

I

Early Period

Early Period - 36pp

1

1.

It was a small and isolated group of women who worked in the early days of this province. Women entered the work force later than their sisters in the Central Eastern provinces and did so in far less concentrated numbers.

From its early beginnings, the B.C. economy has been resource-based,
~~Large~~ *especially in mining & construction* ~~companies~~ *requiring an industrial*
companies dominated the economic terrain, ~~requiring an industrial~~
~~labour force~~ and the need for specialized trades. ~~labour force~~

At the turn of the century B.C. still resembled a frontier; men dominated both the population and the economy. ~~Workers in~~ *Workers in* Railroad construction and forestry were ~~concentrated~~

isolated in a male ghetto of work camps. Jobs for women were relegated to urban areas, where ~~commerce & communications~~ *commerce & communications* networks served hinterland industrial regions.

~~This~~ *This* dependency on the export of resources provided a guaranteed ~~for~~ *social* economic instability. ~~This~~ *This* combined with the seasonal nature of many sectors, such as fishing and forestry, ~~to create~~ *to create* an episodic labour climate. Women ~~were~~ *experienced* economic fluctuations in numerous ways. Women provided part of the labour force ~~as~~ *as* seasonal workers, in fish canneries and the agricultural sector. At the same times, service jobs could fall dramatically

note In 1891 women made up only 4.4 per cent of B.C.'s labour force; expanding to 8.07% by 1911. Given the economic terrain, it is not a surprise that the majority of ~~women~~ *women* who worked were domestics; this sector employed a higher percentage of women than in other provinces. The other categories which employed proportionately more women were skilled women's ~~work~~ *profession* such as nursing, teaching, and stenography.

whether 2.

with the business cycle, ~~wither~~ because industrial workers could not afford to consume in ~~retail~~ stores or cafes employing women or because firms such as laundries dependent on industrial contracts, or ~~wifthy~~ employers could no longer afford to pay women's wages. Women's employment ~~rose~~ in B.C. as the demand for workers as a whole ~~grew~~, but within this gradual increase there ~~was~~ relative declines. In both the depression of the 1890s and of 1905, ~~opportunities~~ opportunities for women diminished. Wage gains made by women in boom times (1910) evaporated as the female labour ~~market~~ market glutted and women competed against each other for work.

The female labour market filled easily. When jobs were scarce women competed not only against ~~men~~ their employed workers but faced further competition from women at home who might seek work during a depression. When other work failed and women returned to domestic service, despite its low wages and prohibitive hours. The price of domestic work was ~~regularly~~ cyclically depressed, not because the work was deskilled but purely because it ~~was~~ an employers' market.

SUB HEAD

The nature of B.C.'s economy elicited an early and ~~strong~~ militant industrial unionism amongst coal miners and construction workers, with later popularity amongst hard-rock miners, and woodworkers. This form of organization was a logical response to brutal employers who used centralized bargaining and lock-outs and to collectively shared complaints. B.C. unions rapidly formed labour centrals in order to coordinate workers; ~~various~~ strategies against ~~unfriendly~~ hostile employers and were very active within the province's political life, in an attempt to provide a legislative framework for working class struggles.

Women fought against terrific odds to sustain union organization. Women were a minority in the workforce, in many workplaces. B.C. employers were generally anti-union and particularly in regards to women. Unions were confused as to their desire for female members and did not always provide a consistent front in their defense.

2a

Domestic service was a low status occupation for ♀, despite ^{real} the level of skill needed to be a nursemaid, governess, cook or housekeeper. The women were constantly on the run, responding to employers' demands, working fourteen or more hours a day.

They lost wages if goods were broken. Instead of wages

women received room + board, they were ^{thus} unable to save enough money to leave domestic service + look for more lucrative work.

The domestic sector was particularly vulnerable to

disruption, because ♀, thrown out of other service occupations

As well, agencies such as The Salvation Army brought in ^{women to work in domestic service} would glut the domestic market. For example in 1913, domestic

were earning \$30/month + room + board, by 1915, their wages had

fallen to \$15/month.

✓ Move to be #2 \$

the early union movement in B.C. did not have a uniform approach to working women. There is no question that women faced the barriers of labour force structure, the demands of an intense domestic workload, a fluctuating labour market, high turnover, a lack of social services (and anti-woman employers) when trying to devote time to union organization. They also faced barriers of social attitudes placing little value on the relative importance of women's wage labour, hostility towards married women in the workforce, sexism from men within the union movement, and differences in their needs around union structure and demands from those of male unionists. However, they, like many working men of their time were often unskilled and struggled to simply attain a union and union recognition. Some sectors of the union movement saw it in their interests, either as craft workers sharing skills with women who might undermine them if non-union, or as industrial workers committed to the principle of organization for all workers (particularly if white) regardless of gender, to assist women with unionization, to incorporate women into their union or to, at least, not provide barriers to women's organization. Strategies towards women's organization varied from union to union at a given time and over the entire early period of B.C. unionism. This was true for both women themselves and the trade union movement as a whole.

• Footnote material from #1 of section 3 here

Even in this early period B.C. union tended to be regional, rather than national, in ~~the~~ concerns and structures. Railway unions grew up around the fight for the 9 hour day. Both crafts and industrial workers, such as miners, dominated cities. ~~Vancouver~~ Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo developed as the organized centres of the province. Labour councils (were established) and a provincial congress in 1890. Between 1890-1895 the Vancouver TLC popularized the idea of workers' cooperatives, a notion that was to arise consistently in strike situations in this early period. In 1892 the unions had reached a threshold where all trades which could be unionized without major conflict, had been. By 1895 industrial organization ^{had} bloomed ~~with~~.

While industrial unions such as the Knight of Labour (1880's) expressed formal sympathy for women joining unions, and actively organized women in Central Canada, ~~the~~ few women worked in industries which these unions organized in British Columbia. *An exception to this was the Waitresses & Ladies Cooks Local of the Waiters & Cooks Union, established in 1898. more to footnote*
~~Women fought against terrific odds to sustain union organization. Women~~

Women entered unionism in British Columbia at a time when craft unions had established themselves and industrial organization was underway. To some extent their demands corresponded with those of male workers; ~~these~~ these included establishing union recognition, a closed shop, better wages, shorter hours of work and more control over the workplace. Male craft unionists had progressed with this latter issue through the creation of union-controlled hiring halls and apprenticeships programmes, while women faced a continual battle against high turnover in their sectors and employers' insistence on strict management rights.

5
110

Women were present within the early craft unions in British Columbia.

In 1891 ~~the~~ Joint(?) Tailors Union of America incorporated tailoresses and fifteen women in Victoria. Thirty-five men were in the union. The union's rates were recognized by the majority of the city's firms. Both sexes organized in order to counteract the cutting of wages by either men or women in the ~~tailoring~~ industry. The union ~~was~~ disbanded in 1893 due to the severe depression. Wages were undercut. This is a trade where women had a long term role in the workplace. When the union ~~was~~ reorganized several women were active for long periods of time; one a Miss McRae through to 1913 and Helena Gutteridge who was a consistent figure in the province's labour movement for many years.

In 1890 the Vancouver International Typesetters Union united both men and women around joint demands for the eight hour day. The next year the union went on record in support of equal pay for women and men. In both these craft areas men and women experienced similar conditions and a unity of demands. It was hard for either sex to sustain organization, both were effected by falling wages if there was no pay equality and both ~~wanted~~ wanted a shorter work week.

6

SUB HEAD

In the 1880s-1890s the Knights of Labour, an international industrial union since 1862, came into being in British Columbia. It had ~~grew~~ grown from its initial origins as a secret society, opening to include women and in the U.S., Black workers. The Knights organized both "mixed" assemblies (representing all trades) and trade assemblies. ^{Its members} preferred political action and cooperatives to strike action, campaigning for the shorter workweek and education for workers. Shops as small as ten people could join to form a local, although in B.C. some locals exceeded one thousand ~~members~~ members.

(4) (3)

By the 1880s women comprised about ten per cent of the membership of Ontario Knights of Labour organizations. The Knights had differentiated dues structures for women and men: men paid a dollar to join; ~~women~~ women fifty cents. Local dues and payments to the cooperative fund were 10¢ for men and 5¢ for women. All assemblies paid twenty dollars ~~for a~~ for a ~~yearly~~ ^{charter} Knights ~~assembly~~, but the organization accepted an implicit inequality in women's and men's wages. Female organizers received only \$5.00 from this sum, while male organizers received ten. However, the Knights believed that all men and women should be organized into unions, and did put this into practice where women were a significant part of the ^{industrial} labour force.

To the Knights, women were peers, ~~and~~ deserving of equal pay, could hold union positions, deserved ^{of} social and political recognition, and suffrage. While men in the Knights often held traditional ideas about women, ~~and~~ spoke protectively of their exploitation by employers, ~~and~~ relying on middle class reformers to change legislation, women members and organizers of the assemblies were clear in stating that women were better off if organized, that they must not rely on middle class reformers, but on their own power and that issues such as wages would attract women to organization, rather than ~~purely~~ ^{purely} social gatherings. ~~Whatever weaknesses there were~~ Whatever weaknesses there were in the Knights attitudes to women, it was clear that they were respected, assisted ^{Palmer} by some, seen as "the best men that we have." Bryan Palmer points out, however, that women were ~~also~~ ^{also} treated more paternalistically by the Knights in B.C. than in Ontario. Here, women were not employed by any major industry and thus were not in contact with male unionists. The corresponding attitude was to see women more as a support for union men, perhaps within auxiliaries than as self-organized and militant workers.

8

In the Trades and Labour Congress of ~~the~~ Canada (TLCC) conventions in the 1880s unionists from the KOL argued that women should be organized wherever possible for better wages and shorter hours. In an attempt to address social attitudes towards women, One ~~member~~ ^{delegate} stated, "If the men of this country worked under the same disabilities as the working women, there would be a revolution." ^{Forsey} Delegates argued for equal pay for women on the basis that women should earn the same as men if they were capable of performing the same labour, that women were often better workers than their male counterparts, that women were as good unionists as men and that the low earnings of women encouraged them to seek a life of crime. *(needs footnote)*

SUB HEAD

There were many more men than women residing in British Columbia in this early period. There was this increased pressure on women to marry, thus there were fewer older single women in the labour force. *paragraph continues*

9

This group has been identified as historically keen on ^{promoting} union organization because they have a ~~an~~ long term interest in improving working condition and wages. The low numbers of such women in the province may have effected women's work ~~identities~~ identities and therefore unionization. There were a smaller number of women in the workforce due noth to population and ~~partial~~ status. Prohibitions against married women working did not relax until the Population distrubutin effected women's ~~careers~~ careers, 1920s. ^{the weight of domestic work,} Women who lived outside of urban areas were often married. Both attitudes ~~and~~ a lack of jobs for women kept most of these women outside of the labour force. The majority of women who worked were ~~young~~ young. They sought marriage as a ~~means~~ means out of unclean and unhealthy working conditions and a life of low wages. Women who were young and single lived at home, their wages were essential to their family's economic survival. Employment as a domestic relieved the family of thier support as well as providing a limited income to women. The close family structure also meant that attitudes towards women's working and unionization were important in determining women's labour activyt.

^{because so many young} women lived at home and contributed to the ~~family~~ family income, fathers saw higher wages for girls as being in ~~their~~ their interest as well. Whatever their attitude towards working women in general, there was clear support from union fathers for minimum wages for women.

~~This latter~~ theme emerges in this period as a major treatment of women workers by the unions, *a theme that runs through discussions within both the B.C. + Canadian union movement* Simply stated, (or implied) ~~was~~ the fear was that women would become prostitutes if poorly paid, not through willingness but to feed and clothe themselves and ~~their~~ ^{of} their families. On one hand, this was a progressive perspective when ~~placed~~ ^{put} against the religious notions of contemporary social reformers who argued that prostitution was an evil to be cured through religion and state repression *and who posed a natural immorality amongst the presumably ignorant labouring classes* On the other, it coincided with a moral reform position, in that it took as a starting ~~point~~ point for bettering women's wages, the concern that women remained virtuous. This was directly tied to a broader concern with women's reproductive role as primary, and the resulting perspective of protecting women's value as untainted mothers and wives. ^{of} Adjuncted to the demand for higher ~~wages~~ wages were concerns for women's reproductive health within industry. This was used at times to better factory conditions, but also used to mask a desire by male union members to exclude a female presence and competition in the male domain of industry. Unionists ~~actions~~ ^{actions} could coincide, in fact, with those of the moral reformers, who sought to exclude women from certain types of work, place limits on hours and times of work for women and not for men (a defacto exclusion) and develop a Factory Inspector system that concentrated not on bettering overall conditions but on women workers appearance, and ~~moral~~ moral protection.

11

A major reason ~~was~~ for women's organization becomes the protection of female morality. Women unionists consistently argued, in the face of middle class concern for immorality, that they were indeed moral despite their poverty. All of these concerns tended to ~~raise~~ raise protective legislation as a ~~high~~ priority, and place the actual unionization of working women on the back burner. Women workers again, contradicted this theme. While many supported protective legislation, they stated that it was only as good as women were organized and able to enforce better conditions and inspectors might recommend.

In 1888 the Knights of Labour pushed for the ~~creation~~ creation of female factory inspectors. The unions; ~~was~~ ^{fight} was ~~for~~ for inspectors who were appointed with union consultation and approval, and for in depth inspection of all levels of working conditions. Some of women's concerns around the limited nature of ~~even~~ even expressed at the TLCC convention, such inspection without unions to back it up was ~~ignored~~ ignored in the debates, and discussion returned to the "delegate questions that were required to be asked female workers", that is questions of morality and harassment and ~~reproductive~~ reproductive health, and thus the need for women inspectors. The corrupt nature of manufacturers and the use of sexual coercion against women was a key concern. While this concern for sexual harassment was ^{again} progressive the terms again were not, impinging on the protection of morality, not on women's sexual autonomy and right to be free from exploitation. ^{The calling up of "women's secrets" was an effective way to quash debate.} The result of inspection would serve ~~women's~~ women's interests if the concrete results were to remove sexual pressure ~~from~~ from the workforce. By 1901 inspection had been established in a number of provinces. ^{which} The TLCC considered ^{notable} ~~notable~~ a victory, However, the fact that women inspectors earned but half ~~of~~ that of their male counterparts and worked harder was not missed by convention. It was clear that only organization could really change the ~~wage~~ wage question.

SUB HEAD

Wage differentials between women and men are an early feature of the Canadian labour market, with lower rates for women rationalized by the age-old primary responsibility of women for the home. The labour market was structured in descending order, beginning with craft workers, on to labourers then women, and children (although women sometimes earned the boys' rate). Women earned one tenth that of craft workers, in many instances. Discrepancies existed in union agreements as well, for example, in the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union in 1913 chambermaids earned twenty-five dollars per month, well below minimum survival rates and male workers earned from sixty to seventy-five dollars per month.

From the early days of waged work for Canadian women the belief that "brothers and fathers help women live" served employers. In an 1895-6 survey of the garment industry, conducted by the Knights of Labour, employers freely admitted to paying as little as \$1.50 to \$3.00 per week to women in sweatshops. Ethnic minorities experienced particularly harsh wage discrimination, but even the the best-paying employers paid and whitest workers earned all of five dollars per week.

Married women took work home, to perform between domestic duties, and because of social prohibitions against their employment, they earned even less. Learners hired on at a lower rate, losing their jobs when the training period ended. Employers swore at women, forced them to wait for work, to work on Saturday afternoons. Workers fainted from the pace of piece work. Technological change hit the cigar industry with the introduction of the cigar mould in about 1888. Skilled men lost their jobs to women and children. Employers proudly admitted beating and humiliating "their" workers to implement work discipline. Similar conditions existed in Vancouver. In 1902 the Vancouver TLCC heard reports of the Millinery House on Cordova Street where women trainees worked for one year as unpaid apprentices. In 1902, the prevailing rate for women clearks was ~~27~~ week/ (check!)

SUB HEAD

13

The 1890s was a time of flowering for women's "clubs" in the province. They provided a social and literary function, an awareness of community, dignity and social order, and an ~~important~~ important pressure for suffrage. It was also a time of great pressure for moral reform. ~~Anti-Oriental~~ Anti-Oriental campaigns ~~mounted~~ mounted ~~and~~ pressures for prohibition and crackdowns on prostitutes combined with white supremacist notions of a pure and wholesome race. The Women's Christian Temperance Union saw the saloon as an adjunct to prostitution and ~~drink~~ drink ~~as~~ as the cause of poverty and immorality.

The Knights of Labour was a fading organization by the 1890s. Its membership was fleeing its structures in favour of the ~~negotiations~~ negotiations orientated job-based ~~unions~~ ^(craft) unions. In its eagerness to regain a base the order linked up with the WCTU to launch a campaign for temperance. In B.C. the analysis of the KOL and moral reform groups ~~conflicted~~ conflicted with a growing socialist trend within the unions. Rather than believing that ~~drink~~ drink created poverty the left thought that it was poverty that created the need for alcohol, as well as despair; workers were ~~educated~~ educated to depression and hopelessness, enforced by bad laws, poverty, and a lack of ~~social~~ social organization. The solution lay in women's suffrage, workers compensation, good legislation, organization and eventually, social revolution. As well, the mostly male union membership were protective of their bars, seeing them as a haven against ~~work~~ work and family. Such debates escalated through the early years of the 20th century as Vancouver was rife with intense anti-~~orientalism~~ ^{orientalism}, a belief that the Chinese community was importing devices such as prostitution, male prostitution, gambling, ~~drugs~~ drugs and alcohol in the innocence of Vancouver's white community. A rabid anti-prostitution campaign evolved based on a white slavery scare. In any case, it is clear that divisions existed amongst trade unionists as to whether or not middle class reformers were appropriate allies for the union movement.

9.

Paternalistic attitudes towards women are ~~clearly~~ evident in trade union actions of this ~~period~~. They were expressed ~~through~~ through a perspective which urged ~~legislative~~ legislative change rather than organization. The myth that women were "unorganizable" prevailed amongst sectors within the union leadership. The stress on legislation, ~~was~~

~~must~~ must also be seen as an expression of the labour movement's growing realization of its potential power on the legislative terrain. Full suffrage for working people was relatively new and the period saw the growth of labour parties and candidates. ~~While some sectors of the union movement favoured more radical political solutions and direct industrial actions, others were earnest in their support for democratic~~

~~Legislative reform at times meant collaboration with the Liberal Party~~ *political reform*

and other middle class agents of social change. Thus, when the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council sought submissions from middle class women for the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia, they were bowing to middle class women's presumed knowledge of conditions and solidifying an alliance with a layer of society which had access to the political process.

~~The problem~~ The problem ~~with~~ with this first alliance was that labour did not define the ~~demands~~ demands for minimum wages for women, and then ask support for its programme. Rather, middle class women, who identified with employers while wanting to better the lot of their working class sisters decided that women needed only \$7.50 and then \$5.00 a week on which to survive despite evidence from working women that ten dollars was a bare subsistence minimum. These women were clear in their submission on the needs of young trainees in the retail trade that they sought a "balanced account"; despite their 60 hour work week they felt that young trainees did not deserve a living wage because they were just learning the trade. *They were notably silent on the wages of domestic servants; not surprising given that they were their employers.*

Significantly, not all union men accepted legislation as a solution to the

Women in B.C. Unions 40.

low wages that women earned. At a lively meeting held by the Minimum Wage Commission in 1918 to address the wage levels of retail clerks working men expressed their skepticism at the commission's structure and capacity to set fair rates for women. Mrs. Ralph Smith, an independent labour MLA and the first woman to sit in a provincial legislature first argued the importance of minimum standards so that "young and tender" feet would not go astray. She then stated that girls at home ought to be able to compensate their families for their care. This note struck home as fathers rose to say that their daughters were working for a mere eight dollars a week although minimum wages had been set eight months earlier. When Mrs. MacGill, the head of the board, said that "No government could go ahead of public opinion" a male unionist rose to say that in his experience the only way that you could get the government to move was "to put a club to them". He was received with roars of approval. The point was made that these wages were not living wages for one person, yet many women supported families, as deserted wives, widows, divorced mothers or women with sick husbands at home. The meeting felt that all workers should be paid for the work done and that it cost a single woman as much to live as a man. The workers ended with the demand that the Board incorporate representatives from the Retail Union in its hearings on standards in the industry, rather than picking only individual workers to state their case, at times on the recommendation of the employer.

From this meeting it is clear that men would support women's wage demands when it was in their interest to do so. Better wages for working children at home meant a higher standard of living for the entire family. It is also clear that there was a genuine sentiment of concern for the women and a mistrust of the government's ability to set standards without close scrutiny by the unions.

Union leaders betrayed women workers on a number of occasions by opting for legislation rather than following through on a strike situation to win a first contract which could be enforced.

16

Women in Unions in B.C. 11.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
Women's rationale for fighting for suffrage divided along class lines.

Middle class women saw the need for suffrage as a tool for political reform/
Working women supported suffrage and reform legislation but also favoured union
organization. They were skeptical of legislative solutions because they had
too often experienced the lax enforcement of ~~minimum~~ minimum standards. Legislation
could create an easier climate in which to organize, but it was the organization
which was ~~the~~ critical.

As Star Rosenthal suggests,

Women's organization cut across all of the currents within the ~~the~~ early
labour movement. Women tended to favour "industrial unionism"; however women
were also active in traditional and conservative craft unions such as the Hotel
and Restaurant Workers Union and their own autonomous organizations such as
the Household and Domestic Employees Union. No matter which structure women
chose, they inevitably appealed to the broader male dominated labour movement for
funds to assist in organization.

There were two waves of organization by women, the first from 1902-1908 and the
second from 1910-1920, with a downturn during the 1915 depression. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ a number of factors dominated this period. The unions were confused in their
orientation to women's unionism: some chose paternalism for exclusion, others genuinely
supported women workers. Men controlled much of the access which women had to unions:
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ traditional ideas of women's place and ^{lack of} organizational competency
were strong; ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ women deferred to male ^{experience} and authority, the unions were
a new terrain for them; women were isolated numerically within the labour movement.
Women faced harsh employers in their fight to organize. Turnover amongst women was extremely
high because women ^{only} worked when young and single, thus unions required ~~constant~~ constant
rebuilding

would need intrs

17

Telephone Workers: Conditions

When telephone service began in B.C. in the 1880s, the Burrard Inlet and New West Telephone Company first hired young boys to serve as both operators and ~~messengers~~. Exchanges were located in stores. As the service expanded, the company chose to hire women instead. The youths were rude and playful, while the women were willing to work long and hard without pay for their training, status of the job ~~was~~ and for the same money as the boys. An ~~operating~~ job was soon seen as prestigious and socially valued work ~~for~~ for young women. As the telephone spread and subscribers grew in numbers, the work was more regulated. Monitoring enforced speed-ups and a community ~~connection~~ connection with city ~~operators~~ operators disappeared. The company brought in strict behavior codes for women and women continued to work an eight hour day, with split shifts, without sick leave for low wages or none at all, if trainees.

Management, in this sector, was viciously resistant to organization. Most

(11) (18)

to organization. Most important to the company was ability

to "manage", to retain control of technological change + training. It

used constant reorganization of the workplace & a heavy dose of

paternalism to attain this end. Operators were young (17-24)

able to work under extreme discipline

educated, often with no previous work record, tall enough to

reach the switchboard and in good health. Their training required memorizing 9600 phone facts, ^{linked to customers} and ^{connections}

reach the switchboard and in good health. This group

so that they could wear heavy handpieces

moved out of the workplace rapidly, taking their places in the

ranks of married ♀.

⊕ Elaine Bernard suggests that the companies protected the

use of Taylorism, or scientific management, in B.C., that is the

division of mental & physical tasks into simple, repetitive

actions, allowing for continuous monitoring, speedups + increased

productivity. There were contests, ^{the ongoing} compilation of statistics,

& monthly reports on each operator.

(17) (19)

Telephone operators in the province joined with electrical workers and linesmen in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers when initial organization began at the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Companies. In the first wave of struggles both the men's union and the women's local operated as one bargaining unit, despite their different working conditions. The company did all it could to undermine this unity, which won a closed shop for all telephone workers in 1902. On November 26, 1902 the linesmen and operators walked out to demand higher wages, shorter hours and union recognition. The men and women had been meeting separately to pinpoint key demands. Women sought a \$2.50/month increase and men \$5.00-\$10.00/month more. New West and Victoria went out in sympathy with the strikers. The operators achieved a complete shut-down of the system because they struck suddenly, leaving the company with no time to hire and train strikebreakers.

18 (20)

Women and Unions in B.C. 12.

Operating was no easy task; it involved complex technology and without its workers the company was disarmed. When the company did hire strikebreakers the weather knocked the system out of commission. The strikers received overwhelming support from the public, and from the business community who resented the monopoly the telephone company held in the communications industry.

A business men's group offered to take over and run the company with the assistance of operators who volunteered for this task while the strike was settled through negotiations. The union agreed to the proposal but the company refused, further alienating the public.

The company capitulated to the union's demands, granting recognition for Local 213, including the operators; and 8 hour day; wage increases; a ten day probation period for trainees; \$20/mth. for city operators and \$30 after 2 1/2 years; 3 days a month sick leave; Saturday afternoon off and a closed shop, the major union demand of this period. Elaine Bernard, who writes of this strike, suggests that the workers won after only two and one half weeks because of the economic power of the strikers, the crucial role of the operators, the increase in public sympathy through the strike and the lack of time that the company had to recruit scabs.

The IBEW local had welcomed women from its inception in B.C. The operators' local was established as "Auxiliary One" of the IBEW, but despite its name, functioned as a full and democratic local of the union. It elected its own officers, chose its own priorities. Two representatives from the men's local attended the meetings, in what may have been an at times paternalistic, at times organizationally useful liaison relationship. This organizational model stemmed from the International's policy of establishing separate women's divisions and locals. What was crucial in the first strike was that despite separate locals, the union fought for joint demands and recognition as a bargaining unit. This was essential around the closed shop.

In the years 1902-1906 management constantly harassed the operators local.

It re

It refused to recognize the closed shop which the union had fought to establish. The company routinized the work, introducing intensive monitoring and supervision, isolating workers from each other and making communication difficult. As was typical of the female labour force of that time, many young women left the trade to marry, and were replaced by women who had no experience with trade union and certainly with the tactics of the previous strike.

It seems that the men's local did not retain a consistent relationship with the women, who were isolated within a male dominated trade union movement and experiencing constant harassment. Apparently there was discussion of "whipping the operators into shape" and of the strategic importance of the women being unionized. In any case, with the assistance of the IBEW Local the auxiliary was reshaped. The existence of separate locals became a problem as the union moved into its second strike. Men were not really conscious of the pressures exerted by the company against their sisters. The company apparently saw the women's desire to organize as a threat to its management rights; it sought to entice women with courtesies, lounges and a "family ideology" rather than the right to a union. Operators were forced to sign an agreement stating that they would not join a ~~union~~ or be fired, This so enraged the women that they went to the men's local for assistance. The union had, unfortunately not enforced its closed shop agreement for the operators. The men fully supported the women but on the basis of union recognition, not on the basis of a closed shop and joint bargaining unit.

There are two interpretations of the ensuing strike. ^{developed} ~~One~~ by Marie Campbell, argues that the male unionists failed to support the women and crossed the picket lines, leaving the women vulnerable and forcing a defeat. Sexism defeats the women's determination in this perspective. The other point of view, developed by Elaine Bernard, suggests that the union made a strategic error in not enforcing the joint bargaining unit of both groups of workers and that they underestimated the company opposition to their strike

and the length of time that it would take to win the dispute this time. ^{The initial economic power of} ~~the operators had diminished with the despoiling of their jobs.~~ ~~is this~~ ~~is~~ ~~poor~~ tactics ^{indeed failed} ~~these~~ the women, but tactics in part deriving from tradition

20
22

14. Women in B.C. Unions

al practices of craft organization and ^{sexist} attitudes ~~to~~ ^{which saw women's work; union identities as} ~~separate from the interests of male workers.~~

When the workers struck on Feb. 22, 1906, twenty craftsmen and thirty-four operators hit the bricks. The company was prepared for the conflict and hired strikebreaker. Business interests unified ~~with~~ against the strikers this time, industrial relations had grown up in B.C. and the bosses understood on ~~which~~ side their bread was buttered. The international vice-president of the region supported the strike. The VILC and one newspaper supported the operators. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ The women and men stayed out through the ~~the~~ spring ~~and~~, summer and most of the fall. By November the linesmen began to return to work. The operators had lost their strike ~~_____~~ and their jobs. It would take over ten years for ~~_____~~ the local to be rebuilt. ~~_____~~

subhead

ADD WINNIE →

Other groups of working women organized at this time. From 1902-1904 the Retail Clerks Association gained seventy-two members, but ~~_____~~ eventually disbanded. The Shirtwaist and Laundryworkers International Union ^{of Vancouver} was active from 1902-1903, fighting strikes at several laundries to win closed shop agreements. The Victoria local struck for back wages in 1905. The majority of the strikers were women and other unionists supported them with donations of food for themselves and their children. This union also disbanded.

The Waitresses and Ladies Cooks Union elected a woman officer in 1903. It was part of the craft union movement. This union had a strong history of opposing oriental labour in the province. While Marie Campbell suggests that this was a result of manipulation by male union leaders, ^{⊗ However, anti-orientalism} it may well have been because unionized white women waitresses saw oriental unorganized shops as competing against them and ^{Unfortunatley,} undermining their wages. The logic of exclusion, rather than organization may have appealed ^{to white} ~~_____~~ as strongly to white women as male workers when their jobs were threatened. Anti-orientalism was also espoused ~~_____~~ by laundry workers. ~~_____~~ Employers did not hesitate to threaten women with replacement by ^{(immigrant workers,} ~~_____~~ who laboured without citizenship rights. [⊗] There is no question that men would be more likely to ~~_____~~ assist in organizing when they shared a trade directly + feared competition + undercutting.

21
23

Women in B.C. Unions

After 1900 there is increased evidence of women workers' organization, with varying strategies emerging. Both ~~industrial~~ ^{industrial} and craft workers supported legislative as well as negotiated solutions to women's low wages and unprotected conditions.

Even when women organized there was an underestimation of the values of women's work. By the 1910's unequal wages between male and female workers had become institutionalized, even in union sectors. Thus, when the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union won a new contract in 1913, male waiters won \$15-18/week, waitresses \$10-\$12/week and chambermaids only \$25/month, a 17¢/day increase. This was half of a living wage for ~~that~~ that period. The report to the VTLC recognized this settlement as inadequate for the women, but saw ~~the~~ the package as a whole as a ~~victory~~ victory.

However, consciousness about equal pay for women began to emerge in this period, ~~one~~ ^{on one hand} because of the impact of the war, but on the other because of the struggle by women for Minimum wages and decent wages levels in union contracts.

In 1918 in the B.C. Federationist a series of articles expounded the importance

of equal wages for women in industry, ~~Many~~ Many unions supported this in order to protect the interests of soldiers overseas and union men still at work.

⊕ As well, they recognized that better-paid & would buy products which in turn stimulated further production, guaranteeing employment. Both unions' movement were learning the importance of a "home market".

⊕ demand for equal pay for women was one of a set of demands that sought the protection of pre-war conditions from industrial conscription and legislated war time conditions.

⊕ There is however, a different, more radical stream of thought about women's

wages. Writers argue that men and women have the same needs, that women have the same dependents as working men. Women should be paid for the work that they performed.

Organized women remained a minority within their trades as well as within the labour movement. In 1910 out of 300 women working in ^{Vancouver} hotels, restaurants, only 13 were present at a union meeting. By August of that year 5 hotels employed union waitresses. The married, female delegate to the VTLC pushed for union hiring, but the union found that there was a greater demand for workers than they could supply. In 1914 the waitresses merged with the men's local.

Between the years 1900-1921 Vancouver workers tried to keep ~~up~~ pace with runaway inflation. Changed in work methods brought increased productivity but ~~wages~~ wages at ~~times~~ times fell. When ~~they~~ they rose they did so far behind the rate of inflation.

In _____, the ~~Council~~ Council of Women in Vancouver, themselves often employers of domestics and tied into the ruling interests in B.C., estimated a living wage for women at \$7.50 per week, ~~but~~ but is \$5.00 ~~for~~ for room and board, and the rest ~~on~~ on carfare, laundry and clothing. This figure was well below that estimated by women as required for their survival. Telephone operators who were ~~well-paid~~ well-paid for women, earned all of eight dollars per week in 1906 and had to conform to a strict and expensive dresscode and maintain excellent health. The Council dropped this estimate to five dollars per week as a submission to the Minimum Wage Board. Most women, in fact, earned below the Minimum. In the 1920s \$1200-1500/year was necessary to support a family of four. Eighty ~~per~~ per cent of women earned below \$1000/year, as did 60% of Canadian working men, ^{Palmer}

Consumer goods production, communications and service ~~sectors~~ employing women grew in the 1920's as union workers gained higher wages from corporations who had realized the importance of ^{the} domestic market. While women's job ~~opportunities~~ opportunities grew, the rationalization, and deskilling ~~of~~ of women's jobs also increased.

The commonly held belief that women's ^{place} place was in the home meant that their workforce involvement was seen as secondary ~~and~~ and their income supplementary. When combined with the view of men as wage earners, this provided a strong rationale for low wages for women, for they worked, after all, for "pin money".

The growth of workers wages and social reform of the 1920s was both a result of ongoing pressure for the organized labour and workers' political movement and a realization by capital of the need for ~~the~~ home markets. The working class family, according to ~~the~~ Ewen, became increasingly geared to consumption. Despite higher wages, ^{the} the majority of Canadian workers did continue to earn

below \$1,000 per year, well below the poverty lines. Nonetheless, advertising and social attitudes began to suggest that working class people could enjoy leisure time and consumer goods once exclusively the terrain of the middle and upper class. While domestic ~~housework~~ labour remained a heavy burden for women, appliances began to appear on the market. Decreased hours of work probably helped women who were both homemakers and workers to stay in the labour force, beginning the trend to married and divorced women entering the wage labour force. They filled the growing number of service jobs.

The issue of decent wages tied to wartime inflation and the removal of anti-~~union~~ left legislation became increasingly important issues in the province. While union rights, ^{(such as the right to organize} had been given ~~the government strikes and lock-outs~~ ^{the federal government banned strikes and lock-outs,} a certain leeway to facilitate wartime production, ~~and~~ ^{and} radical organizations, ~~were banned~~ with extensive prison sentences attached to violations.

The first ^{subhead} Vancouver General strike occurred in 1918. Ginger Goodwin, a former vice-president of the labour congress had met his death at the hands of the special police, who combed the hills outside of Comox looking for draft resisters. Goodwin had chosen to refuse service. The police apparently shot him ~~without~~ without warning. Both his conscription (Goodwin had t.o.) and his death led to outrage on the part of B.C. workers. On Fri. August 2, 1918 tradesmen and industrial workers walked off the job for one day (24 hours). While many working people supported the strike, returned soldiers rioted ~~and~~ ^{VTL} attacking the labour temple. Soldiers ~~battered~~ ^{forced} union leaders. At one point Victor M. Degly, the pres., ^{was} out onto a window ledge. He narrowly escaped death, crawling back in. When the soldiers rallied to push him out the window again, the VTL's telephone operator blocked their way, protecting him with her own body. The soldiers, perhaps humiliated by this woman's courage, retreated.

The second general strike took place a year later, in sympathy with the Winnipeg strike. Strikers in Winnipeg ~~were~~ were defending postal workers union right, the right to collective bargaining and a living wage. When the government threatened to fire ~~postal~~ postal workers and use the militia against Winnipeg, Vancouver threatened

28

to strike. Vancouver struck not only against the use of the militia and for reinstatement of the workers but for a comprehensive political programme. Demands included the 6 hour day and the nationalization of major food reserves preventing hoarding. Some 10,000 workers ^{out} went ~~on strike~~ ;

~~In the~~ ~~The~~ ~~workers~~ ~~decided~~ ~~to~~ ~~take~~ ~~part~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~first~~ ~~strike.~~

~~In the~~ ~~second~~ ~~strike~~ ~~the~~ ~~strike~~ lasted a month, from the beginning to the end of June. Most workers who returned to their ^{jobs} ~~to~~ ~~work~~ did not experience victimization; the exception was the ~~only~~ women's union allowed to join the ^{strike} ~~strike~~. The telephone workers local.

SEE General strike stuff

(we don't want the Wpg stuff here, do we?)

different intro needed

29

Women in B.C. Unions 16

subhead

~~Industrial workers in British Columbia~~
Unionized women had a rough time when the union movement ~~was~~
~~in~~ broke into internal warfare. ~~The~~ Their organization was too fragile and experience as unionists too new for all of the debates to make sense and for their unions to sustain themselves without funds and and physical moral support against employers. This, when the telephone workers joined the 1919 general strike, they did so with militancy and conviction. At the conclusion of the strike, they were ~~the~~ only workers threatened with demotion. They stayed on strike for two weeks but released other unions from their defense telling them to return to work, ~~the~~
~~the~~ B.C. Tel treated the operators viciously; striking supervisors and senior operators were demoted and all workers forced to work side by side with strikebreakers and under the supervision of strikebreakers. If the trade union movement had been strong the women would have received support to fight the harassment. As it was, the B.C. labour movement fragmented into many political and organizational debates and splinters. The result was that the women were left to fight the their union company on their own; ~~they~~ died of isolation and pressure.

The problem was that women and men in the unions were at different stages of organizational development. Men had been able to, with tremendous conflict, carve out a terrain on union power and establish organizations structures, albeit ones that were subject to destruction through recession periods. Nonetheless, the shell was in tact, and the debates that raged were major ones of industrial and political strategy, Some of these ~~were~~ ^{were} relevant to women, but their level of organization was far behind that of men and, even in the most militant sectors, more transitory, lasting for two years at the peak of organization the dying again. Women were again and again thrown back to stage one, while male workers had more of a chance to institutionalize.

The lack of support for women and their specific needs manifested itself in more concrete ways. Even traditional craft unionists such as the Hotel and Restaurant Sisters made ardent and frustrated pleas for male unionists to assist them in organizing. The domestic workers union pressed for men to increase their level of support for their campaign. ~~Helena Gutteridge~~ Helena Gutteridge, who was a very active woman unionist, resigned as a women's organizer. She ran into a number of policy disputes with men in the movement; Gutteridge argues that women should be drawn together in a conference to address their needs while male leaders opposed this idea, seeing it as undermining elected representation. They believed that both men and women should form a policy on "women's issues", and only if they were elected delegates.

The women fought hard to win recognition of women's domestic work as valuable to society, arguing that the home had a tremendous impact on the community. They also supported the right of married women to receive fair wages and be employed. No surprisingly they sought both organization but also legislative protection, a recognition of the isolated conditions of domestic workers and the need for standards.

Women were also in a difficult position when determining the type of strategy appropriate for their organization. Industrial ~~unionism~~ unionism offered the possibility of semi-skilled and unskilled workers being organized. However, in ~~the~~ B.C., the industrial were located in work areas where women simply played no role, and often outside of the urban centres where the only jobs for women were to be found.

Women were critically involved in miners' strikes. While women did not work in any capacity in mining towns, they understood well what it was to administer a household on meager wages, and even worse, to lose a husband, father or brother through accident. The structure of mining communities was ~~more~~ more stable than the lumber camps of this early time, this community identity lent itself to union organization. Mining unions were quick to establish auxiliaries or branches of the Women's Labour League. In the 1912-1914 strike on Vancouver Island, women supported their coal miner husbands ardently, participating in attacks on scabs and company thugs.

vocal

There were strong, ~~were~~ women in the industrial movement, women like Sarah Knight from the One Big Union, for example. On the other hand, the more traditional union movement included women like Helena Gutteridge who were hardened fighters for women's rights and craft unions where women had played a role for years, such as the HREU and the Tailoresses. ~~Some women~~ *Helena Gutteridge opposed the One Big Union movement and was active in organizing the craft unions against the OBU.* Rather than chose between either model, some women innovated. The Household and Domestic Employees Union ~~was~~ organized fairly autonomously, though it made use of the labour temple, and asked for financial aid ~~from~~ from other unions. It posed itself as an industrial union, incorporating cooks, ~~governesses~~ governesses, nursemaids etc., it sought uniform conditions such as 9 hour day, Minimum Wage, the recognition of domestic servants as industrial workers, the creation of a bring hall for the industry, ~~and~~ also embraced the popular B.C. notion of cooperativ ~~is~~, but adapted this to be a cooperative boarding house.

Not much new here - could use it as a summary piece
33

Conditions of Women's Work

X Women workers faced two distinct sets of problems in the ways that their workplaces structured their work experience. Women worked in either fragmented, isolated small shops, offices or homes, under strict paternalistic (or in the case of domestics, maternalist^{ic}) supervision. Women were forced, at worst, to toil at home or in others' homes. It was difficult to locate one's co-workers. Alternately, women found employment with large corporations, for example, telephone companies. Women's work was the subject of constant rationalization, or "Taylorism", that is technological change, deskilling and continual speed-up. The modern office was "a highly rationalized ~~office~~ office in which deskilled jobs were defined as suitable for women's work." Phillips ~~The~~ *→ too late for this period?*

The central expense for both small employers and large industries was women's wages. It was for this reason that women experienced such intense ~~and~~ rationalization and speed-up of work and an unprecedented hostility to their organizing attempts. Employers were almost always male and accustomed, as well, to ~~the~~ female subordination. The notion that women would organize was a direct challenge to this authority. Although B, C, women and men shared employment by large anti-union companies, their conditions of work differed. Star Rosenthal sums up women's work location in this period as "scattered, ~~fragmented~~, ^{fragmented}, no space to congregate, no access to public life, no transportation to work, no childcare, and long hours of work."

In B.C., with a ~~few~~ few exceptions, male and female workers experienced an extreme separation as to where and how they worked. Even when men and women shared a labour force women were strictly relegated to the bottom rungs of the work hierarchy. This separation led to a general lack of imagination on the part of men as to the conditions of women's work and the real personalities of female workers. It was even more difficult to imagine why women would need and want to unionize.

attention to maintain. Women fought again and again for the most basic of demands: decent wages, union recognition and a closed shop. Men and women unionists had different interpretations of the same demands: equal pay for women meant a living wage and respect, for men it meant protection of other men's jobs. Legislation was both a positive vehicle for women, but one when substituted for organization left women with little more than paper protection. Unions relied too much on middle class women as spokespeople for working class women's needs. Women were hit hard in ^{periods} ~~periods~~ of recession because of their position in the labour market, this in turn undermined organization because of competition for scarce jobs. Once organized women were militant and willing to sat out until they won, as evidence by both the telephone workers and laundry workers' strikes. When women did organize themselves (HDEU) it was usually in exclusively female sectors. Important innovations in how to effectively organize women developed out of this process. ~~Where unions did exist where women worked there were weaknesses in the approach to women; organization, for example the structure of the IBEW versus the needs of the women, ~~and the~~~~ ~~structure of the IBEW~~ No matter what barriers existed, women were heroic in their struggle to organize against violent opposition from employers and discomfort from trade union brothers.

→ SUMMARY

STUFF