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Life and work in B.C. conditions

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. 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, ^{for example as tailoresses + bookbinders,} construction, mining and forestry provided, albeit indirectly, the possibility of additional work.

^{From its early beginnings, the BC economy has been resource-based.}
~~The BC economy was...~~ ^{especially in mining + construction} Large unskilled and semi-skilled companies dominated the economic terrain, 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. ^{Workers in} Railroad construction and forestry were ~~organized~~ organized and isolated in a male ghetto of work camps. Jobs for women were relegated to urban areas, ^{where commerce + communications 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 ^{"professions"} ~~...~~ such as nursing, teaching, and stenography.

^{This} ~~The~~ dependency on the export of resources provided a guarantee ^{vacue} for economic instability. ^{This} Combined with the seasonal nature of many sectors, such as fishing and forestry, ^{this} ~~to~~ created an episodic labour climate. Women workers ^{experienced} ~~were~~ subject to economic fluctuations in numerous ways. Women provided part of the labour force ~~...~~ 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 workess could not afford to consume in retail stores or cafes employing women or beacuse 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 ~~grew~~, but within this gradual increase there ~~were~~ relative declines. In both the depression of the 1890s and of 1905, ~~women's employment opportunities~~ opportunities for women diminished. Wage gains made by wimen 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~~ toehr employed workers but faced furthur competetion from women at home who might seek work during a depresssion. When other work failed and women returned to domestic service, despite its low wages and prohibitive 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 ~~job~~ job ghetto, some shared a trade with men, for example bookbinding or tailoring. Women competed at times for the same work for lower ~~wages~~ rates, Vancouver and Victoria tailoresses eventually joined the union to fight forequal pay between the sexes. Men who they worked with ~~saw~~ saw ~~the~~ it as important to include women in their union so that thier 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 imcreased pressure on women to marry, thus there were fewer older single women in the labour force. *paragraph continues*

Unorganized workers, ~~both~~ both women and men, joined the strike out of conviction, The union movement ~~it~~ used this opportunity to appeal to workers to join a union. This appeal was directed at women in the public sector. Government charwomen at the Tuxedo Hospital earned all of \$1.16 per day. After carfare was deducted the women had all of \$1.06 for food, clothing and rent. The bulletin believed ~~that~~ ^{that} it was "high time" that they formed a union. The article exclaims: "One dollar and sixteen cents a day for scrubbing floors and then the bosses profess not to know the cause of labour unrest." Only a living wage could allow workers access to education, housing, general culture and "~~healthful~~ "healthful amusement".

~~Housewives~~ Housewives were also active in their ~~support~~ support for the strike. The Ways and Means Committee of the Women's Labour League set up took over the dining room of the Strathcona Hotel with the full support of management. They set up an eatery where "girl" strikers could eat. ~~Recognizing~~ Recognizing that women's low wages ~~lack~~ lack of strike funds meant that they were impoverished the women ~~could~~ could eat free of charge, while male strikers were welcomed but asked for a ^{full} donation or payment. The kitchen continued successfully until ~~Mr.~~ Mr. W.J. Christie, a local financier, forced the women out by threatening to foreclose on the hotel's mortgage. The women moved to a new location. *Women supporters & strikers helped to establish relief for striking workers.*

High hopes for an early settlement faded and the strikers found themselves with massive public support, but little resources and intense repression from the ~~militia~~ militia. ~~Leaders~~ Leaders of the strike were arrested and held in prison. A Mrs. Armstrong was held for three days, charged with "inciting to disorder" and committed for trial. It is clear that the government believed that women's role was important enough to warrant repression.

After six weeks, despite sympathy strikes in other cities, the strikers were forced to back down and return to work. While many unions were able to protect

Housework: 1910's

BARBER: In those days you found very little working with children-only if misfortune hit her because there was no social assistance in those days, you got out and helped yourself or you starved. A woman in those days had enough to keep a home: it was a washboard, a scrub brush, a broom..When I got work, the first thing I bought my mother for Christmas, and I paid a whole dollar ~~for~~ and a half for it, was an electric iron, And boy, you would have thought that I had given her a Rolls Royce.

1930's

STEWART: I did all the housework. We were married 37 years and Bill never took the garbage out. I made darn sure that he didn't 'cause I took it out. It was the tremendous pressures that we was going under. As a woman, I can handle ~~this~~ a little bit better than some men. Aside from anything, I know the fellows in the union, and its not easy.

~~RANKIN~~Childcare: 1940's

RANKIN: Childcare was a big problem, and it was talked about all the time because women worry all the time. They talk ~~about~~ about women having all this independence and careers. Somebody has to raise the kids, you can be brilliant ~~a~~, you still can't let the kid die. And there's very few men who are gonna take on that role, while the woman works. It's still your main job, and its always been my main job. I always had to raise kids.

Sometimes we had relatives and sometimes the kids were just left, indiscriminately around, or they had to worry about when they came home from school.

1940's

MCLEOD: My mother got sick and I had to find a place to place my child. I tried to find a ~~max~~ place that I could move in and have her, ad there was no way, the housing was nil. I could barely get a place. I had to look for someplace for my child, And it was sickening-there was people that you went to and ~~may~~youknew the situation was n't right; it looked nice because you had made an appointment. I got a very nice woman, who is still my friend to take my child. She had five of them, I think my

CHILDCARE

MCLEOD con't:

daughter was six. It was only for three years-I felt that until my daughter ~~became~~ became eleven- at that time I didn't have much choice of shifts, I was ^{eight} some times working until ~~seven~~ o'clock at night and, I wanted to make sure where she was. There were times when this woman felt that I shouldn't be taking my daughter as much as I did, so I would take the other children too. Because I didn't want to divorce myself from her, there was no way that I was giving her up. But she felt that my daughter had more advantages than the other children, therefore it made it a little more difficult to handle the other children when I brought my daughter back.

PERSON:

post-war

I moved back home and paid my mother board for my daughter and board for myself, but worked on a shift ~~at Fraser Mills~~ at Fraser Mills. First I worked on the afternoon shift, but as soon as she started school I took graveyard so this way I was home early in the morning to take her to school and then I was up in the afternoon. I'd go to bed soon as I took her to school, then I'd get up in the afternoon when she got home from school and then I'd go to bed with her in the evening. I've always split my sleep, I've done that all of my life. I did it ever since I'd been at Fraser Mills on the graveyard shift. I still do it. It became a habit. So that I was there to supervise my own child.

WORK FROM NECESSITY

SCOTT:

There were five in my family and my mother was ill. So I found life prestty rough and couldn;t even complete my grade eleven beacause My mother wa said, "You can't go to school." Don (my brother 4 years younger) and Pat(six years younger) and Betty (8years younger) have to go to school. I went to Winnipeg and wa enrolled as a student nurse in the Victoria Hospital, but the very day that I got my cap, my dadæ phoned and said, "Mother is worse than ever, you haveto come home. " I went home and nursed my mother, Anyway I wann't a qualified nūse, I din't ha e an R.N. I found work with a woman who wanted her house cleaned and wanted me to take care of the house and 2 yong teenagers while she went east. As soon as she came back, sje said to me, "O.K. you can go," I had nowhere to go. I went tot he doctor of the small hospital and said, "I have some experience practical nursing with my mother and o her people. as well as my little but of training," I felt like i'd really come up a notch because I wanted warned \$25 a month and I had to be a receptionist, cook, llaundry woman and run around girl inthe operatign room. I worked very, very hard. I learned to despise the nurses because they wouldn't lfet a finger tixjæix tamhek to help me, and I ran my health down very badly.

MCLEOD:I went back East with my husband before he went overseas and spent a year in Quebec Ex City so it must have been 1941 when i came back from there and went to wrk work, because I didn't know if hef was coming back. You din;t knoe who was soming back. Lots of them were getting killed.

FAMILY SUPPORT

WADDELL:

Probably, the fact that my father was involved in union ~~support~~ work heloed me. I didn't think of it as being union work, jsut a question that someone had to speak up and I felt that I was entitled to something, therefore I spoke up on behalf of the other women. The first thing that ever happened to me, when My father took me out, was to take me down to the union office. When I became organizer my fahter said, "Every person should spend some time in the union, but get out while you still have all yiour good thoughts about it." I decided that I would put in two years in and that was going to be it. Tweleve years later I was till there.

WORK I.D. AND SKILL

Stefani:

In fact, the man that I was helping said that I cought on so easy, that he found that I was just as good as a man helper, if not better. The[^] Mr. Mattinni came and asked me personally if I wanted to go on the ships and be a shipwright's helper, abd that paid more, so I thoughtm "well, gee, I'll take that." He was always stepping me up. So the shipwrightm his job was to lay the superstructure, to mark out the superstructure on the top decks of these ships- which would be the housing and the cabines. His job was to lay it all out and measure it and mark it down; it w would set right on those marjings, and I hekpded him. ~~I guess I must have been~~ ~~with him for about a year and a half~~ I'd have to hold the tape and then take a punch and hammer and then pounch little holes all the way down these arks, because you could't have chazlk ~~mark~~ because they'd rub off. I had to make sure that I made no mistakes because it had to be done right, And simple again, it was no problkem at all, He told me the same thing, "As far as having a boy helper and a woman hepper, I wouldn't find any difference at all." I was with hin for quite awhile when they came and asked, they were pucking abo ut fifteen women to go on the carriers and it was a selection because I think there was about six hundred sailo living on those carriers: they were sleeping, eating, doing their drills. They just wanted it decent-they wanted girls that had very good morals, because you could get into trouble~~s~~sleeping working with six hundred men on the ship every day, you know waht I mean? I was picked, but it was my choice. On that, I was ~~the~~ electricians helper and the money was better, so I thoughtm, "Well, it isn't very far from SOuth Burrard, I think I'll try it."

ISSUES:

- acceptance into union structures
- equal pay
- Boilermakers and the IWA + pay

- childcare: call for nursery schools. several in city, Strathcona
- defense of right to a job

Boilermakers: Whereas women have proven themselves as industrial workers and whereas industrial expansion allow a place for women in industry we support the right of women to any occupation and the right of equal work"

- labour lobbies: industrial reconstruction
- women support industrial unionism because inclusive; problem of master contracts should be explained
- internal strife: raids and fights with the CCL were not prior for women

- shipyard joke: "Chargehand to lady boiler-up: "Now put the nut on the other way, In the shipyard we have to put them on the wrong way. Lady boiler-up: "Oh smart guy eh? Think I'm dumb? I'll put them on the right way-same as I did on the other two plates, Beat it before I crown you;"

vs harassment

- equal pay difficult in shops, Boeings, aircraft: women entered at 40¢/hour not at minimum of \$12.75/week, women got COLA after 3 months women involved in plant committees

read some of text

LABOUR STUDIES PROGRAMME

EVALUATION OF THE INSTRUCTOR

This evaluation will assist the instructor and the Labour Studies Programme in assessing the teaching performance demonstrated in this course. Please complete the blanks on the left side and make comments in the space provided. Thank you for your assistance.

Comments:

<p>The course was well organized.</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	
<p>Course materials and resources were useful and contributed to my learning.</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	
<p>Questions and comments were encouraged.</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	
<p>Explanations were clear and effective.</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	
<p>The instructor had a good knowledge of the subject matter.</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	
<p>Students were treated with respect.</p> <p>Yes _____ No _____</p>	
<p>Other comments:</p>	

would need intro

(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) educated, often with no previous work record, tall enough to reach the switchboard and in good health. ^{able to work under extreme discipline} Their training required memorizing 9600 phone facts, ^{linked with 225000 customers} This group moved out of the workplace rapidly, taking their places in the ranks of married ♀. ^{so that they could wear heavy handpieces}

* 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.

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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 lined up with 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 thw work, introducing intensive monitering and supervtision, 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 exper nce with trade union and certainly with the in tancy of the previous ~~the~~ 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 ad experiencing constant harrassm,ent. Apparently there was discussion of "whipping the operators into shape" and of the ~~the~~ strategic importatnce of the wo,em being unionized. In any case, ~~the~~ with the azzistance of the IBEW Local the auxiliary was reshaped. The existence of seperate locals became a problem as the union movem into its secon strike. Men wre 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 courtes , lounges and a smily ideology" rather than ~~the~~ the right to a union. Operators were forced to sign an agreement stating that they would not join a ~~union~~ ^{union} or be fired , This so enraged the women that they went to the men's local for assostance. 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 th basis of a closed shop and joint bargaining unit.

There are two interprestations of the ensung strike. ^{developed} ~~One~~ by Marie Campbell, argues that the male unionists failed to support the women and crossed the picket lines, leacing 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 noth groups of workers and hat they underestimated the campany opposition to their strike and the length of time that it would take to win the dispute this time. ^{The initial economic power of} ~~is this~~ ^{the operators had diminished with the des filling of new jobs.} ~~is~~ ^{these} poor tactics ~~indeed failed~~ the women, but tactics in part deriving from tradition

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al practices of craft organization and ^{sexist} attitudes ^{which saw women's work's 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 ~~up~~ 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

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 formations 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 ^{Unfortunately,} undermining their wages. The logic of exclusion, rather than ^{to white} organization may have appealed ~~_____~~ as strongly to white women as male workers when their jobs were threatened. Anti-orientalism was also espoused ~~in~~ 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 ~~_____~~ man would be more likely to ~~_____~~ assist in organizing when they shared a trade directly + feared competition + undercutting.

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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 ~~the~~ 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, ^{from one hand} ~~from 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 expound 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.} The 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.

^{Both union's movement were learning the importance of a "home market"} 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. ^{and that it cost a single woman as much to live as a single man.}

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 great 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~~ at ~~times~~ times fell. When ~~they~~ they rose they did so far behind the rate of inflations.

In _____, the ~~Council~~ Council of Women in Vanouuver, themselves often emp loyers of domesticvs 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 drescode and maintain excellent health. The Council dropped this estaimate to five dollars per week as a submis sion to the Minimum Wage Board. Most women, in fact, ~~earned~~ 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}

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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 the domestic market. While women's job opportunities grew, the rationalization, and deskilling ~~of~~ of women's jobs also increased.

The commonly held belief that women's 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 majority of Canadian workers did continue to earn

