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## ♀ and work in B.C. conditions

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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. In the former area, women were a consistent part of the workforce from the 1880s onwards. In Toronto, for example, by 1875, women made up three quarters of the workers in the garment industry. The B.C. economy was based on resource extraction, with a notable dearth of ~~light industry~~ light industry, a traditional source of women's jobs. As industries grew and working class consumers developed, service sector jobs began to open for women. The early gold rush provided the first non-domestic jobs for women and the opening of the railroad, construction, mining and forestry provided, albeit indirectly, the possibility of additional work.

~~From its early beginnings, the B.C. economy has been resource-based.~~ <sup>for example as tailresses + bookbinders,</sup> Large companies dominated the economic terrain, <sup>especially in mining + construction</sup> requiring an industrial ~~labour~~ labour force and the need for specialized trades.

At the turn of the century B.C. still resembled a frontier; men dominated both the population and the economy. <sup>Workers in</sup> Railroad construction and forestry were ~~organized~~ isolated in a male ghetto of work camps. Jobs for women were relegated to urban areas, where ~~commerce + communications~~ <sup>commerce + communications</sup> networks served hinterland industrial regions.

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 <sup>professions</sup> such as nursing, teaching, and stenography.

<sup>This</sup> dependency on the export of resources provided a guaranteed <sup>income</sup> for economic instability. ~~This~~ Combined with the seasonal nature of many sectors, such as fishing and forestry, <sup>this</sup> created an episodic labour climate. Women <sup>experienced</sup> 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

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 wealthy 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 <sup>grew</sup>, but within this gradual increase there ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> relative declines.

In both the depression of the 1890s and of 1905, ~~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 ~~their~~ <sup>to their</sup> 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 <sup>the</sup> hours. The price of domestic work was ~~not~~ cyclically depressed, not because the work was deskilled but purely because it ~~was~~ an employers' market.

While most women were isolated in the female ~~in~~ job ghetto, some shared a trade with men, for example bookbinding or tailoring. Women competed at times for the same work for lower ~~rates~~ rates, as low as one third to one half of the male rate. Vancouver and Victoria tailoresses eventually joined the union to fight for equal pay between the sexes. Men who they worked with ~~also~~ <sup>saw</sup> it as important to include women in their union so that their employment could be regulated and competition decreased.

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*

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This group has been identified as historically keen on <sup>promoting</sup> 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 ~~marital~~ status. Prohibitions against married women working did not relax until the Population distrubutin effected women's ~~careers~~ careers, 1920s. ~~Women who lived outside of urban areas were often married. Both~~ <sup>the weight of domestic work,</sup> 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. 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 eages were essential to their family's economic survival.~~ Employment as a domestic releived the family of thier support as well as providing a limited income to women. The close family structure also meant that attttudes towards women's working and unionization were important in determining women's labour activyt. Their is certainly evidence of family support for female unionism. for example, in early minimum wage debates, union fathers stood up and ~~denounced~~ denounced the low wages and long hours entailed in thier daughters' employment. ~~Marreid women~~ <sup>only</sup> worked or the if a tragedy struck their home, in the form of widowhood, serious illness ~~of~~ of a spouse. ~~In 1911 in B..C. some 51.5% of workers in the province were~~ <sup>women</sup> single, most of these were between the ages of 15-24. Although more married and ~~divorced~~ divorced womeb entered the workforce in the early twentites, ~~some~~ some 90% of women in the workforce remained single. This trend would contnue until World War II.

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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 grew, the rationalization, and deskilling of women's jobs also increased. Unionism was inhibited in offices and telephone companies where every word and gesture was monitored and sped up. On the other hand, the nature of some service work, such as waitressing for a working class clientele in cafes, opened avenues of communication for women through daily contact with union men. One woman talked of gaining her union consciousness during the 1925 longshoremen's strike. The cafe owners where she worked was a waitress served scabs- union men came in and through discussing the key issues in the strike convinced her to cut off their service.

The fluctuating demand for women's labour combined with women's limited experience in the workplace, and experience dependent on lifecycle as well as economic cycle, may well have limited the development of a committed work identity amongst women.

Bryan Palmer suggests that working life had an impact on the ways that family life was organized, both in terms of resources (economic, time) and structure (frequency of contact for example). These effects would be most evident when entire families were employed in an industry, or when separation was required for survival, such as the case of young women who hired out as domestics. The commonly held belief that women's place was in the home meant that their workforce involvement was seen as secondary 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 home markets. The working class family, according to Ewen, became increasingly geared to consumption. Despite higher wages, 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 ~~labour~~ 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.

### 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, maternalistic) 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 central expense for both small employers and large industries was women's wages. It was for this reason that women experienced such intense ~~work~~ rationalization and speed-up of work and an unprecedented hostility to their organizing attempts. Employers were almost always male and accustomed, as well, to ~~work~~ 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, ~~work~~ 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 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

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~~ 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 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 clerks was ~~27¢~~ week/ (check!)

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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, ~~that~~ 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 pwe 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 cent of women earned below \$1000/year, as did 60% of Canadian working men, <sup>Palmer</sup>

#### Telephone Workers: Conditions

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Close family ties meant that family attitudes towards a woman's right to work + to organize would affect her ability to be active at both work + in union.

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was both a result of ongoing pressure from the organized

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Despite higher wages, the majority of Canadian workers continued to earn (less) \$1000/year, well below the poverty line.

While domestic labour remained a heavy burden for ♀,

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to survive in the labour force, thus the beginning tend to married & divorced & entering the workforce, partly to fill newly created service jobs.

### Conditions of f's work

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f experienced either extreme fragmentation, isolated in small shops, offices or homes, under strict paternalistic (or in the case of domestics, maternalistic) supervision. f were forced, at worst, to toil at home or in others' homes. It was hard to locate one's co-workers. Alternately, f found employment in

large corporations, for example telephone companies. Women's work was subject to <sup>"Taylorism", that is</sup> constant technological change & deskilling & monitoring. The modern office was "a highly rationalized office in which deskilled jobs were defined as suitable for f's <sup>Phillips</sup> work."

The central expense for both small employers & large industries was f's wages. Thus f encountered such intense rationalization;

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speedup of work; an unprecedented hostility to new organization

This latter factor also stemmed from the fact that their employers were male & accustomed to female subordination. The notion

that f would organize was a direct challenge to this authority,

although <sup>BC</sup> men; f shared employment by large, anti-union

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jobs f & men shared workforce (domest, govt) but f were

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as to the conditions of women's work; the <sup>specific</sup> relevancy of unionization

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<sup>the days of</sup> From early waged work for Canadian ♀ the rationale that "brothers + fathers help ♀ live" served employers. <sup>management industry,</sup> ~~The 1895~~ 1895 survey conducted by The Knights of Labour employers freely admitted paying as little as \$1.50 to 3.00 ~~month~~ to ♀ in sweatshop. Ethnic minorities experienced particularly harsh wage discrimination, but even the best-paying employers <sup>paid</sup>; whitest workers earned all of \$5/wk.

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to organization. Most important to the company: work 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) <sup>able to work under extreme discipline</sup> educated, often with no previous work record, tall enough to reach the switchboard and in good health. <sup>Their training required memorizing 9600 phone facts & linked out responses to customers</sup> This group <sup>so that they could wear the heavy headpieces</sup> 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, <sup>the ongoing</sup> compilation of statistics, & monthly reports on each operator.

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Laundry workers toiled in hot, unbearable conditions for low wages, standing all day.

Many of the ♀ employed were immigrants. By 1914 there were over 700

women working in laundry on heavy machinery for a 9 hour day,

earning at the most \$9/wk.

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Domestic service was a low status occupation for ♀, despite

the <sup>real</sup> 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 <sup>thus</sup> unable to save enough money to leave domestic service + look for more lucrative work.

This sector was particularly vulnerable to

recession, because ♀, thrown out of other service occupations

As well, agencies such as the Salvation Army brought in immigrants <sup>women to work in domestic service</sup> would glut the domestic market. For example, in 1913, domestic

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

fallen to \$15/month.

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#### 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, maternalistic) 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 ~~workplace~~ office in which deskilled jobs were defined as suitable for women's work." Phillips

The central expense for both small employers and large industries was women's wages. It was for this reason that women experienced such intense rationalization and speed-up of work and an unprecedented hostility to their organizing attempts. Employers were almost always male and accustomed, as well, to 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~~, 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 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.

Consumer goods production, communications and service ~~sect~~ employing women grew in the 1920's as union workers gained higher wages from corporations who had realized the importance of <sup>the</sup> domestic market. While women's job ~~opportunities~~ opportunities grew, the rationalization, and deskilling ~~of~~ of women's jobs also increased. Unionism was inhibited in offices ~~of~~ telephone companies ~~where~~ where every word and gesture was monitored and sped up. On the other hand, the nature of some service work, such as ~~wait~~ waitressing for a working class clientele in cafes, opened avenues of communication for women through daily contact with ~~union~~ union men. One woman talked of gaining her union consciousness during the 1925 longshoremen's strike. ~~The~~ The cafe owners where she ~~worked~~ was a waitress served scabs- union men came in and through discussing the key issues in the strike convinced ~~her~~ her to cut off ~~their~~ their service.

The fluctuating demand ~~for~~ for women's labour combined with women's limited experience in the workplace, ~~an~~ experience dependent on lifecycle as well as economic cycle, <sup>This well</sup> may ~~well~~ have ~~ki~~ limited the development of a committed work identity amongst women.

the ways

Bryan Plamer suggests that working life had an impact on ~~the~~ that family life was organized, both in terms of resources (~~economic, time~~) (economic, time) and structure (frequency of contact for example). These effects would be most evident when entire families were employed in an industry, or when separation was required for survival, such as the case of young women who hired out as domestics. 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 <sup>(P)</sup> 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 ~~Ewen~~ Ewen, became increasingly geared to consumption. Despite higher wages, <sup>the</sup> 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 <sup>el</sup> the terrain of the middle and upper class.

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