

# EARLY PERIOD

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 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~~ networks served hinterland industrial regions.

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

Footnote  
● 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>"professionals"</sup> ~~such as~~ such as nursing, teaching, and stenography.

2

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 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 <sup>were</sup> 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 ~~other~~ 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 <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.

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 ~~the~~ 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.

1

3

3



2a

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.

The domestic sector was particularly vulnerable to

recession, because ♀, thrown out of other service occupations

As well, agencies such as The Salvation Army brought in <sup>women to work in domestic service</sup> ~~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



4

Even in this early period B.C. union tended to be regional, rather than national, in ~~the~~ <sup>both</sup> 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, 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 <sup>had</sup> 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, ~~few~~ few women worked in industries which these unions organized in British Columbia. <sup>(An exception to this was the Washresses + Ladies Cooks Local of the Waiters + Cooks Union, established in 1898.)</sup> <sup>move to footnote</sup>  
~~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~~ 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 apprenticeship programmes, while women faced a continual battle against high turnover in their sectors and employers' insistence on strict management rights.

5  
10

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

In 1891 ~~the~~ Joint(?) Tailors Union of America incorporated <sup>women</sup> 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 ~~sub~~ 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. <sup>(Its members</sup> ~~It~~ 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 ~~sub~~ members.

not in Canada?

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 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 ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Knights ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, 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 <sup>industrial</sup> labour force.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ To the Knights, women were peers, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ deserving of equal pay, could hold union positions, <sup>of</sup> deserved social and political recognition, and suffrage. While men in the Knights often held traditional ideas about women, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 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 social gatherings. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Whatever weaknesses there were in the Knights attitudes to women, it was clear that they were respected, assisted <sup>Palmer</sup> by some, seen as "the best men that we have." Bryan Palmer points out, however, that women were ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 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.



In the Trades and Labour Congress of ~~Canada~~ 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, <sup>delegate</sup> One ~~member~~ 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.

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*

④

~~promoting~~

This group has been identified as historically keen on union organization because they have a 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 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 distributin effected women's careers, 1920s. Women who lived outside of urban areas were often married. Both attitudes ~~the weight of~~ of domestic work, 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 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.

because so many young women lived at home and contributed to the family income, fathers saw higher wages for girls as being in 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) ~~women~~ the fear was that women would become prostitutes if poorly paid, not through willingness but to feed and clothe themselves and ~~their~~ their families. On one hand, this was a progressive perspective when placed 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 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. Adjuncted to the demand for higher 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~~ 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.

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 ~~be~~ raise protective legislation as a ~~major~~ 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~~ of female factory inspectors. The unions; <sup>fight</sup> ~~was~~ ~~was~~ 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 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 <sup>again</sup> 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. <sup>The calling up of "women's secrets" was an effective way to quash debate.</sup> The result of inspection would serve 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. <sup>which</sup> ~~the~~ TLCC considered <sup>mistake</sup> ~~mistake~~ 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.

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!)



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 [redacted] important pressure for suffrage. It was also a time of great pressure for moral reform. [redacted] Anti-Oriental campaigns [redacted] mounted [redacted] 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 [redacted] drink [redacted] 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 [redacted] negotiations orientated job-based (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 [redacted] conflicted [redacted] with a growing socialist trend within the unions. Rather than believing that [redacted] drink created poverty the left thought that it was poverty that created <sup>despair and</sup> the need for alcohol, as well as despair; workers were [redacted] educated to depression and hopelessness, enforced by bad laws, poverty, and a lack of [redacted] 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 <sup>work</sup> [redacted] and family. Such debates escalated through the early years of the 20th century as Vancouver was rife with intense anti-<sup>Orientalism,</sup> [redacted], a belief that the Chinese community was importing devices such as prostitution, male prostitution, gambling, [redacted] 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.

14

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

[redacted]

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. [redacted]

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

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.

[redacted] The problem with this first alliance was that labour did not define the 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 10.

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, <sup>what's her name</sup> 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.



Women in Unions in B.C. 11.

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 standards. Legislation could create an easier climate in which to organize, but it was the organization which was critical.

As Star Rosenthal suggests,

Women's organization cut across all of the currents within 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.

A number of factors dominated this period. The unions were confused in their orientation to women's unionism: some chose paternalism or exclusion, others genuinely supported women workers. Men controlled much of the access which women had to unions:

Traditional ideas of women's place and <sup>lack of</sup> organizational competency were strong; <sup>hence</sup> women deferred to male expertise 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 <sup>only</sup> worked when young and single, thus unions required constant

rebuilding

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. [REDACTED] Helena Gutteridge, who was a very active woman unionists, [REDACTED] 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 policynon "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 organizationn 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, ~~men~~ 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~~ 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, 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, ~~it~~ also embraced the popular B.C. notion of cooperatives, 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<sup>ic</sup>) 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 in which deskilled jobs were defined as suitable for women's work." Phillips ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ *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 ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 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, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ <sup>fragmented</sup>, 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.

34

Women in B.C. Unions 19.

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 <sup>periods</sup> ~~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 saty out until they won, as evidence by both the telephone workers and laundry workers' strikes. When women did organized 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,~~ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 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