

# **Jobs and Women**

**an NDP discussion paper**

## JOBS AND WOMEN

### Introduction

Employment opportunities for women in Canada are bad and getting worse. Women are hit harder than men by high unemployment. The wage gap between men and women is widening. The segregation of women into low-paying job ghettos is increasing. More and more, women are being pressured into leaving the labour force altogether.

The Liberal government has blamed women for the current economic crisis instead of responding to the grave employment situation facing women. It has claimed that women are causing unemployment showing a total lack of commitment to equality and to the needs of women who are working out of economic necessity.

Women have been joining the work force in larger numbers but the recent growth in unemployment is not the result of the increased participation rate of women. Women continue to be laid off in greater numbers than men - the "last hired, first fired" syndrome. Women were drawn into the low-paid, support and service type jobs as these areas expanded in the post-war period. But now, because of an economic recession, these jobs are the first to be affected by lay-offs and unemployment.

There is absolutely no basis to the Liberal suggestion that women are taking jobs away from men. Two-thirds of working women are in clerical, sales and service jobs while the well-paying skilled jobs are almost exclusively male bastions. With the majority of women earning little more than 50 per cent of men's wages, there is no reason to believe that men are prepared to move into female job ghettos.

The present attack on working women and women wanting to work is only adding to an already difficult situation facing women. Economic hardship and poverty are much more prevalent among women than men. Approximately one-third of mother-led families and two-thirds of women aged 65 to 70 are living in poverty. As well, most married women in the work force are bringing in just enough income to keep their families out of poverty.

The majority of working women in Canada are in the labour force because of the need to earn the money to meet the basic necessities of life. When they are unemployed or working for poverty-level wages, they are deprived of basic needs and in most instances their families are deprived. Rather than using women as scapegoats for its economic failures, the Liberal government should be working for equality of opportunity and treatment for women in the labour force.



## Current Trends

Women have been joining the work force in larger numbers. In 1967, 33.8% of all women in Canada were in the labour force. That percentage increased to 45.9% in 1977. This represents an increase in the participation rate for women of 36%. The most significant increase in female labour force participation has been among married women. Between 1959 and 1977, the participation rate for married women went from 18% to 44.1%. Today three out of every five women in the labour force are married women.

The increased female labour force participation rate is not the cause of accelerating unemployment. While the participation rate for women has increased over the past decade by 36%, unemployment for men and women during the same period has increased by 100%. For women alone, the unemployment rate went from 3.7% in 1967 to 9.5% in 1977. This represents a 157% increase which is greater than the increase in the rate of unemployment for men. In 1977, unemployment was higher for women than men for Canada as a whole and for all provinces with the exception of Newfoundland (Table 1).

According to the official statistics, unemployment among women was "only" 30% higher than it was among men in 1977. But when the hidden unemployed, those who gave up looking for non-existent jobs, are added, the true rate of unemployment among women turns out to be 58% higher than it is among men! Of the 487,000 hidden unemployed in 1977, 38% were young people and 41% were adult women, for a total of 79%. Only 21% of the hidden unemployed were adult men. For those 25 years of age and over, the hidden unemployed brings the rate among adult men to 6.8%, whereas the rate among adult women is increased to 13.7%. The rate among adult women is thus twice as high as among adult men (Table 2).

The hidden unemployed are disproportionately composed of women. These are women who had not looked for work during the previous four weeks. But most of them had looked for work in the previous six months and then gave up because there was no work to be found. If economic conditions are unfavourable and job opportunities are poor, many women are "discouraged" out of the labour force. Similarly, many women who would prefer to work are prevented from doing so by a lack of supportive services such as day care. In 1973 Statistics Canada reported that there were 149,000 women in Canada who preferred to work but could not make satisfactory child care arrangements. With recent budgetary restraints in most provinces, the problem of inadequate day care services has become even more acute.

### Women: the last hired, first fired

Clearly, women are being hit harder than men by the current unemployment crisis. Of all people in the labour force, including the employed, unemployed and hidden unemployed, women constitute 39%. Yet women make up 44% of the officially acknowledged unemployed and 60% of the hidden unemployed. They are the victims of a government that views women as a cheap source of labour to be called on when the economy expands and to be discarded when it contracts.

The high level of unemployment among women reflects the fact that women, particularly married women, seeking employment outside the home are not being hired. The government has not responded to a growing number of

TABLE I

Rate of Unemployment, by Sex and Province, Canada, Average 1977

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Nfld.</u>	<u>P.E.I.</u>	<u>N.S.</u>	<u>N.B.</u>	<u>Que.</u>	<u>Ont.</u>	<u>Man.</u>	<u>Sask.</u>	<u>Alta.</u>	<u>B.C.</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Women	9.5	15.4	*	11.6	14.9	11.5	8.6	5.7	5.7	5.2	10.4
Men	7.3	16.2	*	10.1	12.5	9.6	5.9	5.4	3.9	3.9	7.3
Total	8.1	15.9	10.0	10.7	13.4	10.3	7.0	5.9	4.5	4.4	8.5

\* Data based on very small sample and not considered reliable.

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, December 1977, cat. no. 71-001, table 71.



TABLE 2

Number of Unemployed and Unemployment Rates in 1977

	<u>Number of Unemployed</u>		<u>Unemployment Rates</u> (as Per Cent of Labour Force)		
	<u>Official</u>	<u>Hidden</u>	<u>Official</u>	<u>Plus Hidden</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
<u>All</u>	862,000	487,000	8.1	12.2	50%
<u>Men</u>	482,000	192,000	7.3	9.9	36%
15 - 24	236,000	89,000	15.0	19.5	30%
25 plus	246,000	103,000	4.9	6.8	39%
<u>Women</u>	380,000	295,000	9.4	15.6	65%
15 - 24	178,000	95,000	13.8	19.8	43%
25 plus	202,000	200,000	7.4	13.7	85%

SOURCE: R.H. Robinson, "A Secondary Majority: The Hidden Unemployed",  
Canadian Forum, October 1977, p.16.

women wishing to establish careers for themselves outside of the home. It has also refused to recognize that a growing number of married women are entering the labour force in order to keep up with the rising cost of living. By working outside the home, married women can accomplish more in economic terms for their families than they can by intensifying their labour in the home.

Instead of drawing back into the household, more women are claiming unemployment benefits and searching for work, thereby remaining part of the work force.

The higher unemployment rate for women than men also reflects the fact that women are being laid off in greater numbers than men. Under the present economic system, employers hiring workers are inclined to hire low-paid women workers who can be laid off without much difficulty during an economic recession. Because women are less likely to belong to unions, more likely to take on part-time work, and less likely to have seniority and training, they are easier to lay off than men. But it is a vicious circle. Companies are less likely to invest in training their women workers and more likely to discourage unionization of female employees because it is profitable for them to maintain women as a reserve army of cheap labour.

#### Liberal Myths about Working Women

Women are serving as scapegoats for the economic failures of the present government. The Liberal government is not only ignoring the problem of high unemployment among women, it is also encouraging negative attitudes about women in the work force. It is perpetuating myths about women that bear no relationship to reality and that are not supported by any statistics or studies. The most cruel and callous myths include:

- 1) working women are only secondary earners so it doesn't matter if they are unemployed;
- 2) women are taking jobs away from men;
- 3) the weak labour force attachment of women is causing high unemployment;
- 4) women abuse unemployment insurance.

#### Women as Secondary Income Earners

To classify all women as secondary wage earners is a refusal to recognize the reality of working women. The majority of women in the labour force are economically compelled to work. Of the approximate 4,000,000 women in the labour force in 1975 (excluding the hidden unemployed), one-third were single women, 347,000 were widowed, divorced or separated, and 767,000 were married to husbands earning less than \$10,000 a year. These women represented over 61% of the female labour force.



TABLE 3

Female Labour Force, by Marital Status, 1975

	<u>Number</u> (000)	<u>Percentage</u>
Single	1,146	31.0
Married, husband earning \$10,000 plus	1,437	38.9
Married, husband earning \$10,000 or less	767	20.7
Widowed, divorced, separated	<u>347</u>	<u>9.4</u>
	3,697	100.0

SOURCES: Labour Canada, Women in the Labour Force, 1976, p. 33, table 14;  
Statistics Canada, Income Distribution by Size in Canada, 1975,  
 cat. no. 13-204, table 23, p. 51.

Single women, who constitute 31 per cent of the female labour force work to support themselves and to pay for their education or job training. Similarly, the nine per cent of the female labour force who are widowed, divorced or separated, work to support themselves. Over one-half of these women (191,000 estimated for 1977) are single-parent women who are not only responsible for their own economic well-being, but are also responsible for one or more dependent children. In 1975 40.0% of female-headed families as compared to 9.2% of male-headed families lived below the poverty line. It is clear that single-parent women have to work just to maintain a subsistence level of living and to escape welfare.

Married women in the labour force are receiving the greatest brunt of the drive to make women believe that their true place is in the home. There seems to be little recognition of the fact that two incomes are necessary just to stay above the poverty line. Rising prices and low income other than the wife's wages clearly act as a strong push factor for the wife to seek employment. In 1975, there were 2,437 thousand families with both husband and wife receiving incomes, from an estimated total of 5,596 thousand families. Almost half of the families with both husband and wife working had a total income of less than \$15,000 a year. All available data indicate that

the lower the family's income (excluding the wife's earnings) the greater the likelihood that a married woman will work outside the home. This means that many families escape being categorized as poor because the wife works and that many non-poor families consist of two members earning "poor" wages.

TABLE 4

Income Distribution of Families With  
Both Husband and Wife Receiving an Income

<u>Income Group</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Under \$2,000	0.4
\$ 2,000 - \$ 2,999	0.9
3,000 - 3,999	2.1
4,000 - 4,999	2.9
5,000 - 5,999	4.4
6,000 - 6,999	3.9
7,000 - 7,999	3.1
8,000 - 8,999	3.0
9,000 - 9,999	2.8
10,000 - 10,999	3.8
11,000 - 11,999	4.6
12,000 - 12,999	4.8
13,000 - 13,999	4.8
14,000 - 14,999	5.0
15,000 - 16,999	10.4
17,000 - 19,999	14.0
20,000 - 24,999	15.9
25,000 and over	<u>13.1</u>
Total	100.0

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, Income Distribution by Size in Canada, 1975,  
cat. no. 13-207, p. 49, table 20.



All women cannot be considered as secondary wage earners and their unemployment cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Their work is essential to the economy and their earnings are essential to the household. To call them secondary is out-of-date and discriminatory.

Women as Competition for "Men's Jobs"

The growing attack on working women is also based on the mythical assumption that the exit of women from the labour force will provide more jobs for men. This proposal not only contravenes the international principle that all persons have a right to a job. It also ignores the fact that women and men are in different labour markets and, therefore, not directly competitive with one another. This is demonstrated by the fact that a high percentage of the unemployment among adult men is to be found in occupations in which practically none of the female labour force is employed.

TABLE 5

Some Leading Occupations of Female Labour Force, Canada, 1971

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Females as Percentage of Labour Force in Each Occupation</u>
Secretaries/Stenographers	97.4
Sales Clerks	66.0
Elementary Teachers	82.3
Waitresses	82.9
Tellers & Cashiers	91.3
Nurses	95.8
Receptionists	92.6
Telephone Operators	95.9
Baby-sitters	96.6
Supervisors	16.8

SOURCE: Gail C. Cook, Ed., Opportunity For Choice,  
Statistics Canada in Association with the C.D. Howe Research  
Institute, Ottawa, 1976, p. 115

Women unfortunately continue to be employed in what are known as female job "ghettos". The 1971 Census shows, for example, that 97 per cent of all secretaries, 82 per cent of all elementary teachers, 91 per cent of all tellers and cashiers, and 96 per cent of all telephone operators are women. The female labour force has been growing but the percentage of women employed in the same few occupations has remained fairly constant over

the years. Even now two-thirds of all working women are employed in only three occupations: clerical, sales, and service occupations. The majority of women are concentrated in occupations which men have not found particularly attractive. The removal of women from these positions would hardly benefit today's unemployed male workers since men have been neither willing to accept such positions nor qualified to fill the majority of jobs held by women.

There is no substance to the suggestion that women are taking jobs away from men. Despite the publicity given to women in non-traditional female jobs, very few breakthroughs have been made. In 1976 women represented 20 per cent of the total employed in managerial and administrative occupations. However, this represents less than four per cent of the total female labour force.

The record of the federal public service, which should be providing leadership in the area of equal job opportunities, is deplorable. Over the past five years the percentage of administrative support jobs filled by women has increased steadily from 68.2 per cent in 1972 to 79.9 per cent in 1977, creating the biggest job ghetto in the public service. In few departments, if any, do women hold any position of influence. According to the Public Service Commission's 1977 annual report, there were only 38 females in the Senior Executive category compared to 1,286 males. The government is engaging in tokenism. Little progress has been made and indeed, in many cases the situation has actually regressed.

#### Women As Cheap Labour

The female job ghettos have been traditionally shunned by men. High on the list for rejecting these jobs would be the low wages that women have had to accept. In 1975, the average earnings for women in service occupations was \$4,711, in sales \$5,545 and in clerical jobs \$7,157. Even in these fields, which predominantly employ women, men are still earning more money. In many cases the gap between male and female earnings has widened. For example, in 1967, women in the clerical field earned 65.3% of male earnings while in 1975 it had dropped to 64.7% (Table 6).

There is no evidence of an even moderate decline in pay discrimination. Indeed, in many instances, discrimination has become more severe. Statistics indicate that the wage gap has increased to a ratio of .54 in an overall comparison between male and female workers, and that a narrower comparison of full-year, full-time workers between 1961 and 1971 shows that the wage gap has remained relatively constant at the ratio of .59. Based on 1975 data, the average hourly and weekly pay rates for men exceeded those for women in virtually every occupation.

The existence of an earnings gap between men and women reflects, among other things, an increase in part-time employment among women, and the lack of retraining programmes for women, and, most importantly, the prevalence of discrimination or the fact that women are not paid according to male pay structures.

In 1975, 20.3 per cent of women workers worked part-time, while only 5.1 per cent of men did so. While part-time work is desirable to many women who also have to perform household tasks, it makes them more vulnerable



TABLE 6

Average Income of Full Year Workers, Canada, 1975

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Managerial	\$10,805	\$18,747
Professional	9,952	16,772
Clerical	7,157	11,045
Sales	5,545	13,758
Service	4,711	10,136
Farming, etc.	4,148	8,946
Processing and Machining	7,270	11,928
Product Fabricating etc.	6,060	12,007
Construction	(1)	13,483
Transport, etc.	6,660	12,174

(1) Sample inadequate for reliable estimate

SOURCE: Statistics Canada #13-207, 1975, Table 57

in the work force. Part-time workers are largely non-unionized, do not always receive the same rates as full-time workers do, and do not have fringe benefits to be dealt with on leaving work. It is not uncommon for women, who want to work full-time, to be forced to take part-time jobs. Many companies will attempt to get around paying full-timers by only making part-time work available for women. The increase in part-time work for women contributes to the employers' rationale in taking advantage of women by lower wages.

Programmes of vocational training and retraining can be an important bridge for women attempting to upgrade their position in the labour force. While the number of women in such training courses is increasing, the available data shows clearly that women have the highest enrolment in traditional, female-oriented vocations. Women are very much in the minority in technical, machining, finance and supervisory courses. Similarly, women are fairly well represented in Canada Manpower training programmes that provide basic training for skill development but very poorly represented in Canada Manpower apprenticeship training programmes. For the year 1975-76, women represented only 2.8 per cent of all people enrolled as apprentice trainees. Such training generally leads to well paying skilled jobs, but these are almost exclusively male bastions.

The small incidence of women in well paid skilled jobs is related to the support provided by schools, guidance counsellors and manpower training officers. Women continue to be encouraged to enrol in social work, health



and office and secretarial courses. There is increasing evidence of Manpower officers making it difficult for women to obtain training in less traditional fields: pressuring women to take clerical courses, encouraging women not to look for work at all, and providing misinformation about qualifications and training availability.

For the federal public service very little is being done to recruit qualified women and less than nothing is being done to help women trapped in job ghettos. The little data that is available indicates that less than 10 per cent of the money allocated for courses, seminars and training is spent on women. The Career Assignment Program, the one programme which could train women for senior positions, has been a dismal failure. The percentage of women who participated in CAP was down from 33% in 1975 to 14.3% in 1977. Yet women represent 34% of all federal public service employees.

Discrimination on the basis of sex remains the most important single factor in understanding the wage gap between men and women. Many employers assign low wages to jobs that they expect - and sometimes insist - will be filled by women. These women receive the pay they do - not because of the work they are performing - but because they are women. The result is that the almost four million women in the Canadian labour force, on the whole, are paid less than men, even when they are performing similar or identical jobs. It is estimated that Canada loses \$7 billion annually in potential wage and salary income as a result of male-female inequalities.

The degree to which employers can exercise discrimination is to some extent influenced by labour market conditions. The more need there is for women workers, the more they have to be paid. However, with high unemployment and a segregated labour force, there is severe competition for the few jobs available to women and employers are more likely to get away with depressing wages in these jobs.

#### Opposition To Equal Pay For Work Of Equal Value

Desegregation of occupations which leads to greater equality in compensation depends upon the implementation of equal pay for work of equal value. The passage of the Canadian Human Rights Commission with the inclusion of the equal pay for work of equal value test, is a welcome improvement to the legal tests for discrimination. This concept, if applied, promises to help women by narrowing the large wage gaps between men and women workers. It means that women ghettoized into certain occupations would be able to reach out and compare their jobs to male-dominated fields where wages are significantly better.

It appears that the federal government and some of the provinces are not prepared to live up to the new standards set in the Human Rights Act. For example, the federal government refused to intervene on behalf of the female steel plate examiners working for the British American Bank Note Co., a company doing contract work for the federal government. The women went on strike seeking wage parity with male employees at the company. Despite the fact that these skilled women with up to 25 years experience as plate inspectors were earning less than the male janitors, the Ontario labour ministry would not assist the union because the comparison did not involve employees performing "substantially similar work". The federal government



also refused to help end this blatant discrimination and the women ended up going to binding arbitration which did not rule in their favour. If it was committed to its own legislation, the Liberal government could have enforced section 19 of the Human Rights Act which empowers the government to include directives in federal contracts with respect to the anti-discrimination aspects of the Act.

The Anti-Inflation Board has served to maintain the gap between salaries paid to men and women. Despite the catch-up clause which provides the AIB with the mandate to allow women bigger increases than men when salaries are discriminatory, the AIB has blocked the elimination of the wage gap. There have been cases where, after job evaluations had been done and employers agreed to give women larger wage increases than allowed under the anti-inflation guidelines, the wage increases were rolled back. Particularly noteworthy is the case of the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre, where the AIB rolled back the increases agreed to by labour and management by some 50 per cent on the basis of "equal pay for equal work". It examined apparent discrimination between men and women doing the same job but ignored the discrimination of job ghettos.

Both the AIB and the government's proposal to tie public sector wages to those in the private sector are contrary to the spirit of the Canadian Human Rights Act. Bill C-28 is directly opposed to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value since it introduces a comparison of one job ghetto to another, creates a downward pressure on the already low wages of women workers and will destroy the potential for improving women's wages through collective bargaining. The human rights legislation is merely an instrument for the attainment of justice. It will not be a useful instrument until administered in the spirit which inspired it.

### Government Response

At a time when unemployment has never been higher among women, the Liberal government has chosen to deliberately overlook the problem and to foster negative attitudes about working women.

In government programmes and activities designed to alleviate or reduce the unemployment problem, women have been eliminated as a target group. The Employment Strategy for 1979-80 presented by Bud Cullen, Minister of Employment & Immigration on September 1, 1978, is completely void of any projects or measures to ease the unemployment problem facing women. The Employment Strategy, while totally neglecting women, promises to increase youth employment at a cost of \$225 million in 1979-80. In fact, federal funding of projects specifically benefiting women is being cut-off.

One example of this is the government's recent decision not to renew its federal grant to Womanpower, the Montreal job-placement agency for hard-to-employ women funded by a \$76,000 grant. This year-old agency had found jobs for more than 150 women, and counselled hundreds more. It dealt largely with immigrant women and those who have been out of the labour force for some years. All across Canada, women's emergency centres, career counselling services, and job-placement agencies are fighting for survival in the face of government cutbacks.



The government claims that it has a policy to help women gain job skills, to help employers eliminate barriers to women, to help open up more jobs to women. But it has provided no means of ensuring that these objectives will be carried out, other than the assumed co-operation of individual Manpower Centres. Such co-operation has not been forthcoming and, in fact, the reverse is true. There is increasing evidence that Manpower Offices are particularly hard on women to the extent of being blatantly discriminatory. Cases have been documented where Manpower officers have encouraged separated women to collect maintenance rather than look for work; have discouraged women away from non-traditional careers and forced them into taking clerical courses; have withheld information about job openings and made the process of applying for job training unnecessarily complicated; and have actually suggested to married women that they should stay in the home.

### Discrimination in the Unemployment Insurance Program

As part of its campaign to drive women back into the home, the Liberal government is making it increasingly difficult for women to collect unemployment insurance benefits. Regulations governing the implementation of such benefits have always discriminated against women. For example, women are disqualified from UI benefits if they leave the work force for even a few days to give birth to a child, even though they work well over the required number of weeks to qualify. In addition, women are expected to have made firm commitments about suitable child care arrangements before meeting UIC requirements of a claimant's availability for work.

Recently the government has stepped up its attack on women as "cheaters" and "abusers" of unemployment insurance. In 1977, it released a "Comprehensive Review of the Unemployment Insurance Program in Canada" which made incredible and unsubstantiated statements about women workers:

- 1) Males were keener in finding jobs and females might not have actively sought jobs;
- 2) Female rate of disqualification/disentitlement is more than twice as high as men;
- 3) To the extent that secondary earners are more prone to misuse of the program, it is not surprising that a substantial proportion of the benefits are paid to families with incomes in excess of \$10,000;
- 4) The continued growth of secondary earners with unstable employment patterns is likely to generate unexpected increases in UI benefit expenditures.

Together these statements imply that women are only working for "luxuries", have a weak attachment to the labour force, are not keen to work and tend to misuse the program through non-availability, refusal to work and inadequate job search. These impressions cannot be supported factually and, in fact, the statements made about women throughout the Review bear no relationship to the data presented. As Elise Rosen of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women wrote in 1977:



By its technique of making sweeping generalizations about women claimants which are not substantiated by the data, this Review is dangerously misleading in the picture it purports to draw of women claimants. It should not be used for policy purposes until a more thorough and detailed analysis of available information has been undertaken.

The Liberal government has done exactly what the Advisory Council said it should not do. It has developed policy blaming women for abusing unemployment insurance and making it more difficult for women to collect benefits without carrying out a single objective study on women as unemployment insurance claimants. The cutbacks in UI benefits recently announced by Cullen represent one of the most vicious attacks on working women in recent Canadian history.

The proposed changes to the Unemployment Insurance program will hurt women more than any other group in Canadian society. They are designed to deny UI benefits to those who cannot find long-term employment. Obviously women, the "last hired, and the first fired", will be affected more than men. Rather than understanding how high unemployment leads to a tenuous attachment to the labour force among women, the government has chosen to cut them off completely, no matter how grave their economic circumstances. Several of the proposed changes will have particularly devastating effects on women in the labour force.

1. The higher entrance requirements for repeaters means that claimants, who had previously received UI benefits, will have to find work at least equal to the weeks of benefits drawn in their previous claim. In other words, if a person collects benefits for 20 weeks and then finds work, that work must last at least 20 weeks before requalifying for UI benefits. For many women, who are more prone to lay-offs than men and more likely to work at short-term, contract jobs, it will be almost impossible to meet this requirement. The twisted logic behind this change is that it will "require claimants to show more substantial attachment to the labour force before qualifying for UI". No consideration is given to the fact that women will never be able to build a stronger attachment to the labour force if there are no jobs, or only short-term jobs available.
2. The increased entrance requirements for new entrants and re-entrants to the labour force state that claimants will have to work at least 40 weeks in the last two years, of which 10 - 14 weeks must have been within the last year, before qualifying for benefits. While the government may have intended this change to be a shot gun on young people, it is women, particularly older women, who will receive the brunt of the blast. Women who have spent years in the home are most likely to be unskilled and thus only able to find work on a very temporary basis. Many find that the only way they can obtain the odd job is by registering through temporary employment agencies. To



require such women to accumulate 40 weeks of work in two years, reveals that the government is totally unconcerned and insensitive to the employment situation facing women. It is forcing widowed or separated women who desperately need to work to resort to welfare as their only means of survival.

3. Although women are often denied equal access to training courses, training for many women is still one of the only ways to achieve stable employment. However, at the very time when unemployment among women has reached a new high, the Liberal government has introduced a disincentive to get training. New regulations introduced by Cullen on September 1, 1978 make it impossible for anyone collecting UI benefits to get a training allowance as well as reduce the training allowance in general. Before the introduction of this regulation, a woman with four children, who is on a training course, would have been eligible to receive \$109 per week. Without this allowance, a single-parent mother with four children will never be able to meet the additional costs of transportation and day care that a training course brings if she was only living on UI benefits. This provision specifically deprives women of employment opportunities and therefore appear to contravene the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The proposed changes to the Unemployment Insurance program will particularly affect women. Yet the rationale behind the changes bears no relationship to the reality facing working women. Women have a tougher time finding jobs than men. But that is because women are confined to fewer jobs than men and unemployment has hit these job ghettos particularly hard. In 1977 the greatest number of unemployed women workers was to be found in those occupations where women are generally segregated (clerical 106,000; services 81,000; sales 34,000; teaching 13,000; medicine and health 15,000). If women are more unlikely to have unstable employment patterns than men, then surely this must be understood in light of the higher unemployment for women and the less attractive job opportunities for women than men.

The unstable labour force attachment of women is not a cause of high unemployment; it is a consequence of the government's inaction in the area of equal job opportunities. Without the security associated with unionization, without employers willing to invest in the training of women, without government commitment to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, and without government initiatives in the area of day care and other support services, women will not be able to enjoy stable, permanent, and decent employment.

Under the Liberal government, women cannot win. If they enter the work force, they are accused of taking jobs from men. If they give up looking for work that doesn't exist, they are accused of not wanting to work. This confusing logic is rooted to the Liberal government's lack of interest and commitment in working towards equal economic opportunities for women.



## NDP Policy and Recommendations

The New Democratic Party recognizes that women have made an important contribution to the Canadian economy. Women with their skills have carried out jobs that keep the economy functioning, jobs that provide important services to people. Yet despite the important role they play, women continue to be treated as second-class citizens. Increasingly, women are being blamed for the country's economic ills and denied the freedom to seek employment on an equal basis as men.

The NDP believes that a healthy economy depends on the full and equal participation of women. Finding work for everyone is a matter of social justice as well as a necessity for the balance of the economy. The failure to use human resources to the full is an unacceptable form of waste. The Liberal suggestion that women go back to their homes would have a disastrous effect on the economy. Clearly, the present government has not calculated the economic cost of failing to employ women.

The NDP realizes that women are bearing the greatest brunt of high unemployment and high inflation. This situation is unlikely to change under the present economic system which is oriented towards profits rather than the fulfilment of citizens' needs. It is in the interest of the present government and the capitalist economy to have a large reserve of cheap labour made up of women who can be shunted between house and outside employment at will, according to fluctuations in the economy. Women's unemployment is, therefore, a political problem which will not be solved without moving in the direction of a democratic socialist society. The right to work is one of the basic indivisible principles of the NDP. It is committed to a full employment policy that does not discriminate on the basis of sex and that develops special measures to ease the unemployment problem facing women.

Under the present system, collective bargaining is one of the only routes available to women for improving their wages and working conditions. The NDP believes that efforts to organize women into trade unions must be encouraged and supported since only by strengthening their position in the work force will women be able to counteract bad legislation. It is also important for women to voice their grievances in a forceful way on the political platform and to this end, women are being encouraged to participate at all decision-making levels of the NDP.

The NDP believes that stability of employment and the dignity of working women should be safeguarded in legislation. It will continue to fight for legislative measures that will end existing discrimination in the labour force and that will create equal employment opportunities. It recommends changes in several specific areas.

First, the implementation of a full employment policy must include special measures to create jobs for women. The NDP would institute public and private sector programmes to sponsor employment opportunities specifically for women. It would develop an affirmative action programme in the public sector with teeth whereby the proportion of women in the working population are taken into account when jobs were filled. This involves the establishment



of quotas, targets and timetables for female representation at each stage of the employment process.

Affirmative action programmes would also be developed in the private sector. Public financial support for private enterprise, in the form of contracts, grants or tax breaks, would be linked with the requirements that targets and timetables for female representation be established at all levels of employment, that women be paid on the basis of equal pay for work of equal value, and that equality be built into career structures, promotion schemes and benefits. Through affirmative action legislation, women would eventually be represented in all professions, in numbers corresponding to their population figures, thus breaking down the distinctions between purely male and female work. The purpose of affirmative action would not be to give women special rights but to deal with the fact that women are in a disadvantaged position to begin with.

The creation of equal employment opportunities also requires significant emphasis on training for women in the more specialized and technical areas of employment where women are seriously under-represented. The NDP strongly condemns the Liberal government for reducing training allowances at a time when unemployment for women has never been so high and when women should be given every incentive to seek training. The NDP would encourage vocational training centres to include a proportional number of women in their programmes and would make it economically possible for women to get such training.

The NDP would enforce the concept of equal pay for work of equal value as a means of improving the economic situation facing working women and of ending the discrimination of job ghettos. It would begin by implementing the concept in the federal public service and making it a condition of any federal contract to private enterprise. It will strongly oppose the government's intention to tie salaries in the public service to those in the private sector, a proposal which contravenes the Canadian Human Rights Act. The NDP would also work with provincial governments to ensure decent minimum wages and to discourage attempts to introduce differentials in the minimum wage for people who earn tips.

The NDP recognizes the need for changes in the family so that the role played by men is important as that played by women, at the same time ensuring that women have the same opportunities as men to create a position of economic, financial and personal independence for themselves. To this end, the NDP would work towards the following changes:

- 1) ensure that maternity leave is made available to both men and women on the birth of a child since it would help to redistribute the tasks involved. This change should include guarantees of a job to return to with no loss of pay or seniority;
- 2) provide federal funding for public or co-operative day care centres and introduce realistic child care tax credits to be given to the lower income spouse, regardless of sex;
- 3) change UIC regulations so that claimants with dependents are not disqualified because of difficulties with child care arrangements and so that pregnant women are eligible to receive either regular or



maternity UI benefits when they become unemployed, regardless of when they become pregnant;

- 4) create equal conditions of employment for part-time workers so that they receive benefits on a pro-rata basis;
- 5) develop more enlightened personnel practices such as shorter work weeks and flexible hours, thereby enabling both parents to work and spend more time together in the family.

Finally, the NDP would make freedom of choice a reality for all women whether that means working in the home or seeking outside employment. To make that choice possible, the NDP would ensure that equality is entrenched in laws governing the income tax act, family property and pension plans. The full and equal participation of women in Canada's social, public and economic life, will lead to a better society with a higher quality of life and human relationships.