

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~~ pace of piece ~~work~~ 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~~ Street where women trainees worked for one year as unpaid apprentices. In 1902, the prevailing rate for women clerks was ~~27¢~~ week/ (check!)

Between the years 1900-1921 Vancouver workers tried to keep up pace with

runaway inflation. Changed in work methods brought increased productivity but wages at ~~times~~ times fell. When 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, ~~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 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, <sup>Palmer</sup>

#### 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~~ 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 ~~and~~ and for the same money as the boys. An ~~operating~~ 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