

OFL Women's Conference — A good beginning

By FRANCES SCOVIL

The OFL women's conference, held in Toronto April 20-22, was a big success. Two hundred women were expected. Over three hundred women attended from a good cross-section of unions. The atmosphere was friendly and there was much useful information exchanged and tactics were discussed.

On Friday evening, Mary Eady of the CLC's women's bureau spoke. Saturday was a full day of workshops covering bargaining tactics for women to win equal benefits and equal pay; major issues that affect women including sexual harassment, cutbacks, layoffs and automation; and the need to organize. It was evident from the workshop that I attended in the morning, "The Impact of Cutbacks in Social Programs", that women are the ones who bear the brunt of the economic crisis we are in. Barbara Neyedly of OPSEU pointed out in her talk that women's low paying jobs disappear first in layoffs and attrition and that they are the ones most easily replaced with computers.

At lunch time Ed Broadbent, leader of the NDP, gave a short

address on the NDP's role in the fight to give women equality in the workplace. Following his talk, the delegates were entertained by the cabaret, "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl". In the evening the excellent film, "With Babies and Banners", was shown.

Sunday morning the delegates broke up into workshops on "Working for Equality in Your Union". These workshops built on the panel discussion of the same subject given by Julie Griffin of CUPE, Edith Welch of the UAW and Deirdre Gallagher of USW on Saturday afternoon. There was much useful discussion on the need for women to organize pressure on the labour leadership around women's issues. Such pressure should not be only at conventions, but also

afterwards to make sure the leadership act on the policies adopted which affect women. How to build women's committees in our own locals was also a large part of the discussion.

At the plenary, the reports from the workshops were read out. The recommendations in the reports were unanimously approved by a show of hands by the delegates. These recommendations will be forwarded to the OFL Women's Committee. As this was not a policy making conference, it is important for delegates to get resolutions passed at their locals to go to the annual OFL convention. The conference did unanimously pass one emergency resolution — to send a telegram from the conference demanding the acquittal of Jean-

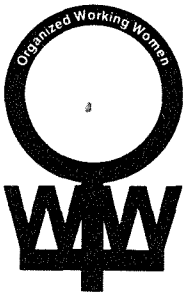


Claude Parrot, president of CUPW.

There has been a promise by the OFL Women's Committee to have a second women's conference next year. This first conference has shown how much

women feel the need for such a forum. It can only be hoped that we will build from here and develop as a strong and vital force within the union movement.

Frances Scovil is a member of CUPE 1230.



UNION WOMAN

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MAY 1979

Spirited strike against Lancia- Bravo

By NAOMI WALL

Since March 19, 1979 260 workers of Local P 530, of the Canadian Food and Allied Workers, have been on strike at Lancia-Bravo Foods, a division of the U.S. multinational corporation, General Mills. The plant is located in the west end of Toronto.

One half of the strikers are women. Nearly all of the striking workers are immigrants to Canada, from Portugal and Italy. They are maintaining a 24-hour picket line. The women are on the line by 6 a.m., or earlier, in considerable numbers. Seventy to eighty women arrive each morning.

On two consecutive strike days, the company hired convoys of tractor trailers driven by masked scabs: 10 trailers on the first day, and 8 on the second day. Their aim was to move stock, which had been produced before the strike began, out of the warehouse. The police forced the entry of the trailers through the picket line and three striking women were taken to hospital as a result of these incidents.

The central issues in the strike are union security, wages, and benefits. The plant was organized in 1976 at the time of the federal government's AIB offensive. A bitter certification battle was fought by the union and after three consecutive one-year agreements, the union security issue is still not resolved. The union members at Lancia-Bravo are insistent on their right to union security and continue to demand the union membership of those

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City Hall not a model employer

By BONNIE ALTER

As part of the fall-out from International Women's Year and the Mayor's Task Force on the Status of women, Toronto City Council adopted an Equal Opportunities Programme for all City Hall employees (affirmative action to us). The 1978 Annual Reports on the progress of this programme in every department of City Hall are now in and the results are as predictable and depressing as one could have imagined.

In the clerical area: "men are in a diversified range of functions which lead to a wide range of

specialist functions" whereas 80% of the women are stuck in stenographic/typing positions. In the technical/professional area: "on the whole, women are not as diversified" — all of them are concentrated in lower end of the salary ranges, 50% are in Public Health. In the manual/trades area: there are 1917 men and 41 women (20 of whom are cleaners). These manual jobs generally require less education and skills and offer higher salary ranges.

A cursory look at the various departments of City Hall reveals the extent of the job ghettos. Even within clerical levels,

women are at the lowest salary levels. In the Fire Department 100% of women are stenos, 100% of men are in stores control, accounts and supervisory positions. In the Legal department 100% women are stenos, while 100% junior clericals, from which senior positions will be chosen, are male. In the Property department women are hired only as cleaners in the lowest salary range, despite the wide range of jobs in this department.

It is not enough to stress the need for applicants to take courses. The most popular course offered (50% of all women

participants took it) was "Telephone Communications Seminar" followed by "Career Awareness" and "Transactional Analysis". Men took "Effective Supervision" (20% of men).

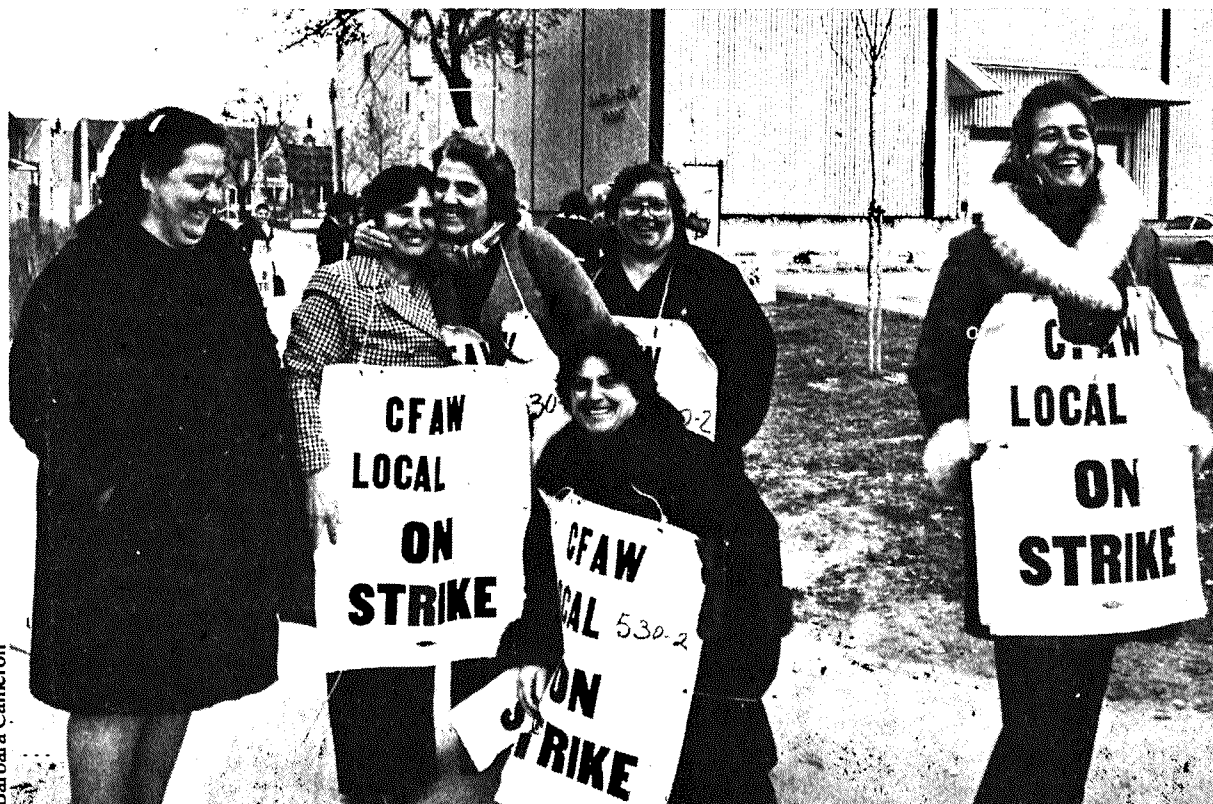
Attitudinal changes are crucial. For women — in considering non-traditional job opportunities and for management. To quote the City Solicitor: "In my view one of the obstacles preventing females from entering the clerical field is just fear of losing skills that have taken them a considerable time to acquire i.e. shorthand and typing". The Commissioner of Public Work: "It is not expected that women will be attracted to these occupations in great numbers because the work is generally heavy and/or dirty". (This category includes jobs of watchman, parking meter collector and other such jobs which are neither heavy or dirty).

Both Alderman Pat Shepherd and the CUPE 79 Status of Women Committee have responded to the Annual Report. Alderman Sheppherd suggests that the mandate of the programme is insufficiently aggressive. As well, there are only 1 1/2 staff positions allocated to it.

The representatives from each department are all management appointees; 75% are male. These representatives should all be elected from among the bargaining unit. Extra funds for educational training should be allocated for women, specifically. Courses should be offered during work time.

Some departments will have many senior positions open

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Spirits are high on the Lancia-Bravo picket line after seven weeks on strike. The most recent company offer was rejected by a higher percentage of workers than originally voted to strike.

UNION WOMAN

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Barbara Cameron

Two thousand people hit the streets on International Women's Day, 1979, in support of "Jobs and Rights for Women".

ELECTION '79

According to the OWW Constitution, Union Woman cannot endorse any political party. Shelley Acheson, President of OWW, gives her comments on the upcoming election.

Here we are in the midst of another election and you would think that in the minds of the two major parties 51% of the population did not exist. And in fact, this 51% are those whose unemployment rate is the highest, who have been most severely affected by cuts in welfare, day care and other social services, who work in the lowest paying jobs and who have the most to gain by voting in a party which will respond to these problems. Clearly the Liberal and Conservative governments do not feel that votes lie in this direction. It is up to us — working women and men — to prove them correct in this assumption.

It has even reached the hallowed pages of the "Toronto Star" that "Broadbent is the only party leader so far to directly seek women's votes". This is an unprecedented event in the history of recent elections. There was something thrilling — a sense of

accomplishment, perhaps — in listening to the NDP leader speak at the recent OFL Women's Conference. He spoke with sincerity and with ease about the issues that on bleak days we feel will never be uttered by any political leader: equal pay for work of equal value, maternity leave with pay, federal funding for day care centres, an end to the cuts in training allowances, to name some.

There was a feeling of accomplishment because without women having fought and struggled and struck and lobbied, there is little doubt that these issues ever would have been brought to the fore in this election campaign. However, being sure that our cause is just and our concerns of critical importance, does not necessarily ensure they will be taken up in the public arena. For this we can be thankful there is a party which is considered labour's party. It will be interesting to see if the other parties will be forced to speak out on women's issues as a result of the NDP's initiative. If they do, it is easy enough to recognize the devil out to tempt us.

These past ten years of Liberal rule have been ones of economic crisis and erosion of civil liberties. None of us from Tory Ontario, where women's services and organizations have been cut back to nonexistence, can expect any better from the Tories in Ottawa. "Fellow equal members of the human race", let's stand behind a party that has the decency to use that phrase and the programme to make it a reality. *Shelley Acheson is President of OWW.*

More women in the trades!

By BARBARA CAMERON

In his April 10, 1979 Budget Speech, Ontario Treasurer Frank Miller announced a \$200 million Employment Development Fund to encourage private industry to train skilled workers. How much of this money will go toward training women? Not very much.

Women in Canada make up just under 5% of all skilled workers. This situation has remained virtually unchanged for the past two decades. Right now in Ontario, there are only two women apprenticing in Tool and Die making, two in general carpentry, three in auto body repair and one as a machine fitter.

According to Sybil Pulsford of the Industrial Training Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the problem is not that women are refused entrance to skilled training but that they are not encouraged early enough to consider this kind of career. By the time a woman realizes the advantages of having a trade, she is often in a life situation which makes acquiring the training almost impossible.

To enter an apprenticeship programme, a woman first has to find an employer willing to hire her. Then she can register as an apprentice with the Ontario government. Because there is no preliminary training programme, the employer makes the decision about her ability to learn the trade. Women are obviously at a disadvantage trying to get into trades traditionally done by men.

Until last September, the Ontario government's Industrial Training Branch only had one woman counsellor. She was responsible for hairdressing. Since then, Mrs. Pulsford has suc-

ceeded in getting two woman counsellors appointed by having the rules relaxed which made previous experience in a trade the condition for the counselling position.

In government assisted training programmes, employers are paid a certain percentage of the trainee's wages as an incentive to provide on-the-job training. With the federal government's Canada Manpower Industrial Training Programme 85% of the wages may be paid if the person comes from a "socially disadvantaged" background. Women, including sole support mothers, are not considered "socially disadvantaged".

A few years ago the federal government sponsored a Youth Apprenticeship Programme to try and encourage employers to provide skills training for young people. Mrs. Pulsford did not know of any programme which provides financial incentives to employers for providing training as skilled workers for women. The attitude seems to be that treating women as equals means that no special programmes should be provided.

A major problem faced by women in apprenticeship programmes is their isolation as "token-women" in male-dominated occupations. Apprentices and community college instructors in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg have set up groups calling themselves "Women in the Trades". These organizations offer mutual support and serve as pressure groups to gain more opportunity for training and work for women in the skilled trades.

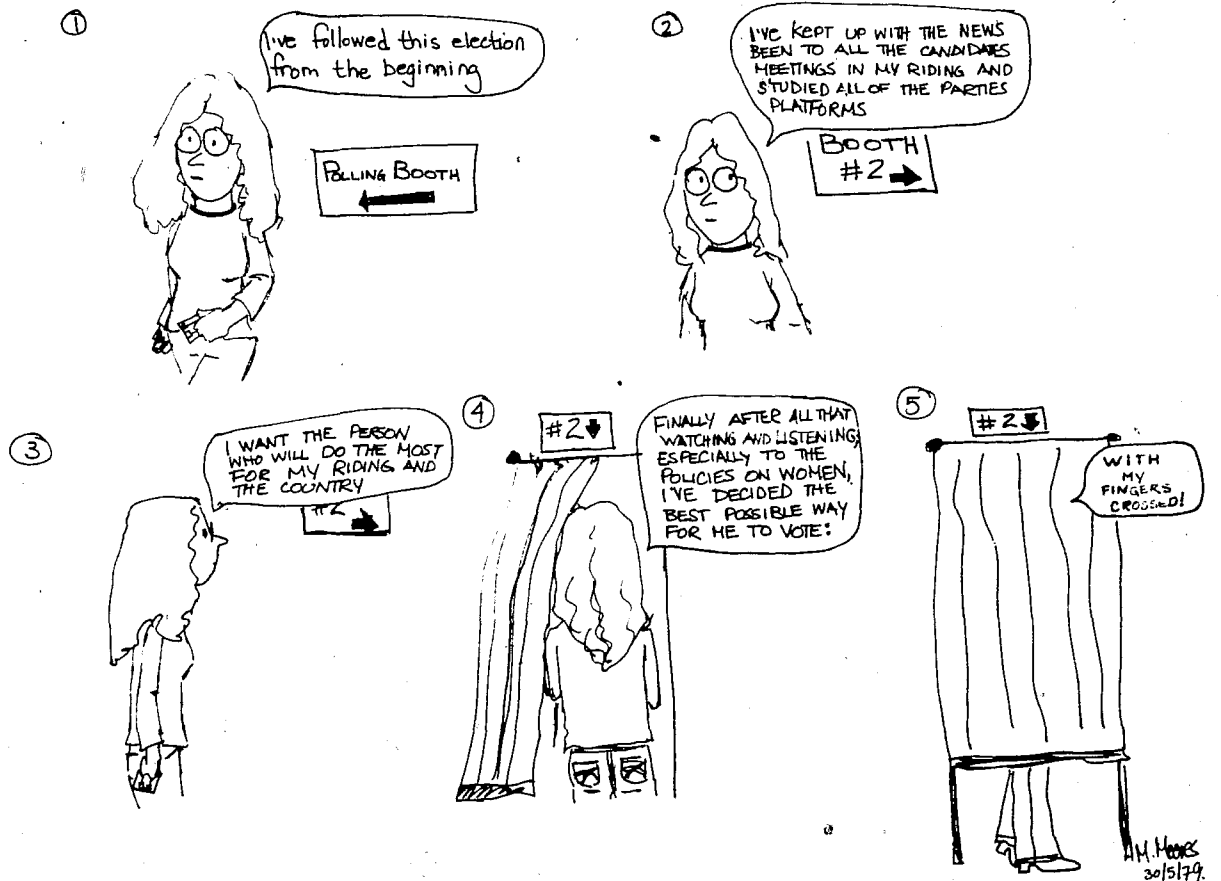
Barbara Cameron is Secretary of OWW and a member of GAA Local 2.

Women teachers and public servants laid off first

Layoffs of public service employees are occurring at a faster rate among women than men, according to the Public Service Commission. Of those in scientific and professional jobs, 339 women, more than half the number of men, have been laid off although women only make up 34 per cent of workers in this field. No women have been laid off in the executive category, says the commission. This category is 100 per cent men.

The Canadian Teachers' Fed-

eration has discovered that women teachers are laid off at a higher rate than men. From 1972-73 to 1976-77 there were 1,562 fewer women and 1,261 more men teaching in elementary schools in Ontario.



Handbook for the harassed

By MARGARET SMITH

Margaret Smith of CUPE 2189 interviewed Leah Cohen who co-authored with Constance Backhouse *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women*. Toronto, Macmillan, 1978

Q: What is sexual harassment?

A: Sexual harassment is any repeated and unwanted sexual comments, looks, suggestions or physical contact that you find objectionable or offensive and causes you discomfort on the job.

Q: Why did you write the book?

A: No matter what issue of concern to working women we researched and wrote about, sexual harassment was always an underlying problem. 70% to 88% of women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment on the job. Others had experienced it but didn't have a name for it.

Everyday women are forced to resign or submit to unwanted verbal abuse and physical contact. Many are laid-off if they refuse, others are laid-off or fired when they report it to supervisors. It's usually impossible to get a work reference if you complain or quit because of sexual harassment.

Q: What is the effect of sexual harassment?

A: As I've said, it threatens our psyche. In addition it undermines our health and our self-image. Tension, fear, anxiety build up and

most victims experience psychological depression and despair. Many develop ailments such as stomach aches, nausea, insomnia and hypertension.

Q: Is sexual harassment only work-related?

A: No, but its effects are most serious in the workplace. Unless a woman is unionized, has a Sexual Harassment Protection clause in her contract and an active grievance committee, she has little relief as a sexual harassment victim. In this society a woman can be harassed almost anywhere: on the street, at social gatherings for example. At these times, she cannot stop the harasser on her own but she does have a final recourse: she can leave the party; she can stay off the streets. This recourse is not a solution, it is avoidance and we should be angry at how it limits our choice of activity. It does however, bring relief. At work, a woman has no recourse. To keep her job she must go to the workplace where she is accessible to the harasser. Sexual harassment is the ultimate reminder to women that their fundamental status in society is that of sex object, and that they hold their positions in the workplace only on male sufferance.

Q: Who are the sexual harassers?

A: Bosses, supervisors, co-workers, clients and customers can all be perpetrators of sexual harassment. Male perpetrators of sexual harassment cannot be defined as psychologically disturbed, perverted, or even

immature. They could be any man.

Q: Are all men sexual harassers?

A: No. There are men who never indulge in sexual harassment because of religious beliefs, ethical standards, a personal code of morality or because of their commitment to women's personal as well as economic equality. There aren't many men like this, we need more of them.

Q: How can we change men and stop sexual harassment?

A: I don't think we change men, they have to change themselves, but we can pressure for change. Right now sexual harassment is "acceptable" male behaviour. They won't change until it becomes "unacceptable" behaviour. Our research shows that if a man has a record as a sexual harasser it will not prevent his promotion on the job, it will not prevent his election to a union position.

Society gives men the right to be sexual initiators and the right to dominate, but if women initiate sexually, we are still often defined as "forward", "loose" or "desperate". It's hard to speak out when we've been taught that it's our fault; our first reaction is often guilt but it should be anger. We have to build on what we learned from organizing around other kinds of violence against women such as rape.



Leah Cohen conducted workshops on sexual harassment at the recent OFL Women's Conference.

Q: How do we begin?

A: The most important thing is to do it collectively. At the moment managements, unions, the state, and the law do not consider sexual harassment a serious problem. In the workplace the best thing to do is to unionize and make sexual harassment number one in the clauses relating to intimidation and working conditions. In the U.S. there is now the "California

Legal Workers Union" and the issue of sexual harassment was one of the major organizing issues and the reason for the success of the drive.

Q: Is your book practical?

A: Yes, we wrote for women who want to do something about the problem. We have lists of tips to help women in the labour movement as well as for women who work in non-union workplaces.

Vital statistics

That great Canadian Tradition — the federal election — is once more upon us. This time round the campaign seems to be particularly noteworthy for its lack of discussion of any of the important issues affecting this country. Trudeau won't talk about the RCMP and its powers, Clark won't talk to Broadbent and Margaret is busy discussing her love life with the entire nation. And for sure, no one is talking about women's issues. Of the 3 major parties in Ontario, there are 32 women candidates (13 NDP, 11 PC, 8 Liberal — in 95 ridings) which goes to show it's still a man's game.

In fact, there are a number of very serious economic questions of vital concern to women which should be raised during this campaign.

Women are being systematically forced out of the workplace and into poverty. U.I.C. changes have eliminated compensation for part-time workers, Manpower re-training allowances have been reduced and women are no longer considered a target group for employment strategies. 61% of all working women are single, divorced, separated or married to husbands who make less than \$10,000 a year. And yet Family Allowances have been cut, as has CMHC financing for low cost housing. For every dollar a man

earns, a woman earns 44¢ and the wage gap is broadening yearly.

The Women's Committee of the NDP Ontario is making an attempt to reach women voters. They have devised a leaflet which will be distributed, along with the regular canvassing material, in 5 selected ridings across Ontario. (In Toronto it is Spadina riding). The ridings are ones which have a mainly anglo-saxon and working population of women. The leaflet sets forth NDP policies on women's issues (ex. affirmative action, paid maternity leave, equal pay) and lists some rather shocking "vital statistics". For example: 75% of all husbands default on court order child support, 42% of mothers with children under the age of 6 are working and 75% of all women over 65 live below the poverty line.

This is a pilot project aimed at a very limited and somewhat "select" audience and it is difficult to know how much effect it will have on influencing women's votes.

This election will come and go and probably not change our daily lives very much. But if women are going to make changes it is important to understand who is going to support our interests and to work collectively to force candidates to be responsive to our concerns or else lose.

Commentary

Commentary is a forum for debate and discussion on issues of interest to trade union women. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Organized Working Women.

CUTBACKS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

A continuing discussion

By HOLLY KIRKCONNELL

There is a belief currently circulating that the cutbacks in social services are part of a conscious effort to force women out of the labour market and into the home in this period of high unemployment. I think this analysis is incorrect.

I would argue that the cutbacks are taking place *not* specifically to get women out of the workforce, but rather because the social service sectors are considered "frills" in our economy and are therefore the first to be affected in times of economic crisis.

It is true that large numbers of women work in these sectors and are therefore being hit particularly hard by these cuts. There are historic reasons for this.

When you look at the participation rates of women in the labour force over this century, several things became apparent. First, there has been a more or less steady increase in the participation rate of women generally from 1900 to present. Secondly, World War II was a watershed for the labour force participation of married women and women with children. In fact, the bulk of the increases since World War II can be attributed to increasing numbers of married women and women with children entering or re-entering the labour market.

It must be pointed out here that the belief that women were pushed back into the home after World War II is not entirely correct. While we may have been pushed out of certain industries, the rapid expansion of the white collar and service sectors in the post-World War II period provided employment for growing numbers of women.

Much of the demand in these areas was for female-specific labour — for skills which women

had already acquired and which therefore reduced or eliminated the cost to employers of on-the-job training. It is into these jobs that we went and have remained, competing with each other for employment.

With a national participation rate of almost 50%, women now make up over 40% of the total Canadian labour force. However, we are still heavily concentrated in the clerical, sales and service occupations.

The cutbacks are affecting women both as workers in the service sectors and as consumers of these services. Our role in the reproductive process and in the home has always been the source of our vulnerability in the productive labour force. The services which are currently being eroded are those which comprise the support systems so essential to our participation in the workforce (eg: childcare services).

The effect of this erosion, I suspect, will *not* be to cause women to leave the labour force. What will happen is that the "double burden" will become a triple burden and the lives of working women will become that much more stressful.

These very social services and social benefits are ones which have been won by the strength of working people in the past. All trade unionists must be aware of and concerned with this erosion of our "social wage".

We must fight to retain our past gains and continue to press for a further expansion and improvement of the services we need. We must at the same time ensure that women have access to skills training so that we are able to enter other occupational groups and participate fully in the labour force.

Holly Kirkconnell is a member of OPEIU 343.

City Hall report

Continued from page 1 through retirement in the next few years. Such areas should be target positions for women. Very often it is difficult to bridge the gap between levels of jobs without more experience. There is a need for training/bridging jobs. Outside recruitment of women is not a solution — this discriminates against inside employees

who are still unable to move out of the "ghetto".

Several City officials were publicly angered by the Alderman's response. One said it was a "slur on secretarial staff" and "not their fault" that women did not apply.

Clearly, City Hall women still have a long way to go on this battle.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Norma Rae: Salt of the earth

By TINA CARTWRIGHT

Norma Rae is a movie about an organizing drive in a one industry textile town in the southern U.S., and it makes no bones about whose side it's on. The heroine, portrayed dynamically by Sally Field (the Flying Nun?) is the driving force in trying to get the mill organized. Her relationship with her husband and children is an aspect of the film which I found most interesting.

Many of us who are involved actively in the trade union movement know the problems that occur as a result of women asserting themselves at work and trying to fulfill the role at that they feel they should. The pressures that result, especially if there are children, can really mount up. It is the exploration of that aspect of the story which provides what I think is the most moving scene in a very exciting film.

But the film is of course about Norma Rae. She is a widowed mother of two — young, frustrated, and not getting a great deal of satisfaction out of her life. Both her parents work in the mill as well, with its deafening noise and everpresent dust that causes brown lung. Norma is just resigned to working there, coming home to her parents house,

struggling to bring up the kids, and occasionally being used sexually by one or another of the many men in her life. (She remarries later in the film).

It isn't until her mother goes deaf and the Company doctor cynically tells her not to worry about it, that she gets involved in the union. From that point she becomes more and more determined to win the rights for the workers at the mill — not to just be a commodity that gets used up and thrown away. At one point the union bureaucrats pay a visit to the full-time organizer in an attempt to discredit Norma by pointing out the gossip around her sexually activity.

The actual organizing effort is shown quite well, going from times of great enthusiasm as people start to air their frustrations, through to other times of real despondency and despair as a result of company tactics. Of course racism rears its ugly head, with no small amount of prompting from the Company.

And interwoven in all of this we get the picture of this wonderful, gutsy woman, who finally decides that she has had enough and is going to fight back. I think the expression is "salt of the earth".



Spirited Lancia-Bravo Strike

Continued from page 1

employees who benefit from the presence of the union in their plant.

The base wage rate for many of the women at Lancia-Bravo is \$4.16 per hour. These women pack pasta and work in the canning department. The average plant wage is \$4.81. The company

offer on the eve of the strike was 8% increase in the 1st year of a two-year contract, and 8% in the second year.

The workers are also negotiating for improved employee benefits, including vacation time, a dental plan, and sick pay. Of particular concern for women is the language of the agreement, which currently makes promotions available on departmental seniority rather than on overall plant seniority, which the workers have demanded.

The workers at Lancia-Bravo

Foods produce Lancia pasta and Bravo tomato products and canned vegetables for retail markets. The Canadian Food and Allied Workers striking Local P 530 has asked for support from other union locals in retail supermarkets. These supporters have been asked not to handle Lancia-Bravo products.

Negotiations have resumed in an attempt to find a basic settlement. Mr. Kenney stated, "Of course, we are hopeful that we can find a settlement. We'll maintain the line until we do."

You & the law

Part-time workers organize

By JEAN DIRKSEN

Discrimination against any worker or group of workers, organized or not, should be of prime concern to trade unionists. The present peripheral situation of part-time workers in Ontario is demanding of special consideration to OWW, as the majority of part-time workers are women.

The Ontario Labour Relations Board does not specifically define part-time work, nor does it articulate guidelines for policy regarding rights of part-time workers. Its practice is to consider part-time workers to be those who work regularly not more than 24 hours per week. In most cases, part-timers are certified in separate agreements from full-time workers, and are often linked with summer student employees in collective agreements.

The above practice serves to exploit and alienate part-timers, reinforcing their peripheral position in the labour market. Persons who accept work more than 24 hours a week are still included as part-timers, if they do not regularly work for more than 24 hours a week.

Part-timers can be moved into the full-time force at peak

periods without being reclassified as full-time workers, thus without receiving the rights and benefits of full-time workers. Certification into separate bargaining units for part-timers excludes them from all the rights, fringe benefits, permanence and tenure of employment of full-time workers. Their frequent connection to summer student employees in collective agreements denies their commitment to participation in the work force. As they are not required by legislation to provide more than a paltry minimum of wages, working conditions, and benefits to part-time workers, businesses normally use them as a cheap and available labour source.

Clearly, the need to organize part-time workers is imperative. Presently, unionized part-time workers are in a minority, and even those who are unionized are peripheral to the mainstream of the trade union movement. Barriers to unionization are considerable, as it is difficult to organize part-time workers, but also as existing Union dues structures for part-timer are unrealistically high in comparison to their average wages, and also in comparison to the service they get.

Nonetheless, if sufficient energy, dedication and commitment is applied to the task of unionization, part-timers will respond. CUPE Local 1996, representing Toronto Public Library workers, recently succeeded in organizing its part-time workers. These workers include students who work after school, regular part-timers, and those on relief staff. We have all agreed to be part of the same local and intend to negotiate with management to be part of the same bargaining unit.

As long as women remain charged with the major responsibility for child care and household management, it is important that part-time work be available to them. However, there is no justification to the present practice of treating them as secondary workers. Their commitment to the labour force, their productivity, is no less strong because of their preference and/or necessity to work part-time. Any worker, part-time or full-time, is entitled to acceptable wages and working conditions, and protection from exploitation of any kind.

Jean Dirksen — C.U.P.E. Local 1996

Join OWW!



Membership in OWW is open to all women in the Toronto area who are members of bona fide collective bargaining units or a bona fide organizing committee of a union. Membership is \$10.00 per year.

To join OWW, send in this application form with proof of union membership to the OWW office, address below.

Name

Address

..... Telephone

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