

PRIORITIES

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PERSPECTIVE

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**Women: victims of
unemployment, tech.
change, restraints**

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"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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EDITORIAL (1)

Strategies to fight back

Early this past summer, the federal NDP conducted a workshop in Vancouver on, among other topics, economic strategy. The reports and discussion illuminated a great deal of what this issue of *Priorities* reveals to be the situation of women in the present crisis of unemployment and cutbacks.

The 1981 Ottawa summit meeting of leaders of the so-called "Western Alliance" made important decisions to institute Reagonomics on a world scale. Their objective is to drastically change the distribution of wealth in favour of the banks and corporations—the "six and five solution."

Working people in Quebec and the other provinces have fought this process. Union struggles have shown, over and over again, that most workers are prepared to fight for their rights, including women's rights.

But the trade union movement and the movements of the various oppressed sectors of the population (including women) need greater unity in action, not only to defend themselves, but for socialist governments using socialist solutions against those who benefit from the "six and five."

We must renew our efforts to renew that coalition envisioned by the Canadian Labour Congress so that we are as united and determined to win as our enemies are united and determined to impoverish us through unemployment, high interest rates, and take-backs. ♀

EDITORIAL (2)

Where do we go from here?

The Women's Rights Committee held a workshop on September 26 to assess the work it has been doing and to develop new directions for its work after the November convention.

We have done a great deal of work refining policy for the provincial election and promoting feminist candidates. This included the Spring Conference, the meeting with women candidates in the summer, and work on the Election Planning Committee.

The Women's Rights Committee has sustained several committees, to produce and distribute *Priorities*, on abortion rights, child care, older women, technological change, pensions, family law. While these committees have done a great deal of very valuable work, some negative aspects resulted. Our activists were isolated in small groups and the job of coordinating all these activities was beyond our collective capacities.

The workshop decided that we must focus the energies of the Women's Rights Committee over a larger number of women. It was decided that we should hold monthly educational meetings on the model of the old Lower Mainland meetings. These educational events could include lectures, panels, films and benefits. Much of the work presently carried on by committees could be incorporated into these meetings. The meetings could also be used as a model for similar events organized by constituencies and regional women's rights committees.

The Committee on Technological Change would continue its mandate from the last convention. *Priorities* would use the direction of the educational meetings as the focus of its editorial content.

It was also decided to set up a Public Relations Committee to work on heightening public awareness of the NDP Women's Rights Committee.

These proposals will be the subject of discussion at the next meeting of the Steering Committee of the Women's Rights Committee, November 6, and we look forward to hearing the opinions of women from across the province. ♀

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT



Make women's rights election issues

by Shelley Rivkin

Over the past six months, election speculation has dominated much of the discussion and debate within the NDP. We, in the Women's Rights Committee, have not been immune to this activity. The women's conference, the meeting with women candidates, the reviewing and refining of policy have all incorporated the possibility of an imminent election.

There is a tendency during a pre-election or election period to get caught up in the details of charts and statistics and forget that it is party policy that we should be campaigning on and not snazzy slogans or fancy leaflets.

A lot of time and thought and hard work has gone into developing viable policy consistent with our feminist-socialist analysis. It is important that all of us who believe in, have worked on or fought for this policy ensure that they become election issues. We must encourage and assist candidates who actively campaign on women's rights policy. Whether it is on the doorstep or in the committee room, we must see that the election platform on women's issues is articulated and reinforced.

We know that women voters believe that the NDP is more interested in responding to their needs. We also know that if women voters perceive that their concerns won't be raised and dealt with, they will not come out and vote.

It is our obligation as feminists and socialists to see that this upcoming election not only does not forget the concerns of women but actively and sincerely campaigns on them. ♀

On the request of the Platform Committee of the B.C. NDP Election Planning Committee, the Women's Rights Committee submitted the following proposals for inclusion in the party's election platform.

The September 19 meeting of the Provincial Council passed a motion endorsing the inclusion of these positions in the election platform.

Economic equality for women included in B.C. election platform

Equality for women in the labour force has become one of the more important political issues for the eighties. As a result of the growing economic crisis, the significance of the issue cannot be over-estimated.

It is well documented that the current situation of high unemployment, inflation, cutbacks and wage restraints are inflicting an especially hard blow to women. Women comprise a large, permanent and growing force within the labour market (approximately 40%) yet 60% of Canada's poor are women, primarily older women and single parent mothers. Women experience a higher level of unemployment, and when working earn about 60% of male wage earners.

To achieve economic equality for women, an NDP government would:

- Initiate affirmative action programs

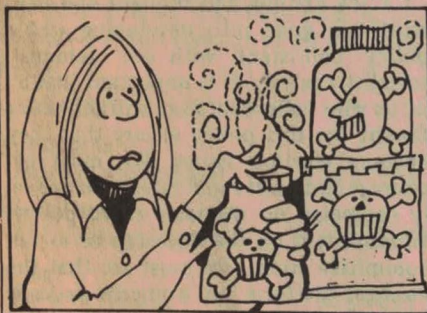
within the primary and secondary industry sectors to facilitate the entry of women into non-traditional jobs.

- Provide the necessary infrastructure within small and resource industry towns to ensure adequate child care and after school programs are available.
- Examine technological change programs initiated by both the private and public sector to ensure that deskilling and elimination of jobs do not occur.
- Review all recruitment procedures to ensure that non-discriminatory initiatives are being taken in the hiring process.
- Establish training programs for older women either re-entering or just entering the work force to enable them to learn or update work skills.
- Work with the trade union movement to support organizing drives in tradi-

tionally non-union "female" occupations.

- Revive and strengthen a Women's Economic Rights Branch to ensure that all economic development programs initiated by the government would consider the impact on women at the design, implementation and evaluation stages.
- Implement legislation to protect workers against sexual harassment, coercion and intimidation.
- Negotiate with the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission a greater number of training seats for vocational, technical and upgrading programs specifically targeted for women.
- Implement equal pay for work of equal value legislation that defines value in terms of economic reality rather than a market definition of value. ♀

Caution: Housework may be hazardous to your health



Reprinted from "Vegetarian Times," January 1982.

The few studies that have been done on occupational health problems associated with housework strongly suggest that housewives are at slightly greater risk for several types of cancer compared to those who work outside the home. In Oregon, a 15-year study of women aged 16-64, listed as housewives on their death certificates, died of breast cancer, ovary, colon, uterus and stomach cancer at a rate of 110.8 per 100,000, while women employed outside their

homes died of cancer at the lower rate of 51.1 per 100,000. Housewives topped the list for job-related cancer deaths for all occupations.

The obvious implication is that the average household must contain carcinogens to which the full-time housewife must be exposed more than her paid colleagues with jobs outside the home. Some of the carcinogens common in homes include benzene, naphthas, petroleum distillates, chromic acid,

chlorinated hydrocarbons, halides, and ammonium compounds present in cleaning products. Exposure to low-level radiation from TV sets and microwave ovens may also add to the problem. In some cases cigarette smoking, overeating, excessive indulgence in alcohol and lack of exercise all contribute, as well as to reduced resistance to disease. Dangers from indoor pollutants such as carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, radon gas, asbestos, ozone, cooking gases, and cigarette smoke become worse as ventilation rates are reduced in buildings to conserve energy.

Aside from throwing in the dish towel and going off to live on a raft, what can be done? It is suggested that housewives (and househusbands) switch to natural, non-toxic cleaning agents. Other tips: keep your home well ventilated, spend time outdoors, and don't ignore seemingly small and transient health problems such as occasional shortness of breath or skin rashes. ♀

Trouble in paradise: unemployment in the Kootenays

by Joanne Partridge

On the whole, life has been good to West Kootenay residents. The splendorous setting and rich abundance of natural resources have combined to provide a comfortable existence lit with bright prospects. For years the mining and smelting operations, the lumbering industry and the spin-off effect of their wealth has attracted people from not only across Canada, but from other countries as well. B.C. Department of Labour statistics for November 1981 showed the average weekly earnings of West Kootenay residents to have been \$618.56, almost \$200 a week more than the B.C. average of \$430.21.

As a young woman growing up in the Kootenays, I never fully realized just how wealthy this area was until I left it. In return visits I was struck by the abundance of expensive late model cars being driven by young people. I took more notice of the trappings of material wealth people surrounded themselves with: the costly homes, the recreation vehicles, the snowmobiles, the power boats, the latest stereo equipment. It seemed *everyone* owned both a car and a truck. Most young couples expected to be installed in their own homes or property relatively early in their married lives.

Cracked paradise

The recession is beginning to change all that. Cracks have appeared in the foundation of this paradise and the uncertain communities hover between denial and subconscious reaction.

The economy of the West Kootenays has suffered some serious setbacks, particularly due to the forest industry slump. The Cominco lead and zinc smelter at Trail, long a major backbone of the local economy, has reacted to poor metal prices and the expense of its own modernizations with substantial lay-offs. As a result, many other businesses have closed their doors.

The unemployment rate has more than doubled to 13.3% in July of this year over the July 1981 figure of 5.7%. The gravity of this situation prompted the Nelson, Trail and District Labour



Council to form an Unemployed Committee last March. The committee surveyed unions, government agencies, social services, community organizations and businesses and released a report of their findings last May.

At that time they found a total of 5,011 people on active U.I.C. claims. This figure does not take into account those collecting welfare or those not eligible for unemployment benefits but still seeking work. When the survey was done, local U.I.C. officials were estimating the local unemployment rate to be close to 25%. The Unemployment Committee's report detailed the human story behind these statistics with reports from local service groups. There was every indication that family violence, child abuse, and alcohol and drug related problems were on the rise.

How are women and children coping?

Knowing full well that women and children are the first to suffer in any societal upheaval, I took another look at how they were coping. Some very confusing facts started to roll in. Although official figures from the Ministry of Human Resources Regional office were not made available, sources from MHR said there was *no* significant increase in child abuse, child apprehensions or violent domestic crises. One MHR worker said welfare applications were up

12% over the same period last year, but considering the number of unemployed sawmill workers who are seeing their U.I.C. run out this summer, that figure is hardly surprising.

Another MHR worker said he was expecting a "flood of applications" in August for the same reason, but as yet the "flood" is merely a trickle.

At the Nelson Canada Employment Centre, the figures for their area show women are consistently representing approximately 25% of the U.I.C. rolls. The provincial unemployment rate for July 1982 shows 13.8% of the male work force unemployed and 12.5% of females unemployed. As the provincial male and female unemployment rates are almost equal, it would seem on the surface that local women are doing well. They even comprise 50-60% of recent job placements at the Nelson office.

Sounds good? Not really. Most of these jobs are in the service industry with an average wage of no more than \$5.00 an hour. The West Kootenays is a highly unionized area, and lay-offs take place along seniority lines. Those few women who have managed to break into the higher paying industrial jobs are among the first to be laid off, along with the younger males. The Kootenay Forest Products Plywood Mill, traditionally one of the few places where women were welcomed to earn a decent wage, has shut its doors completely, with little chance of re-opening.

Although no firm statistics are available, it appears more and more married women are going out to work when their husbands' fat paycheques dwindle to the pittance provided by U.I.C. For added income there are all those luxury items or the extra car or truck to be sold. It's a buyer's market right now for second-hand goods.

Crunch will come this winter

The true effect of these stop-gap measures remains to be seen. In an area of high expectations and fairly traditional values, one wonders how long families will bear up under the strain.

It is not surprising that MHR has not received the expected flood of applications for welfare. People will endure a lot before taking the demeaning step of applying for welfare. At this time of year there is plenty of garden produce and no worries about fuel bills. People endured the Cominco smelter shutdown for five weeks this summer by emigrating en masse to the various lakes and vacation spots. The *Trail Daily Times* even did a humorous article about a "man-on-the-street" interview that ended up on the shores of Christina Lake because there was no one on the streets of Trail to talk to.

While the weather is nice and all your friends are unemployed, it's easy to be philosophical about hard times. But what will happen when foul weather confines families, those fuel bills start rolling in and men begin to increasingly resent having their wives out working at some crummy job?

An indication of what could be coming is seen in some quarters, and it is found in the increasing tendency towards drug and alcohol abuse. Gail Schell, a local musician who has played in bars all across the province, has noticed changes in people's drinking habits over the past year. "People are drinking more—the cheap stuff, draught beer. The men seem to be getting more abusive towards the musicians. And there is a lot of partying going on."

Two older Alcoholics Anonymous members commented on the increasing numbers of people showing up at their meetings. They were particularly surprised to see so many younger people coming in.

ACCESS, a drug and alcohol abuse counselling agency in Nelson, has seen an ever-increasing number of referrals to them over the past ten months. Rosy Thomas of ACCESS noted, "Traditionally it is slow in the summer months; this year and last that is not the case." The ACCESS staff also noted that wife beating is increasing.

More battered women

The *Women in Need Society*, which operates a crisis line and a shelter for battered women for the Trail area also sees things differently from MHR. Although they had only ten crisis calls in August 1981, this year there have been twenty-four calls in August, including three calls from men. June was a busy month with 29 calls, but during the Cominco five-week shutdown they received only eleven calls. They noted more of the crisis calls are directly related to unemployment and alcohol abuse.

Even though the picture of an increase in drug and alcohol abuse and

family violence as noted by these social service organizations is seen at variance with what MHR has noticed, these facts must be viewed in the context of the previously high standards of living enjoyed by most people. People are suffering anonymously, trying to maintain outward appearances.

Women realising their dependence

Women are becoming increasingly aware of the fragility of their economic dependence. Vita Storey, co-ordinator of Selkirk College's Women's Access Program, sees a difference in the kinds of concerns women are bringing to her

as compared to three years ago. "More women are looking ahead and planning. There is less interest in the arts and general interest courses; the prime focus is on economic independence and job security."

Despite the increasing awareness in job training and security, the local employment prospects do not look any brighter currently, either for men or women. It is easy to see why one social service worker is expecting the situation to exact a heavy toll on the women and children. In her words, "I think a lot of people are not going to have a very merry Christmas." ♀

BCGEU settlement contains advances for women

by Leslie Dixon

The new tentative agreement reached on September 20 between the provincial government and the B.C. Government Employees Union has turned out to include some very good plans for the many women in the union and in other unions across Canada. At a time when most of us had given up hope that anything could be achieved, and many had grave doubts about whether we would be able to survive the dispute without losing ground, we have actually made gains in the area of women's rights.

Sexual harassment clause

The section on Sexual Harassment was discussed early in the dispute, when the employers were willing to discuss items other than money, perhaps in the hope that the union would be satisfied with non-monetary concessions. The agreement recognizes the right of all employees to work in a climate free from such harassment and places the onus on the employer to take action on all properly filed complaints.

Sexual Harassment is defined as a course of vexatious comment or conduct of a sexual nature that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome. The definition includes both solicitation and reprisal if the solicitation is rejected. The employee who wishes to complain must submit a complaint in writing within 30 days to the union representative. The complaint will go directly to the deputy minister, who

must call a hearing of those concerned to investigate the complaint, in confidence.

After the hearing, a report shall be made to the deputy minister by the ministry designate and the union representative. After the reports are received, the deputy minister has thirty days to resolve the problem. If a satisfactory resolution is not found, either party can take the dispute before a union/employer panel whose decision shall be binding.

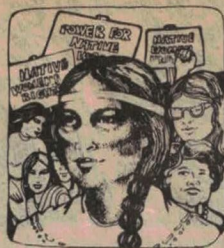
The process outlined seems to provide for quiet and speedy action, with all parties well represented. There is also an agreement that if an employee is to be transferred it shall be the harassor, rather than the harassed employee, unless the person suffering harassment agrees to leave.

Video Display Terminals

The negotiators also worked out agreement on working conditions for the many people, mostly women, who operate Video Display Terminals. These workers will be given, at the expense of the employer, ophthalmological examinations before they begin work on the VDT's. They will get a second eye test after six months and, subsequently, will receive annual tests. All expenses incurred in the testing, including leave from the job and travel costs, shall be at the expense of the employer.

Continued on page 7

Somewhere Between



Review of the film shown for the Margaret Livingstone Memorial Fund Committee of the Women's Rights Committee.

by Barb Horst

"Does this seem too much to sacrifice for love? I believe it should never have come to this."

About forty of us, women and men, asked ourselves this question on August 13, as the film, *Somewhere Between*, unfolded in a darkened Rio Hall.

Somewhere Between, the first in a series of film showings organized to raise money for the Margaret Livingstone Memorial Fund, looks at the history of Canadian legislation affecting Indian women, and their traditional role in Indian society. The film focusses on the personal experiences of five non-status Indian women, interspersed with discussions of the Indian Act, debates in Parliament, and a press conference with John Munro, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, held in June 1980 in Vancouver.

Despite poor sound quality from a faulty projector, which made it difficult fully to understand much of the dialogue, the sense of loneliness and the feeling of separation suffered by these women who lost their status due to unjust laws remains long after the evening is over.

Denial of birthright

In her introduction to the film, Hilda Thomas referred to the speech made by Shirley Joseph, Vice-President of the Professional Native Women's Association of B.C., at the showing of *Somewhere Between* on Parliament Hill, June 10, 1982.

Joseph sums up the problems presented in the film in this way: "The film is a reflection of the emotional and psychological trauma associated with a denial of birthright. Condensed in a fifty-minute time frame are some of the consequences of 113 years of

legislated discrimination. Since the introduction of section 12(1)(b) in 1869, native Indian women marrying men not recognized by government as Indian are stripped of all rights associated with Indian status.

Neither the woman nor her children are entitled to live on reserve land. They cannot own or inherit property on reserve land, cannot participate in programs or services available to band members, cannot participate in the affairs of the band, are not eligible to receive royalties available to band members, and cannot be buried on reserve land.

Through application of section 12(1)(b) the woman and her children are no longer deemed to be Indian under the Indian Act or any law in Canada."

15,774 women deprived of status

In Canada, an estimated 15,774 women have lost Indian status through section 12(1)(b); 1,836 women were involuntarily enfranchised affecting "in both cases the lives of 57,000 children." As one of the interviewed women put it: "You can't change your ways. . . The only thing they can't take away from you is that, when you're an Indian, you're an Indian."

The women talk about the role of the church, the police and the Indian Act, an "extension of Canadian colonial policy" during the early twentieth century, in attempting to break down their culture. Sent to residential schools as young girls, they were not allowed to talk to their brothers attending the same schools. Frequent beatings for speaking in their own native language forced them to speak their language only "underground."

One woman reflects on the heart-breaking result of the choice of an enfranchisement made by her husband.

She knew that he carried the paper in his wallet for many years. But she did not know, until he died, that this paper prevented her and her children from returning to the reserve after his death, to live with her close friends and relatives, and to be buried there when she died. She did not know that this right to vote condemned her and her children to a life of loneliness and isolation.

Another woman shows the interviewer the house she once owned on the reserve, which she was forced to sell. Although she fell in love with a non-status man, it took her two years to decide to marry him, because she knew it would mean the loss of her family, the loss of her "Indianness."

Variety of views

Somewhere Between does not give answers to all the questions, or provide a clear, simple solution to the problems. This is probably because there are many differing views.

In scenes from a press conference Indian Affairs Minister John Munro expressed the government's intention to change the discrimination against Indian women, but suggests there should be native involvement in changes in the legislation. He states that there is no consensus among the Indians themselves.

A representative of the National Indian Brotherhood feels that, although the plight of the women is an important issue, there are other more pressing issues for the bands: lack of adequate housing, and 80-90% unemployment, for example.

I found a background paper prepared by Jim Manley, MP useful in my attempt to understand the problems faced by Indian women and some of the solutions proposed by different groups. This paper, entitled *Indian Women and the Indian Act*, was put out by the Research Branch, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, July 23, 1980 and revised March 1981.

The laws affecting the status of Indian women present a specific and urgent problem which also forms part of the larger issue of the legal rights and economic conditions of Canada's native people.

While *Somewhere Between* does not deal with all of those issues, it does highlight the discrimination suffered by Indian women under the Indian Act. It illustrates with painful clarity the need for immediate changes, to alleviate the suffering of those women who are at the mercy of these unjust laws.

One of the women in the film summed up the agony: "The question comes 'Who am I? What am I?' The mind and heart remain the same—how can this be changed?" ♀

There was a story in the *Province*, August 19, 1982, headlined "Fewer Women Lose Jobs New Labour Survey Shows." Good, I thought—one optimistic ray of sunshine in the prevailing economic climate. Then I read on. The article does not exactly say what the headline says. It correctly points out that one must examine the jobs women are doing, how often they do them and the wages they receive to get the total picture.

First, let's look at the labour force figures (those that are employed or unemployed). In B.C. the female participation rate has increased over the last year by 52.8%. During 1981, 51.9% of all women aged fifteen and over were in the labour force. In fact, the labour force in B.C. between July 1981 and July 1982 grew by 17,000 workers and all of them were women.

During the month of July this year, 26,000 new people (most likely students) entered the labour force. However, 70% of those were male. The *Special Report on Labour Force Statistics*, July 1982, points out the participation rate for July has declined, "signifying that many younger workers have been discouraged from entering the work force this summer."

Women seek work in increasing numbers

Nationally, the Economic Council of Canada predicts between 1975-85 women (aged 25-44 years) will increase their numbers in the labour force by 71.1%. Interesting, in the 45-65 age bracket women's numbers are predicted to increase by 10.8% while the number of men decline.

Women have been entering the labour force at an increasing rate over the last decade. Does the declining rate in B.C. during the last month signify a change? Or should we believe the predictions? Unemployment rates for women may win good headlines, but hardly much else. First, a reminder—to be counted in the unemployed statistics a person must be unemployed during the last reference week and actively looking for any available work during the previous four weeks. (Unless involved in a layoff or waiting for a new job).

The unemployment rate in B.C. for July 1982 is 13.8% (seasonally adjusted), 13.2% (actual). Women have a 12.5% unemployment rate and 13.8% of men are unemployed. One year ago, 5% of men were unemployed, while the figure for women was 6.9%. In 1976, 10% of women were unemployed, while 7% of men were unemployed.

To put it simply, women have always had difficulty finding jobs. Now the

Women's lot



unemployment, low wages, part-time work

by Astrid Davidson
Director of Women's Programs
B.C. Federation of Labour

situation is worse. In a recently released report, *In Short Supply—Jobs and Skills in the 1980s*, the Economic Council of Canada points out the unemployment picture is changing. More and more unemployment is long-term unemployment. The Council points out that women's unemployment increases with their age and predicts new entrants to the labour force and those returning after an absence of five years or more will continue to have the most difficulty in securing employment. Dropping out of the work force to take on family responsibilities for more than five years could mean the end of a working career outside the home. These are future predictions. Let's look at the B.C. scene more closely.

Out of non-traditional jobs

The big declines in employment—where most of those now unemployed once worked, were in mining and forestry (23,000 drop), manufacturing (39,000 drop) and construction (22,000 drop). These are not traditional female areas of employment. Nonetheless, the figures are distressing for women—these were the new job areas women were entering. They are also the areas of the highest paid jobs. It is unlikely that

more than a few women remain in these fields.

In fact, the majority of women still work in the traditionally female jobs, clerical, sales and trade. According to the Economic Council of Canada women are increasing their numbers in these fields and the trend to segregation will continue for some time. In *A Profile of Low Wage Workers in B.C.*, Ministry of Labour 1977, those three job categories are the lowest paid in B.C. There is little reason to believe that the situation has changed. *Statistics Canada* released figures in June that showed women in 1980 earned less than half the wages received by men.

Significantly, those areas of employment experienced a small or no decline in employment. Specifically, employment increased in public administration and finance. Heather Menzies, in her book *Women and the Chip*, says an increase or stabilization of employment in the clerical, sales and service fields, particularly in the banking industry, should be expected. She explains, industries going into the first and second phases of implementing new technology (micro-electronics), usually increase their staff. In B.C. many companies are now in those first stages. There will be more on this later.

An important aspect of the employment picture is the total hours spent on the job. It would be nice to assume that all of those 88% of women, who have a job, worked full-time (even if they are in the lowest paid jobs. Not so.

There are 1.3 million people working part-time; 70% of them are women. Of all workers, 12% of them work part-time, up from 10.6% July, 1981. The number who say they are working part-time because they can't find full-time employment now is represented by 41.4% of all persons working part-time. Not only are employed women making low wages, they are most likely not working the hours they would like to. Part-time work usually indicates fewer benefits. No doubt, if adequate support services were available, the number wanting full-time jobs would be higher.

Technological change

In the discussions and articles about the economy, few note the accompanying impact of technological change. Some affiliates to the B.C. Federation of Labour recently pointed out that the huge layoffs in some industries are in fact attributable to technological change rather than the economy. The new technology will affect women disproportionately. According to the Economic Council of Canada, jobs in the clerical, sales

GOVERNMENT RESTRAINTS TAKE TOLL OF WOMEN'S JOBS

and clerical fields will grow in the future but because the nature of these jobs will change substantially, it will be difficult to fill these jobs. Buried in the report of the Economic Council is the comment, "on the other hand the jobs that have traditionally provided opportunities for female and youth employment are those most likely to be jeopardized by rapid technological change."

In its brief to the Federal Task Force on Micro-Electronics, the B.C. Federation of Labour pointed out the importance of examining the long-term effects on jobs. While employment generally increases in the first and second phases of implementing the new technology, the third and fourth phases generally produce marked declines in employment. The brief also pointed to the significant increases in part-time work noted in European studies on the impact of technological change—a trend that is already occurring.

Government restraint programs

The last aspect of the employment picture is the effect produced by government restraint programs. Hidden by the public image of fat-cat unionists striving for more pay are issues being raised by trade union women in the public sector. These are virtually the same issues raised earlier in this article. Equal pay, VDT's, auxiliary workers are all important items at the bargaining table with B.C. Government Employees Union members. Nationally, federal public sector workers adopted policies in the spring which were aimed at ending the discrimination faced by part-time workers employed by the federal government. However, Bill C-124 effectively prevents the Alliance (PSAC) from negotiating benefits for part-timers—the majority of whom are women.

The Public Commission on Cutbacks to Social Services, Commission Interim Report, reports, "layoffs related to public sector cutbacks immediately affect areas where large numbers of women are employed: nurses, hospital workers, library workers, teacher aides." Since the report was written, teachers and others could be added to the list. Needless to say, the impact of government restraints on women will be severe.

Single parents

Some women now entering the labour force do so as the sole breadwinner for families which include an unemployed male. But most are single parents! The 1981 Census states there are 78,715 single parent families in B.C. (1976 — 60,205); approximately 90% are female-headed families. The Commission Interim Report received the figures 37,369 single parent families supported by an income below the poverty line (83% headed by women). To get low wages and few hours is one matter but to try and stretch the pay to support a family is another. The fact that so many women are now the sole support for families obviously needs more public attention and action.

Not even a complete picture

This article has attempted to portray the picture of the women's labour force in Canada and B.C. More women are facing unemployment, low wages and unwanted part-time work. The segregation of women into the traditional female jobs is increasing while entry into the non-traditional areas is curtailed. The encroachment of technological change, along with government restraint

augment a depressing situation.

This paper mentions little about the devastating effect of social service cutbacks in education and training programs on B.C. women. There has been no attempt to deal with the added hardship placed on homemakers or older women. For a more complete picture on the status of women in this province, these other issues must be examined. ♀

Source material:

A Profile of Low Wage Earners in B.C., 1977 and *Labour Force Statistics, July 1982* — B.C. Ministry of Labour.

The Labour Force, 1981 and *The 1981 Census* — Statistics Canada.

In Short Supply — Jobs and Skills in the 1980's (1982) — Economic Council of Canada.

Copies of the *Commission Interim Report*, the Public Commission on Social and Community Service Cutbacks July, 1982 and the B.C. Federation of Labour's submission to the Federal Task Force on Micro-Electronics, July 1982, are available from the B.C. Federation of Labour, 3110 Boundary Road, Burnaby, B.C. V5M 4A2.

BCGEU settlement

Continued from page 4

Pregnant women operating VDT's will now have the option to switch to work of another nature, if such work is available in her headquarters area. She can choose to work at her pay level or at a lower pay level, in which case she will maintain her original pay.

In the unlikely event that work is not available, she is entitled to take leave without pay and maintain her seniority and benefits. It is felt by the union that other work will be available as offices with VDT's are usually very large operations with many staff members.

Economic issues

During the dispute it often seemed unlikely that any money would ever be produced. This was a matter of extreme concern, especially for the thousands of office assistants whose starting salary was \$1099 per month. Often such workers were trying to support dependants on a smaller disposable income than that of people on income assistance. Initially, it was hoped to bring these

salaries up to \$1386 per month, the starting wage for a storeskeeper. The final settlement did not accomplish this goal but it did maintain the principle of bringing the mainly female office workers closer to other workers in the union.

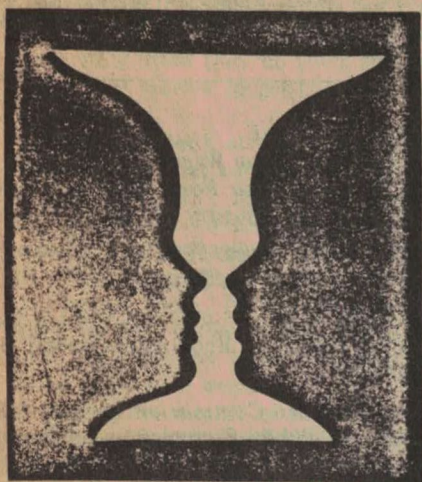
These workers, and all workers who earn less than \$1386 per month, have been offered an increase of \$125 per month. All workers receiving over \$1386 per month will receive \$100 per month more. Thus the percentage increase changes as the salaries change, with the largest increases going to the workers at the bottom of the scale who will receive approximately 17%.

Women's Committee pleased

The BCGEU Women's Committee is very pleased with this package and have stood firm in their representation of their membership. We should all offer them our thanks for progress they've made towards better conditions for all women. ♀

The faces in the jar

by Hilda L. Thomas



A familiar psychological perception test consists of a figure which at first glance looks like an ornate vase, but on second glance can be perceived as two people in profile facing one another. The background-foreground reversal gives rise to a completely new image.

Our perception of women in Canada today can also give rise to two quite different images. Like the faces and the vase, the two are very different, and call for totally different interpretations.

The positive side

On the positive side, the facts seem encouraging. Women will account for 70% of labour force growth in Canada by the end of the 80's. At present, 50% of Canadian women between 15 and 65 are now doing paid labour, and they make up 40% of the total work force. Looked at from a different perspective, however, this means that half the women of working age in Canada are not gainfully employed, that women are under-represented in the labour force in relation to their numbers in the total population, and that they are still employed for the most part in dead-end, low-wage, unorganized jobs. Of the total female labour force, 1.6 million—over one third—are employed in clerical work. Over 900,000 are in sales and service jobs, where they make up 78% of the total. While feature articles in the daily papers give a high profile to successful professional women, and networking creates the impression that women are boosting one another up the ladder to success, the reality is that

under 25% of women, including teachers and nurses, are in managerial or professional jobs—an increase of 5% in ten years. In the light of these facts, the image of the smiling, energetic young career woman striding along with her gleaming brief case under her arm must give way to another, less glowing picture: a picture of women confined within a narrow and suffocating space in the working world. And even that space is shrinking.



Scramble for profits

The scramble for profit in an unplanned market economy has resulted in huge corporate debts at unprecedented interest rates. This, coupled with the export of jobs to the non-industrialized countries where the labour force can be brutally exploited, has led to plant closures, layoffs, and unemployment.

In Canada, where the industrial sector is weak and colonized to begin with, our "free enterprise" government has provided massive funds to prevent the collapse of multinationals like Chrysler, DeHavilland and Massey-Ferguson. Hundreds of millions of tax money have been spent to rescue the very corporations that are responsible for the recession. In B.C. where the whole economy depends on the export of largely unprocessed resources, the Socred government has gobbled up \$1 billion in reserve funds to facilitate the super-exploitation of our resources by foreign corporations, with little or no benefit to the people of this province.

Public sector workers first sacrificed

As B.C.G.E.U., B.C.T.F., and H.E.U. members well know, workers in the public sector, in education, and in health care, because they are susceptible to government control, are the first to be

sacrificed on the altar of restraint, with a well-orchestrated chorus of abuse playing in the background. Women, of course, are more than equally represented among the victims.

Another, and in the long run perhaps more serious cause for concern is that the current recession is providing the excuse to silence demands for equal pay for work of equal value, child care, parental leave, and job training. It is also clearing the way for the introduction of new technology which could effectively wipe out 50-75% of clerical and service jobs by the end of the decade. The micro-chip revolution, if it is carried out solely in the interest of profit, will result in deskilling, greater centralization of control in the work place, and widespread unemployment, along with an increase in home work.

The effects are already being seen in the banking and telecommunications industries. The nightmare vision of alienated workers operating under the unblinking eyes of work place computers, tied to computer work stations, or working in isolation in their own homes is rapidly becoming a reality. A recent book, *The Seam Allowance*, by L. Johnson (Women's Press) describes in vivid detail the experience of garment workers who operate on a piecework basis in their own homes. It is totally impossible to organize these workers, to monitor their working conditions, to regulate hours, holidays, health and safety standards, or benefits. In the U.S., Reagan is in the process of deregulating home work, reversing even the minimal legislation that did exist. Canada has no protective legislation. In the U.K., where home work has increased along with unemployment, women earn as little as 20p per hour (about 50¢ Canadian).

Capitalism gives and takes away

If there is a lesson to be learned from all this, it is that what the system gives with one hand, it takes away with the other whenever the market dictates. Corporate capitalism has no commitment to women or to workers. The changes in attitude brought about by the women's movement in the past decade will not last unless they are rooted in a new soil.

For feminists this means a re-examination of many of the ideas which have been held out as solutions to our problems, such as wages for household work and pensions for housewives. Even in affluent times more and more families need two members earning decent wages to provide an adequate standard of living—an index of the gradual impoverishment, in relative terms, of the working class. And, in these families,



women who work in paid jobs often do most of the household work as well. Moreover, the model family envisioned in the scheme, with breadwinner husband, homemaker wife, and two blue-eyed children, is no longer the norm. Single parents, childless couples, divorced, remarried, or widowed people, lesbian and gay couples, represent an increasing proportion of all families. The introduction of wages for housework would also have the undesirable effect of reinforcing the notion that a woman's place is in the home, further entrenching the view that the human values traditionally identified with the family can be confined, along with women, to the private realm. As Janna Thompson puts it,

"... as the methods of science and technology have come to be applied not only to machines and materials but also to the organization of work and to social control, a woman's traditional sphere becomes more and more peripheral and her supposed aptitude for human relationships becomes more and more inappropriate in a society which stresses the efficient management and control of human and other resources and tries to keep moral judgements from clogging up the machinery."

Women, Technology, and Nuclear Power, Australian Women's News Service, 1979.

Part-time work not a solution

Nor is part-time work or work-sharing a solution. Part-time workers are not only very difficult to organize, they are also notoriously exploited. Part-time work is economic only because it is labour intensive. That means the kinds

of work women traditionally do—service, sales, and clerical. Any increase in the number of women working part time would thus reinforce the sexual division of labour, confirm the inferior status of women in the work force, and provide further justification for the failure to provide child care facilities. In any case, governments which are prepared to



savage education, health care, and social service budgets are not likely to consider wages for household work or pensions for housewives as serious options, especially in times of recession.

The real solution lies in the general reduction in the hours of work to give workers a share in the increased productivity made possible by technology, and an extension of human values into the work place through a serious program of industrial democracy. This would give women an equal role in the world in which decisions—both technical and political—about the uses of technology are made, and where priorities are established.

But it will not happen without fundamental changes in the economic and social order. A system which glorifies the private ownership of social property and which views technology as a means to enhance private control and private profit will never willingly grant equality to workers who serve as a convenient under-class, and women will continue to

be manipulated in periods of affluence; exploited, abused, and marginalized in periods of recession until that system is replaced.

Revolutionary courage and determination needed

The fundamental link between attitudinal shifts and economic conditions can no longer be denied. But the problems of women will not be solved automatically by changes in the economic structure. While women do not constitute a class in the precise sense of the word, women of every class suffer from the social effects of the present system. There is evidence that crimes of violence such as sexual assault are linked not simply with poverty and unemployment, but rather are profoundly tied to feelings of alienation and hopelessness among the perpetrators. Women who have been raped, assaulted, or battered will take no comfort in being told that their attackers are also in some sense victims; nor should we adopt a guilt-ridden liberal approach towards those found guilty of brutal crimes. But we should be equally clear that the judicial system in patriarchal societies is at best a flawed mechanism for dealing with crimes against people, especially people without power, and secondly that criminal violence is deeply rooted in the muck of corporate capitalism. Alienation, the loss of a sense of community, the absence of hope for the future will affect more and more people as technological change leads to deskilling and intensified control on the job, and creates a large surplus labour force. Under these conditions, the fragile growth of human freedom may wither and die. And with the decay and disintegration of human values—the values identified in the past as "feminine"—will come the added threat of a nuclear holocaust as those in whose hands is concentrated the power to make decisions and to determine priorities vie with one another for supremacy.

As socialists and feminists we have an urgent task before us. We must reverse the system which gives priority to the ruthless scramble for profit and shoves human needs and values into the background. But we must do this in a way that is non-instrumental, that rejects the view that our problems will be solved merely by a change in regime. Feminism has given birth to a new perception of what a truly human world would be like—a world of free, autonomous, cooperative, equal women and men. It will take a collective effort of revolutionary courage and determination to bring that world into being before it is too late. ♀

"Sorry, we don't hire women here. We tried it once about ten years ago and she didn't work out so now we just don't bother hiring women any more."

Sound like something out of the Dark Ages? No. This is one of the responses I've gotten from personnel offices during my seven-month ordeal of looking for work in Vancouver.

Although it is illegal to discriminate against women, some companies are very upfront about it. The boss knows he can get away with breaking the law during an economic crisis. Most companies maintain, however, that they do not discriminate and are happy to give me an application form. But when I ask how many women work in the plant I am usually told, "... the plant? Oh, there are no women in the plant. We've got a couple of girls in the office, though."

Looking for work when unemployment is at its highest level since the last depression in the thirties is, to put it lightly, a drag. If I were alone I don't think I could make it. But, I've been looking for work with a group of five—three women and two men. The "jobs committee" as we call ourselves is my lifeline to sanity in an otherwise insane situation. We meet four days a week at 8 a.m. and decide where to search on that day. After compiling a list of places to go to put in applications we head out into the world, the men in one car and the women in another. This tactic has been a real eye-opener. We often realized during the next morning's meeting that many places accepted applications from the men, but not from the women.

Over the past seven months, we've checked out all the major industries in the Vancouver area and received similar treatment. Like I said, if I had to look for work on my own I'd be in a rubber room by now. I'm convinced the only way to save one's sanity is to search with friends—especially with women.

Manpower no help

And don't think that Manpower is going to be any help. I attended their afternoon seminar on job retraining. A counsellor told me and about fifty other people all about the courses one can take through Canada Manpower—if you can wait one and a half or two years until your name comes up for a course for which funding has been drastically cut back and which probably won't even exist in a few months' time anyway. Thanks for nothing, Canada Manpower.

However, to be fair, in some of these virtually non-existent courses there are two places held open for women. The

Pounding the pavement looking for work

by Bonnie Geddes

counsellor was very careful to point out that he disagreed with this policy and was sure that the men in the room felt that this was discrimination against men. 'Ladies' apparently get all the special treatment and lucky breaks in this society. Yuk! Thanks again, Canada Manpower.

Blacklisting

Now, it isn't that I love to spend all my time complaining about problems but, when looking for work, problems are all I get. Another obstacle was what can only be called "blacklisting." My last job was at Panco Poultry until the bosses, a huge multinational called Cargill, decided that they weren't making enough profits and closed the plant down. Almost 400 people, mostly women, were thrown out of work. I was a first-aid attendant at Panco and, even if I do say so myself, I did my job well. I worked by the book on first-aid matters. Well, after the lay-off, I applied at dozens of places as a first-aider. When several weeks had passed and no one had hired me, I got a friend to call Panco, posing as a prospective employer to see what kind of reference they were giving out about me. What an earful my friend got!

"Oh, yes," the Panco supervisor said. "I remember her. She did her work okay. She showed up for work on time and all that, but she was a little too close to the union side." He went on to explain over the phone how Panco had hired me to be on the company's side on first-aid and safety issues. But, unfortunately, I had gotten off to a bad start and took the union side. I do not deny the allegation. It's true. I'm a union woman and proud of it.

The lawyer I consulted said it was within Panco's rights to say this over the phone to prospective employers. Apparently, the boss has a right to his opinion. And if that means I never work again, well, c'est la vie. Or, rather, that's capitalism.

Who does the system work for?

That brings me to the question of just who does this system work for anyway? It's clear to me that this system does not operate in the interests of women or working people. This system is set up for the bosses and their profit interests. If the bosses can make more profits by laying workers off than by employing us, we get sacked. If the bosses can make more profits by breaking our unions, driving down our living standard, imposing wage controls, then that is what they will try to do. And the government backs the bosses all the way.

We have a government of bosses. We need a government of working people. I was interested—in fact, inspired—to read Barb Horst's article on Grenada in the last issue of *Priorities*. There is an example of a government that acts in our interests. We need more information on Grenada. We need to get slide shows and discussions going in our ridings. Speaking tours from Grenada would be an excellent way to get the word out in the NDP. The party should even consider organizing tours to Grenada so we can all have the opportunity to see for ourselves what can be done when we have a government that acts in the interests of women and working people. ♀

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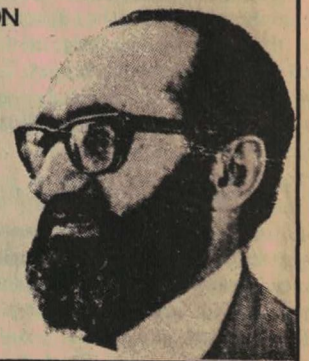
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Liberal government's dismal record

From "Women's Report" issued by MP's Pauline Jewett, Margaret Mitchell, Neil Young.



Pauline Jewett



Margaret Mitchell

"Tons of rhetoric and little substance." That's how Status of Women critic Margaret Mitchell describes the dismal Liberal government's record in helping women achieve equality in the workplace.

"While Judy Erola and Monique Begin shrug off questions and criticisms by suggesting real changes are on the way, the truth is that they have failed miserably."

Just take a look at issues that most concern working women.

- Uncontrolled inflation and high interest rates meant a real downturn in the job market. And women are suffering from unemployment in record numbers. The Liberal government has failed miserably in its attempts to deal with this problem. Only 31% of the Canada Works and LEAP employment program has been targeted to women, yet women make up 45% of Canada's unemployed. Job creation measures have almost completely bypassed the hundreds of thousands of women with a family to support. And most jobs created are on the edges of the work force, short-term and low-paying with little chance of acquiring skills for permanent employment.

- If getting a job is a real struggle for women, getting a good-paying, challenging job has become a remote fantasy. Judy Erola recently warned private industry that mandatory affirmative action is not far off. Maybe she should take a look at the Liberals' past record. Only 3% of students in apprenticeship training are women; only 27% of all industrial trainees are women and only 33% of the full-time students in the manpower program are women. Her own department is no better. 80% of the women who work for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources are in the lower-paid support staff positions. And a mere four women have attained the management category, four out of a possible eighty-four positions.

- The Liberal government enshrined equal pay for work of equal value in federal legislation in 1977. And promptly forgot about it. Five years later, thousands of the government's own workers have been forced to take their

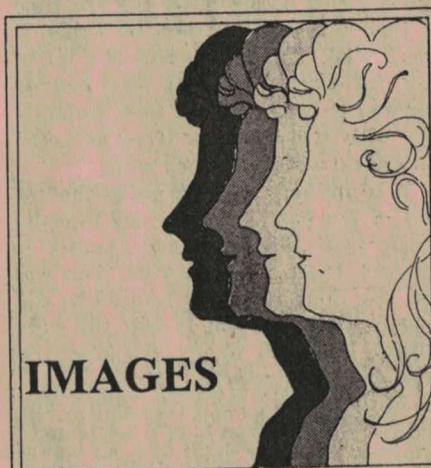
case for equal pay to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. In 1982, the truth remains that for every dollar a man earns, a woman earns only 58 cents—not so surprising when you realize that 60% of all working women hold low-paying jobs in clerical, service and sales fields.

- Judy Erola delights Canadian women with such lines as "paid maternity leave should be fair and all across Canada." Erola's idea of immediate and decisive action was to suggest that a committee study the question. Meanwhile, Canada's labour unions have had to do what the Liberal government won't—negotiate collective agreements that provide adequate maternity leave for women in the work force.

Women treated as reserve army of labour

Canadian women deserve better results from the two women in the Liberal cabinet. The truth is that the Liberal government continues to treat women as a reserve army of labour. As Ed Broadbent, NDP leader said, "When women are accepted at every level within their chosen occupation, then we will have equality in the workplace." ♀

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HOW FEDERAL BUDGET CUTBACKS HIT WOMEN

- No more automatic indexing of pensions to senior citizens receiving more than \$6000 a year. 1.2 million pensioners who get only Old Age Security benefits will lose \$300 in the next two years.

Over half this group are women.

- De-indexing of Family Allowance will reduce the amount on which indexing is based when it is re-introduced in 1985.

This represents a real financial loss to women with small children.

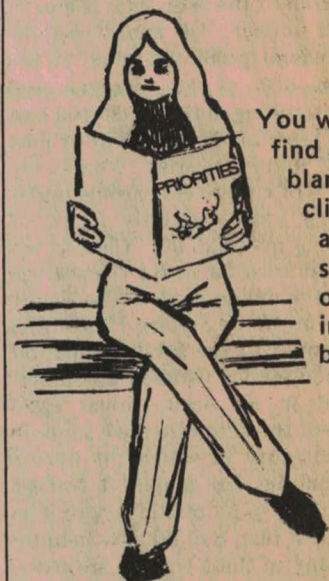
- The federal wage control 6%-5% program being forced on public servants and promoted in the private sector will hit women workers hardest.

Wage controls will put women, who earn only 58% of what men get, further and further behind in the struggle for equality.

From the federal NDP Newsletter "The Women's Report."

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Women victims of restraint program

by Margaret Mitchell MP (Vancouver East)

As the critic on Women's Issues for the federal NDP caucus I have watched the government in Ottawa show its true colours in its commitment to the concerns and issues which face women in Canada.

They introduced the infamous Bill C-124 which created the 6/5 solution to deal with our economic crisis.

Unfortunately, this does not solve the economic mess which they created. It only shifts the blame onto the workers, in particular the lower income workers, most of whom are women.

The government wage control program which will restrict public sector wage increases to 6% this year and 5% the following year is going to have an economic and social impact on women which is greater than on any other sector of the public service.

Public service women at the bottom

The harsh reality is that women are at the bottom of the economic ladder in the public service. Of approximately 268,000 federal public servants, 35.6% are women, 60% of those women workers are in teaching, nursing, clerical and secretarial jobs, hardly the kind of jobs which pay luxury salaries. Women represent 54% of employees earning under \$18,000 per year, and only 12.4% of those earning over \$22,000. Clearly, women workers earn far below the average income in the public service. The report *Women in the Public Service 1980* states that, compared to the total population in the public service, women are under-represented in all occupational categories except the administrative support group, a category in which the lowest paid occupations are found. It further shows that 70% of all public service jobs which pay less than \$10,000 are held by women. Many of these women are struggling to raise families on their own as single parents, or in many cases, their partners are unemployed. This means that many of these families are living at

or below the poverty line.

When we discuss the impact of the imposition of wage controls we must not kid ourselves: we are not talking about high-priced executives, Members of Parliament, or judges. We are talking about the thousands of clerks and secretaries who simply cannot stretch their paycheques any further. It is a myth that the majority of public servants are overpaid.

Collective bargaining destroyed

One of the best examples of how the federal government has used this legislation to destroy collective bargaining and at the same time undermine women workers is the situation with the federal clerks.

There are 50,000 clerks in the public service. Most of these are women. In 1980 the clerks organized and negotiated for better wages. After not being able to achieve the wage increases they needed and certainly deserved, for the first time in their history they went on strike. It was a first. This took a hell of a lot of guts for women workers who had no experience with unions and certainly not with strike action. They picketed for several weeks and they won.

It is not easy for workers at the low end of the pay scale, who are insecure about their jobs and have families to support, to go out on strike. This was the last thing they had wanted to do. Finally they realized it was the only chance they had to get the salary increases they deserved.

As a result of the strike action, the clerical workers won a 16% settlement, bringing many of their salaries up to \$11,000 per year. However, that settlement was for last year. This year they are due for a 12.5% increase. It was negotiated through collective bargaining, with the President of Treasury Board kicking and screaming all the way to the bank. The same man who has brought in wage controls.

Betrayed by government

Those workers have been betrayed by government. They bargained in good faith and won a decent settlement. And now the government will not honour the 12.5%. Instead they will get 6% this year and 5% next year. They are being made scapegoats—the category of workers who are the most grossly underpaid.

The wage control legislation will have a major impact on the future of affirmative action rights, the right to equal job opportunities in the public service for men and women. Affirmative action may no longer be negotiated.

Technological change

Traditional women's jobs are being phased out as they fall prey to technological change. There are changes in all departments, in practically every office which has anything to do with government services. Word processors and desk top computers spell the end of thousands of clerical jobs. It is important that there be solid affirmative action policies in place to ensure that the jobs that are here are equally shared, and together men and women can negotiate to protect themselves from the negative aspects of technological change in the workplace.

The government has claimed that it is a leader in the area of affirmative action. In three departments they established programs which would provide a mode for all of Canada. Nothing has happened. There have been studies. We have had studies before. Yet no action has been taken to show a serious and concerted effort by the government to establish a legitimate and progressive affirmative action program.

The facts speak very clearly for themselves. The Public Service Commission Annual Report for 1981 states that only 4.3% of public service executives, the top-ranking employees, are women. Only 3.1% of those earning over \$50,000 are women. This represents an actual decrease over the past year. There has been no change in the position of women in senior positions from the 1970's, despite the many competent and experienced women who are in the public service and who should have opportunities for advancement.

We have argued for compulsory affirmative action, not only in the government, but also as a condition of government contracts to the private sector, yet the liberals and Trudeau state that they could not get that tough with the private sector and would wait for the results of another three-year study before they pursued affirmative action. Another study.

Equal pay for work of equal value

The question of equal pay for work of equal value will also be thrown into limbo by the restraint program. While the President of the Treasury Board has said he will honour the Human Rights Act in respect to equal pay, his long history of broken promises when women's issues are involved lends little credence to this promise and provides little comfort for the thousands of underpaid women in the public service.

In 1981, 3,000 General Services workers, mostly women, won a very significant decision on the equal pay question, under the Human Rights Act. This was a historic decision. The President of the Treasury Board, Mr. Johnston, initially refused to comply with the decision of the Human Rights Tribunal, but was eventually forced to pay \$17 million in back pay to the service workers. Many of these workers had been maintenance and cafeteria staff who were paid \$2,000 to \$3,000 less than their male counterparts. Women librarians have also won a significant case on the equal pay issue in the past year.

Presently there is a case involving hospital workers before the Human Rights Tribunal. This case could be endangered by the restraint program. If

this happens it could spell the end of equal pay for at least two years.

Erola all talk and no action

There had been some hope initially that the Minister of Mines who is also responsible for women's concerns, would be able to fight in Cabinet on behalf of women. Unfortunately, she has been all talk and no action. Judy Erola's charm and public relations staff alone will not further the rights of women in Canada. There are at least five instances in recent history where she has either broken promises or refused to act in any meaningful way on behalf of women.

- She refused to fight for the inclusion of women's rights into the Constitution;
- She has not made one progressive move on pensions for women and instead voted for the latest cutbacks to pensions included in the June budget;
- She has not acted to assist Indian women to end the discrimination under section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act;
- She has backtracked on her support and adamant stand on affirmative action, now stating it can't be done.
- Finally, she supported C-124 which attacks women workers, leaving them stuck in job ghettos, or worse, unem-

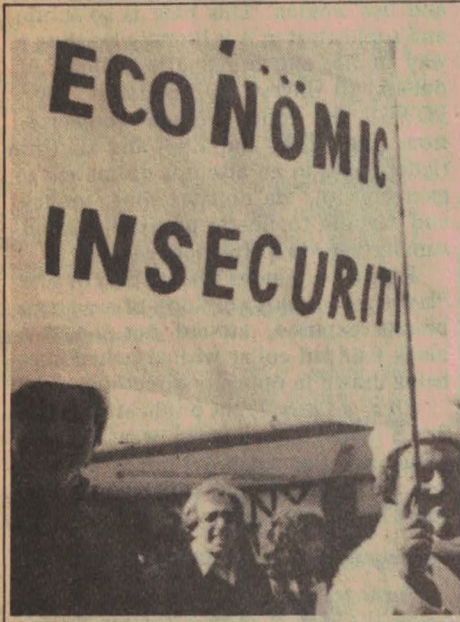
ployed with no recourse.

Clearly, Judy Erola will not be the advocate women so desperately need in the male-dominated federal Cabinet.

Create jobs and lower interest rates

C-124 and the 6/5 solution will not solve Canada's economic problems. It is simply a regressive, tyrannical piece of legislation which has cut workers' wages. Wage controls are a typical attempt by this government to victimize workers and make them scapegoats for an economic mess which the government has created and has no solutions for. Wage controls and the denial of collective bargaining will not reduce inflation, nor will it improve Canada's markets for growth. We know that. Only positive economic policy for recovery which creates jobs and lowers interest rates will do that.

For the women in the public service wage controls mean much more. They mean the restriction of women to low-paying jobs with no opportunity to advance, leaving them stuck in job ghettos or, worse yet, will force many of them out of the work force and on to the growing unemployment rolls. ♀



Unemployed committees historically have had an unstable composition—everyone hopes they'll soon have a job and no longer qualify as members. This has led to a loss of leadership as experienced people get hired away and have less time to contribute. It looks like that won't be the case with the Unemployed Committees developing in B.C. right now; the economic outlook seems to indicate a long and increasing

Unemployed hold conference

by Sharon Hazelwood

membership in their ranks.

I was an observer at a conference of Unemployed Committees held in Nanaimo on Saturday, August 28—a day-long seminar on organizing the unemployed and the goals of such Committees. Most of the facilitators were from the Campbell River and Port Alberni District Labour Councils' Unemployed Committees, and people attended from all over the Island, with a handful from Vancouver. Of the 70 people there, most were unionized and over three-quarters were male. I think this reflects firstly, the high level of unemployment in the forest industry which is overwhelmingly male (in spite of an IWA resolution supporting affirmative action for women) and secondly, the misperception by themselves and others of women as not really "workers." As a labour pool, we flow in and out of jobs according to industry's needs, are frequently underemployed when we have jobs, and often work so few hours that we never qualify for U.I.C. and so never appear in the statistics. Combine that with the lack of childcare facilities to enable women to

attend such a meeting and the attitude among many families that the male partner "takes care of those kinds of things" and it's not hard to see why attendance would be predominantly male.

Government and business responsible

An opening address by a representative of the Carpenters' Union stressed the placing of blame for unemployment where it belongs, on government and business. There have been 10-year cycles of unemployment in Canada since 1825, but the trend is still "blame the victim" whether you speak of workers on strike, workers on U.I.C., people on welfare, or injured workers on Workers' Compensation.

The meeting then split into two groups that met separately, later switching chairpeople and recording secretaries. The workshop on organizing committees included the kinds of functions possible such as soup kitchens, publicity, advocacy work, etc. In Campbell River and Port Alberni where soup kitchens have operated for some months, many people

Continued on page 16

The other day I was threatened with forceable removal from London Drugs, 2585 East Hastings Street. I was looking for a book. *Penthouse* was right beside the books I was interested in. I grabbed the magazine, intending to throw it over my shoulder, when it opened in my hands to a picture of a gigantic fly imbedded between the nude spread legs of a woman.

Usually, I would have turned away and gone on with my shopping, but that morning was different. I had seen *Not A Love Story* the week before. I was more aware and less accepting.

I was furious. I took the magazine to the nearest salesperson, in the Camera Department. I showed her the picture and demanded to see the manager. She said, "Why are YOU reading it?" Temporarily non-plussed, I just stared at her.

When the manager arrived, I showed the picture to him and accused him of being responsible for promoting pornographic hate magazines. He said it offended HIM that I would flash the picture in his face. A man listening yelled over, laughing, "I'm not, I like it!" I pointed my finger at him and yelled, "I'll remember you on the streets, you pervert!" The manager then threatened me with forceable removal if I didn't leave, because I had offended one of his customers.

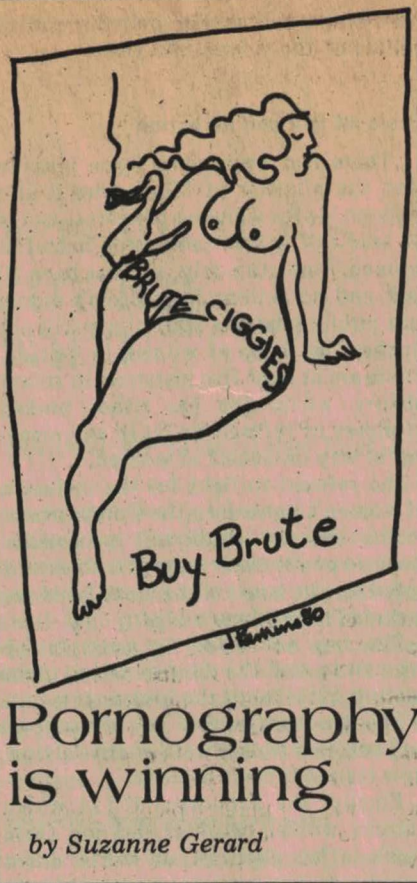
No age limit

I asked my 17-year-old son if he would volunteer to buy three porn books from the same London Drugs store. There is no age limit in the Criminal Code of Canada for buying pornography. He reluctantly agreed. We stood at the rack and looked through a few of the magazines. My son turned to me and said he didn't want to look through any more because he was getting sick to his stomach.

"You're not alone," I told him. "There is a group of men called the *Masculine Collective Against Sexism* who submitted a brief stating how they resented being brought up to believe [through pornographic propaganda] a pack of dangerous lies about how women should be treated."

I picked out the books and, as I watched, he paid for them with no one saying a word to him. On the way home, he said that some of the material in magazines for his age group were "sorta rough" too. I wanted to know what "sorta rough" meant. He showed me a copy of *Heavy Metal*, August 1982.

Page 30 — a nude woman is bent over; her ankles are firmly being held by an ape as he anally uses her. She is depicted with a smile on her face.



Pornography is winning

by Suzanne Gerard

Page 58 — a nude female child is mated with a cat, producing offspring with both characteristics.

Examples from *National Lampoon* include:

— A cover showing a nude woman sectioned off for butchering like a side of beef.

— A woman lying face down on a bar, her legs spread, her underwear hanging on one leg, as men putt golf balls into her.

— An article entitled, "Pretend rape, using it to get what you want from older men."

How to make the unacceptable acceptable

I asked my son the difference between his books and the ones we had just bought. He said the artwork was really great and that everyone knew the stories were just jokes. Do they? The Fifth Rule of Propaganda: constantly bombard the mind with the same theme and soon the unacceptable becomes acceptable.

The following are excerpts from the magazines that we bought and one other that was lent for use in this article.

Penthouse, August 1982, Page 141 — A woman with her lower clothing removed, a gigantic fly embedded between her legs.

Pages 62-71 — A series of photos,

under the heading "Joys of Sexual Surrender." The theme is dominance, S/M, submission, mutilation, and bondage.

#431 — "Sex Adventures:" a husband ties up, whips, and beats his wife into submission.

Oui, June, 1982 — The message throughout this magazine is that it is OK to sexually use young girls because they encourage and like it.

Pages 28-29 — This series of shots of a young woman shows her with her back to the camera; she is wearing pink panties and her hair is in braids covering her breasts. The picture beside this one has her kneeling, a mirror beside her reflecting bruises on her thigh and upper rib cage.

I showed this set of pictures to my father and asked him how old he thought she was. His eyes widened as he dropped his newspaper on his lap and said, "My God, she's only about 14 years old."

Playboy, August 1982 — Hefner's *Playboy* is less obvious in its approach to dehumanizing women but more insidious and dangerous, with the use of psychology, sociology, marketing techniques, criminal law, and propaganda. He uses hate as a terror tactic to control and use women. This hate is so subtle and sophisticated it is literally creating a way of life and bringing in millions of dollars to invest in his latest toy—POWER. He funds women's organizations like NOW, and ERA and abortion rights issues in an attempt ultimately to gain control. He donates time, money and favours to liberal politicians to ensure his version of freedom of speech.

Page 51 — Under the caption of *The Playboy Advisor* is a cartoon of a woman, breasts exposed, around her throat a black studded collar with attached lines being drawn in opposite directions.

Chic, a Larry Flynt publication, page 9 — a nude young woman, wearing a girl scout cap. Her wrists are bound and her legs are spread and she is being tied with ropes by a nude male in a boy scout cap.

Pornography is not eroticism

Pornography is not eroticism. If the scales tilt against respect for the human body and being, and power comes into play using domination, humiliation and the violent sexual abuse of women, you have pornography. When the underlying message becomes "It's OK, they like it." you have Hate Propaganda. In its most lethal stage, this propaganda produces snuff films.

Pornography makes extensive use of propaganda, as shown by J.A.C. Brown in his book *Techniques of Persuasion*.

1. Use of stereotypes—creates a fixed, unfavourable idea of the chosen scapegoat.

2. Name Substitution— creates a biased reaction by using derogatory words to describe the scapegoat, e.g. cunt, scumbag, twat, etc.

3. Selection—only chosen facts are presented to the public, e.g. rape is a fact but the victim and consumer are constantly told, "She'll love it." The rest of the fact that is left unsaid is, of course, that rape is physically and emotionally destructive.

4. Lying—Larry Flynt of *Chic* is an expert at this. He published a photo portraying a woman thrusting a large kitchen knife into her vagina, with blood spurting from the wounds. The look on her face is to be interpreted as one of sexual ecstasy. Now obviously such an act would cause severe pain and the person would not be smiling.

5. Repetition—by constantly repeating the message the abhorrent becomes acceptable; e.g. Hitler's "Final Solution."

6. Assertion—this technique is used, not just to point out the pertinent ideas but to aggressively promote them. E.G. pushing the "Freedom of Speech" theme.

7. Pinpointing the enemy—the enemy in porn is woman; she must be subdued and vanquished.

8. Appealing to Authority—this is a vital step for porn pushers. They will use quotes from so-called experts and/or testimonials from famous people.

Joseph Goebbels said, "The best propaganda is that which works invisibly, penetrates the whole of life, without the public having any knowledge at all of the propagandist initiative."

The Criminal Code of Canada Hate Propaganda

281.1 1. Everyone who advocates or promotes genocide is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for five years.

2. In this section "genocide" means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part any identifiable group, namely:

- (a) killing members of the group, or
- (b) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.

Pornography would fit into this category when you consider the show *Snuff* and others that are now making the circuit. *Snuff* is billed as showing the mutilation, dismemberment and actual murder of a young woman. It achieved notoriety because of the carnage in the final five minutes of the film. South American porn films, containing actual

murder footage for the jaded sexual appetites of the sick, have been brought into Canada on a regular basis since 1975.

181.2 1. Everyone who, by communicating statements in a public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace is guilty. . .

This section needs revising, especially when you consider "identifiable groups" means "... any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin."

Offences tending to corrupt morals

159 1. Everyone commits an offence who:

(a) makes, prints, publishes, distributes, circulates, or has in his possession for the purpose of publication, distribution or circulation any obscene written matter, picture, model, phonograph record or other thing whatsoever, or

2. Everyone commits an offence who knowingly, without lawful justification or excuse

(a) sells, exposes to public view or has in his possession for such a purpose any obscene written matter, picture, model, phonograph record or other thing whatsoever,

(b) publicly exhibits a disgusting object or an indecent show,

(6) where an accused is charged with an offence under sub-section (1) the fact that the accused was ignorant of the nature or presence of the matter, picture, model, photograph record, crime comic, or other thing by means of or in relation to which the

offence was committed is not a defence to the charge.

(8) For the purpose of this Act, any publication a dominant characteristic of which is the undue exploitation of sex, or of sex and any one or more of the following subjects, namely, crime, horror, cruelty and violence, shall be deemed to be obscene.

No protection for women

You will note that in both of these sections of the Criminal Code of Canada there is no protection for women against being exploited, or against the total offence to our womanhood, or the acting out on our bodies and minds of the terror tactics that pornographic propaganda encourages.

Obviously, the Criminal Code of Canada needs radical overhauling. We need to draw attention to the victimization of women. We must demand that the police and elected officials execute their duty to 52% of the population and lobby for stricter legislation. If these public servants have difficulty relating to this issue on a personal level they need only remember their female loved ones are categorized as mindless available meat too.

Data from:

Take Back the Night, edited by Laura Lederer, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1980.

Pornography by Masculine Collective Against Sexism, Montreal, 1982.

Criminal Code of Canada, 1981. ♀

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Letters to 'Priorities'

From 'The Women's Report' by
MP's Pauline Jewett,
Margaret Mitchell and Neil Young

Dear Friends,

Pensions may seem complicated, technical, and too far off in the future to worry about. But it is a vital issue of particular importance to women. Women's needs are not adequately met by our present retirement income system.

Most of today's female pensioners spent their lives as homemakers—a job for which they received no pay or benefits. Thus, they are almost totally dependent on Old Age Security and the income-tested Guaranteed Income Supplement. But the maximum benefits provided by both these programs fall 18% below the poverty line.

An equally grim reality faces widows who hope to rely on some income from widow's benefits. The Canada Pension Plan provides a surviving spouse with only 60% of the contributor's benefits. The average benefit paid to widows by the CPP was only \$93 per month.

Women who work outside the home don't fare much better. The Canada Pension Plan makes no special provision for women who temporarily drop out of the labour force to bear and/or raise children. During this period of her life, a woman isn't allowed to put any money into her CPP fund. Another disadvantage is that the plan provides only about 25% of pre-retirement earnings. In 1980, the average CPP retirement benefit paid to women was \$100 per month.

All these facts paint a desperate picture. Older women and especially single

older women are more likely to experience poverty than any other group in this country.

The NDP caucus is travelling across the country and meeting with groups concerned about the special needs of older women. We're hearing about their problems and listening to their ideas. We're also committing ourselves to a Canadian pension system that's based on the following principles:

- all pensioners should be guaranteed a basic retirement income at a level above the poverty line, whether they live in cities or towns, and regardless of sex, marital status or income class;

- pensions should replace about 75% of pre-retirement earnings so that people can move from work to retirement without a dramatic decline in their standard of living.

- pensions should be indexed so that retired people don't see their savings and pensions dwindle away as the cost of living rises.

We'd like to hear from you with your comments and ideas. Please write us, postage free!

Sincerely,

Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam)

Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East)
Neil Young (Beaches, Ont.)

VANCOUVER ISLAND UNEMPLOYED COMMITTEES CONFERENCE (Continued from page 13) WOMEN PRESS FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, PROTECTION AGAINST AUTOMATION LAY-OFFS

enter at this level, build their confidence and experience and go on to more outward oriented activities.

The newsletter put out by the Campbell River Committee and distributed at U.I.C. and MHR offices have been quite successful in gathering new people. The advocacy work concentrates on helping workers find their own solutions with problems in UIC, MHR, banks, etc. This was stressed frequently during the day; workers can and must do it themselves. Committee positions developed out of discussions and partisan groups are not encouraged to offer pre-packaged analyses until and unless the groups arrive at the same conclusions. Even labour affiliations must take a back seat to the group finding its own answers.

The other major point stressed was that members are unemployed workers with emphasis on *workers*. They are still part of the labour force and have a right to demand fair treatment from UIC and MHR, both of which are paid for by all

our taxes, and to require of government and business a change in high unemployment tactics.

How are women workers affected?

The second workshop resulted in many suggestions for political demands and actions and these were debated for most of the afternoon, resulting in a joint position that will be sent to all Unemployed Committees. Michell Forrest and Arlene Alexandrovich of the Victoria Unemployed Committee participated frequently in the discussions. Mentioning the need for affirmative action in industry, the impending massive loss of jobs through automation, and the difficulty in gathering unemployed workers in an urban area compared with small centres where you're more likely to know all the ones sharing your position. All of these affect women workers greatly, whether unemployed or not.

An obvious need for more discussion

centered on volunteer work and its place in a stagnant economy.

The eventual aim is to develop a working relationship with all Unemployed Committees in B.C. for mutual support and actions, and I'll be waiting to hear results of further meetings.

A Postscript: I spent several frustrating hours Saturday, September 11 at a conference at Malaspina College, Nanaimo on Safety in the Forest Industry. It concerned the development of Safety Training Programs to be developed at the College. They seemed designed to appeal to the industry's pocketbooks, i.e. fewer accidents mean lower assessments. I came away feeling that both governments intend to leave more vocational training to industry which I feel strongly puts in danger not only worker health and safety, but also affirmative action programs etc. and will negatively affect women in the work force. ♀

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