

OUR TIMES

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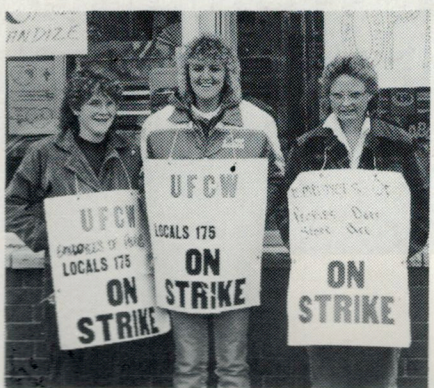


UNION SISTERS

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Frank Benn
Canadian Director
UFCW Region 18



United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
61 International Blvd., Suite 300, Rexdale, Ontario M9W 6K4



Our Times believes that progressive journalism means giving people a chance to speak for themselves.

A unionized cooperative publishes Our Times which, in 1984, went from being a quarterly to a monthly publication. Our Times was started four years ago to answer the need for a labour journal that focuses around the issues that are vital and current to today's trade union movement. It is our policy to publish not articles on labour but articles by labour that has brought us strong support from major unions and has led to the formation of a labour advisory board.

At present many unions take advantage of the educational potential of Our Times by buying copies of the magazine for their executive, staff and their individual education programs. Our Times also carries advertising designed to assist and educate our growing readership.

We hope that your union will take advantage of Our Times by ordering copies of the magazine at our reduced bundle rate.

Our times

OUR TIMES

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JOSE KAUFMAN

SISTERS & BROTHERS

At first glance it may seem that these are difficult times for working women to be demanding more from the union movement. Down here in the working class, there is still a recession. Unemployment and layoffs have reduced union memberships. Governments and employers are always introducing new and complicated limitations on union organizing, collective bargaining and the right to strike. In recent times, many unions have declared victory when they simply beat back employer demands for concessions.

At the same time, women workers have achieved many things in the last 10 years. There are now about a million women union members in Canada, about double that of a decade earlier. Spurred on by the women's movement, most unions now have active women's committees, and a number have internal affirmative action programmes. With women making up nearly half the work force, issues like parental leave, child care, sexual harassment, and equal pay have found their way onto the union agenda. Strikers at Canada Post, Eaton's, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (and there are surely others) have received concrete support from independent women's organizations.

Nevertheless, as the articles in this issue make clear, women workers are demanding more from unions. They are demanding more because although women now have a kind of political or legal equality, they are still denied a real material equality. It's a plain fact that women earn, on average, just over 60 per cent of what men earn and they comprise a majority of the poor. Most working women are married and work a second unpaid shift in their homes. Only one in four women workers are unionized, compared to nearly half of the male work force. Inside unions, women are under-represented at the leadership level. No wonder women are demanding more!

They are also giving more and they are fighting harder. Although this is partly due to changes in the Canadian economy, women are now unionizing at a faster rate than men are, and faster than they are entering the work force. In the process they are challenging the union movement to better defend their interests.

It's an often painful struggle. But it's also a welcome struggle and one that fills us with real hope. We all, brothers and sisters, benefit from a labour movement whose active concerns extend beyond our pay cheques and embrace broader social issues. Labour's unity is based on equality. And if not yet full equality, at the very least, a determined commitment to fight for it.

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CALM PHOTO

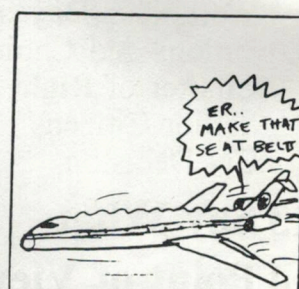
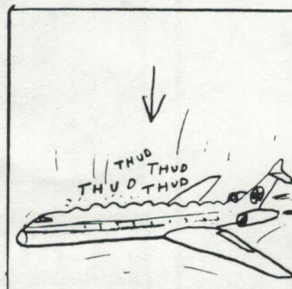
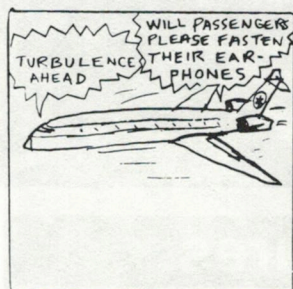
LETTERS

Highlighting risks

To the Editors:

I am writing to commend Ron Labonte and the editors of Our Times on the publication of the articles on Smoking and the Working Class. This is a very difficult subject for many health activists, particularly those working with trade unions, such as myself. Ron has done an excellent job of highlighting not only the health risks of cigarette smoking, but also putting this hazard in the social context it belongs, without falling into the "blame the victim" tone that does often characterize such discussions.

Working people produce the wealth of the nation and deserve good health. Safe and healthful conditions are worth fighting for, both on and off the job. As an occupational physician I have seen dozens of workers whose workers' compensation claims were denied, largely because their smoking habit influenced to some extent the development



FLIGHT SCAR Funnies

MIKE CONSTABLE

or progression of their work-related disease, or because the compensation board could argue that it might have done so. As a researcher in occupational health I have encountered the difficulties of trying to prove the hazardous nature of workplace exposures, sometimes precisely because the conditions they produce are also caused by cigarette smoking, and the extent of smoking in the workforce may mask the effect of the workplace hazard. Often these same hazards only become recognized and addressed when the effects on non-smokers are documented. Also, as Ron discussed at length in his second article, many workers have diseases which are induced by exposure to the cigarette smoke of others. These workers have rights too. Thus the smoking habit hinders the recognition of occupational hazards, hurts the acquisition of Workers' Compensation benefits and may itself be a cause of occupational disease.

But more importantly, just as working class people are entitled to decent housing, good nutrition, and adequate leisure time, so too should workers and their families have the opportunity to grow up without developing self-deprecating and harmful habits, largely induced, as Ron points out, by the class that benefits from ignoring the health needs of workers on the job as well.

The smoking habit indeed deserves the attention of the labour movement and progressive individuals. Ron Labonte deserves credit for introducing this issue in Our Times magazine. As one further point to add to his hit list of things to do, unions should negotiate for smoking and non-smoking areas so that both groups of workers may be suitable accommodated, while anti-smoking programs are mounted.

Sincerely,
Annalee Yassi, M.D., DOHS, M.Sc.
Manitoba Federation of Labour,
Occupational Health Centre.

Unjust expenses

To the Editors:

Having recently returned from working in Nicaragua for over a year, I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the courageous stance you have taken in the pages of Our Times on the issue of war and peace. This is an issue of vital importance to the working people of Canada and the U.S. If the Reagan administration is permitted to continue its escalation of bloody aggression in El Salvador and on the borders of Nicaragua, it will be American youth sent to die for the profits of the defense industry and the corporations which have plundered the economies of these impoverished nations. American direct intervention exists right now, with the funding and training of the 'contras' mercenary forces, the Costa Rican and Honduran armed forces whose leaderships are bent on provoking a border clash with Sandinista defense forces, and the army of torturers that is called the 'government' of El Salvador. The course of American policy is leading inevitably to an invasion by U.S. troops, and we must firmly demand that the Canadian government forthrightly condemn the U.S. war drive. As with Vietnam, it is we who will pay the expenses of this unjust game.

I must mention that friends regularly sent issues of Our Times to the few Canadian residents of Nicaragua and it was invaluable in keeping touch with the pulse of Canadian movements for social change.

In solidarity,
Barbara Stewart
Canadian Action for Nicaragua
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LETTERS

Mac-Pap meeting

To the Editors:

Considering the events going on in present-day Nicaragua, I'd like to remind readers that 1986 marks the 50th anniversary of a distinguished and similar struggle. Half a century ago, many progressive Canadians crossed the Atlantic to fight fascism in Spain. In fact, 1,200 men went to Spain as part of the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion of Canada, 600 of whom never returned.

The veterans of this brigade continue to work against fascism and world war. We've taken a special interest in the struggles of the Nicaraguan people. To this end, we are holding a meeting on Sunday, Sept. 29 at 8 p.m. in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education main auditorium (252 Bloor St. West, Toronto) and have invited Nicaraguan Consul General in Canada, Pastor Valle-Garay, to speak.

People are welcome to come and hear Mr.

Valle-Garay and also meet some of the men who fought in Spain. There will be discussion about the Mac-Pap's continuing struggle for government recognition and veterans' pensions along with a report on a book we're putting together about the volunteers.

Along with the speeches, we'll be holding the Mac-Pap annual banquet on the same day, at 6 p.m. in OISE's restaurant. Tickets for that meal are \$15.00 each. Entertainment is planned. If you are interested in attending the banquet please write to us at the Office of the Secretary General, Box 835, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario, M4T 2N7.

In Solidarity,
Ross Russell

Shadow project

To the Editors:

Just a note to thank OUR TIMES for the use of your building for the PAND

International Shadow Project 1985. With your help people in your area were able to get their materials easily.

It was wonderful to work on such a great project with so much good energy, lots of people, and good media.

Let's think of something else.

Thanks again,
Lynn Connell
PAND Toronto

Our mistake

OUR TIMES would like to apologize to Bonnie Heath and our readers for the typos and proofing errors in Bonnie's article which we published in the July issue of the magazine. "Selling Safety" dealt with the Industrial Accident Prevention Association's annual conference held last April in Toronto. Part of the introduction to the piece was also left out. Again, we extend our apologies.



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National President



Nancy Riche
National Secretary-Treasurer

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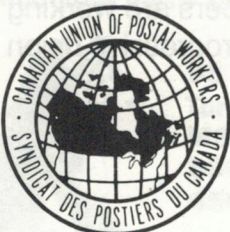
CUPW members have a special reason to celebrate because of the gains made toward the equality of women. Before 1965 women postal workers were almost all part-timers and subject to atrocious working conditions. They were not members of the union. Today women are 40% of full time workers and 60% of the part-time workers. Under the collective agreement they enjoy:

- paid maternity leave
- equal wages
- no discrimination for benefits & rights
- job security

This is a result of the union's militant activity — starting with the 1965 postal strike which paved the way for bargaining rights for all federal public sector workers.

**As postal workers we
have learned — equality
builds strength and
solidarity.**

*THE STRUGGLE
CONTINUES
Women Need Unions
Need Women*



280 Metcalfe St.
Ottawa, Ontario

Abortion is a union issue

Beyond collective bargaining

This August in a Toronto courtroom, a community college teacher from Haileybury argued that he should be exempt from paying full dues to the Ontario Public Service Employees Union as long as union officers continue to squander funds on issues that have nothing to do with collective bargaining. The case has the full support of the National Citizens Coalition which is urging the court to rule that the legitimate activities of trade unions are restricted to workplace issues in the narrowest sense and that dues paid under compulsion must be spent on these activities alone.

One frivolous expenditure cited in the application, along with financial support for disarmament campaigns, for coalitions demanding low-income housing, for British coal miners, Sandinistas, and the New Democratic Party was support for the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics. This particular citation struck a chord in the hearts of some committed trade unionists.

As practised by organizations like the United Auto Workers, social unionism recognizes that the problems oppressing working people do not stop at the company door. This has been the foundation of labour's fight for better pensions, for unemployment insurance, for affordable housing and an end to nuclear war. It's been the basis for entering the political arena to ensure that victories won at the negotiating table are not erased in the legislatures of the nation. In fact the labour movement was instrumental in pushing the New Democratic Party towards a pro-choice position.

But at conventions some labour activists with impeccable credentials have argued against even considering choice resolutions. They've insisted that the struggle for reproductive choice has nothing to do with the fight for a shorter work week, for environmental protection, affir-

mative action or an end to apartheid. From personal religious convictions some members have argued in the pages of union papers, that any trade union supporting the Morgentaler Clinic is stepping far beyond the bounds of labour activism and trespassing on questions of conscience.

In fact, it is the pro-choice advocates who are fighting to make certain that reproductive freedom remains a genuine question of conscience. They want choices about conception and whether to terminate an unwanted pregnancy to be made by the individual instead of dictated by laws which either prohibit options or subject choices to the vagaries of geographical access, wealth and pure chance.

For working women the right to plan and avoid pregnancy has as much to do with economic advancement as access to apprenticeship and equal pay. There's no question that the ability of women to determine when and if

they will bear children has an enormous effect on their ability to work and consequently their ability to secure an adequate income for themselves and their families.

Women already participate in the work force from an extremely disadvantaged position. They're victimized by stereotyping in the educational system, by lack of skills training and outright bias in hiring, wages and promotion. They are concentrated in job ghettos that are rapidly disappearing under the treads of the new technology that management is wheeling in.

Their ability to earn a living in a wage based economy is further compromised by unanticipated pregnancy. In an increasing number of families, both parents must work to maintain a good standard of living for their dependents. Yet government refuses to recognize any obligation to provide universal daycare that will permit women with young children to easily reenter



DAVID SMILEY

COMMERCE SHOULD PLAY FAIR BALL. About 250 members of the Union of Bank Employees took their cause down to a Toronto Blue Jays ball game in August to score some points against the bank, one of the ball clubs sponsors. Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Visa Centre workers in Toronto have been on strike for a first contract since June 12. The Visa strikers are expecting some progress in negotiations this fall as many non-union employees, mostly university students, return to classes and the company is once more faced with a labour shortage.

the work force. For the increasing number of women who are single parents this is doubly hard.

Faced with these economic realities it is crucial that working women have the right to complete access to birth control information, contraceptive devices, gynaecological counselling, and if necessary, the right to abortion.

Certainly the economic order has to be changed so that individuals can have children without suffering gross economic consequences. But the decision making power must be given to women who bear the full social responsibility for child rearing.

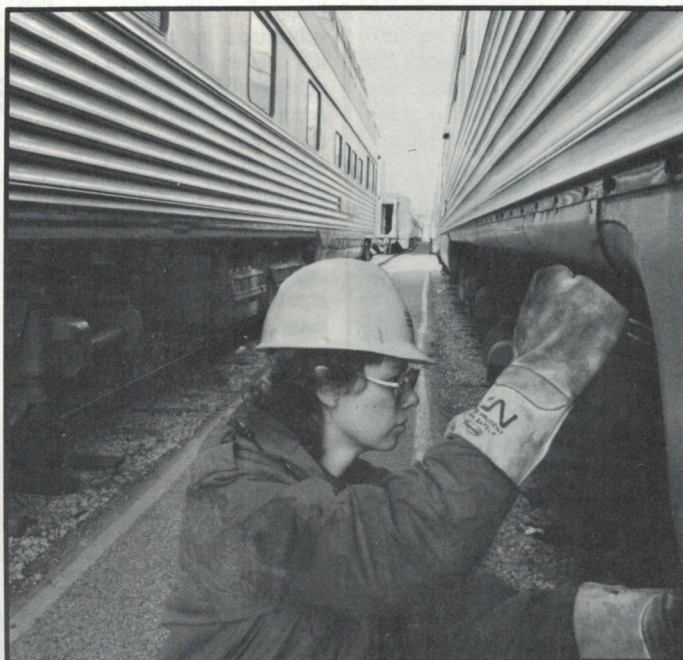
The struggle for reproductive choice, like other labour struggles is about control. The labour movement has always fought to take power from the bosses and give it to the workers, and to make society at large reflect the needs and interests of working people.

Pro-choice advocates are trying to take control over their individual fertility away from impersonal forces in society, whether it's the state, an unsympathetic medical profession or a church to which an individual may or may not adhere.

Inevitably, reproductive choice includes access to abortion. Anyone who has shared responsibility for prevention of pregnancy in an adult sexual relationship will be aware of the shortcomings of existing contraceptive methods. But the struggle for "choice" involves more than just access to abortion. Anyone who has listened to the preachings of the catholic and fundamentalist churches on abortion will have no doubt that these forces are actually fighting against every form of birth control.

Ultimately, if the labour movement ignores the struggle for reproductive choice, their fight to guarantee women's economic equality, will be incomplete.

Mary Rowles



Corporate watch

CN railroading

Many Canadian companies discriminate towards women simply by not hiring them. One such company is the crown corporation Canadian National Rail (CN).

"We've been told for years that CN didn't discriminate against women. Well, I say that's bullshit. The only reason I got my job was because I began working in the office." Karen Pengilley, a member of Local 1183 of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and to whom these words belong, is employed by CN Rail as a heavy machine operator. She's one of the very few women who do this type of work. When Pengilley goes out for 15 to 20 day stretches with a railway gang, she's nearly always the only female going along. Recently, an attempt to alter this sort of situation was shot down by the courts on CN's request.

In July, a federal court of appeal overturned an order made by the Canadian Human Rights Commission which had asked CN to adopt a weak affirmative action program. A complaint had been filed six years before by a Montreal-based women's group called Action Travail des Femmes. When the commission's decision on the complaint came down last year, it demanded CN begin hiring women so they'd eventually make up 13 per cent of the total number of blue collar workers in the St. Lawrence region of Quebec. No women did this sort of work in that part of the country (CN employs only 13 per cent women across Canada in blue collar jobs). The commission also imposed an interim quota of 25 per cent until the overall 13 per cent level was reached.

Ironically, since the commission made its decision, Pengilley says "CN began to hire women like crazy." The jobs involved in-

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clude brake and yard people, checkers, track and signal maintenance, signal helpers, car cleaners, engine cleaners and building laborers.

Evidence suggests the reason why CN hasn't hired women in the past for these jobs is mainly because they don't want to. It's surely not due to a lack of positions. CN, with assets worth \$7.5 billion, is the 13th largest Canadian corporation employing over 66,000 people. These employees work in CN's hotels, trucking, ferrying, consulting operations and, of course, the CN Tower. However, the biggest part of their operation lies in the railways. They oversee 40,255 km of main track, transporting 125 million tons of freight annually.

CN argues they don't hire female workers because women aren't necessarily interested in the railway jobs. But as Pengilley points out, the company never

encourages women to apply for these positions. She says even if they do, it's unlikely they'll get the job. Pengilley indicates the only reason she got her position was because she'd worked in one of CN's offices beforehand.

Why did CN appeal the commission's decision? Michael Matthews, CN's manager of public affairs, says they did so not because they disagreed with the content of the commission's ruling. Instead, he says they simply didn't like the idea of the commission telling them who they could hire. "We can come up with our own employment equity program that is much better than hard and fast quotas," says Matthews. "We didn't think the commission should tell us what quotas we must follow."

This is said despite the fact the company is owned by the federal government. But since its inception in the 1920s, CN rarely aligns itself with the public well

being. Even though it is heavily subsidized by the government, it's never considered itself a publicly owned entity. Instead, according to the Blue Book of Canadian Business, CN was originally created to buy up a number of money losing railway companies so that an essential service could be provided for profitable corporations. In other words, CN transports goods manufactured by privately owned companies to market — at a loss. The company's long term debt is currently \$2.5 billion. One could justify this set up perhaps if CN was accountable to the public. But as the appeal court's decision shows, it isn't even accountable to the human rights commission.

The future for women already

employed by CN doesn't look bright either. While the company seems to have adopted a new hiring policy (one in four new employees must be female), indicators suggest things may get worse before they get better.

Carl Kaufmann, council chairman of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen Local 619, says CN plans to cut 30 per cent of its workforce over the next year. "Women will be affected the greatest because they have the least amount of seniority," he points out.

Meanwhile, the Montreal women's group plans to appeal the court's decision. Perhaps this time a ruling will be in their favour instead of CN's.

Bruce Livesey

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Shadow protest

Anti-nuclear protesting was given an inventive and startling twist last month with the International Shadow Protest, organized in Canada by the Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament (PAND). Hundreds of peace activists across Canada (and thousands world-wide) worked all night long on August 6, painting chalky shadows on downtown sidewalks to commemorate the bombing, 40 years earlier, of Hiroshima, Japan. A number of that city's inhabitants were instantly vapourized and

only their shadows, on sidewalks and buildings, remained. While the federal government continued to debate the relative merits of Canadian participation in the U.S. space based defence plans (nicknamed Star Wars), the American consulate on University Avenue in Toronto was a favourite target of the shadow painters. Pictured here is the consulate's security guard talking with a Toronto street cleaner about how quickly the embarrassing art work could be cleaned up.

SUZY LAKE

OFL daycare campaign

Sharing the caring

A four-year-old is locked in a stairwell with his toys while his divorced father, who cannot find daycare, works. A three-year-old is left in unlicensed group care in a private home. Her parents return to find the sitter, a former mental patient, in a psychotic state. An 18-month-old toddler is left in the care of six-year-old sister while their mother works the 3 to 11 shift.

Not all childcare stories are this desperate. But there is a social phenomenon going on in every Canadian community; decent, loving parents can't find affordable childcare and are being forced to make arrangements that barely meet the most basic needs of a growing child — affection, nourishment, stimulation and security.

Canada, one of the most backward nations in the world as far as daycare goes, provides licensed care for about one out of eight children who need it. The parents of the other seven make do with relatives, unlicensed childcare centres, private babysitters — or situations like the ones described above.

It is a horrific situation with potentially enormous costs. Says Canadian childcare expert Howard Clifford: "What's happening is even worse than we thought."

"Even if only 10 per cent of the country's children are in damaging conditions — and that's a conservative estimate — over the next few years the consequences in terms of school, social and mental problems will bankrupt us."

In the last few years the workforce has been transformed by the entry into the labour force of thousands of women, many of whom are married mothers. Few of these working mothers are seeking "personal fulfillment" and leaving their husbands and kids in the lurch, as so many of

those lamenting declining morals and family life would have us believe.

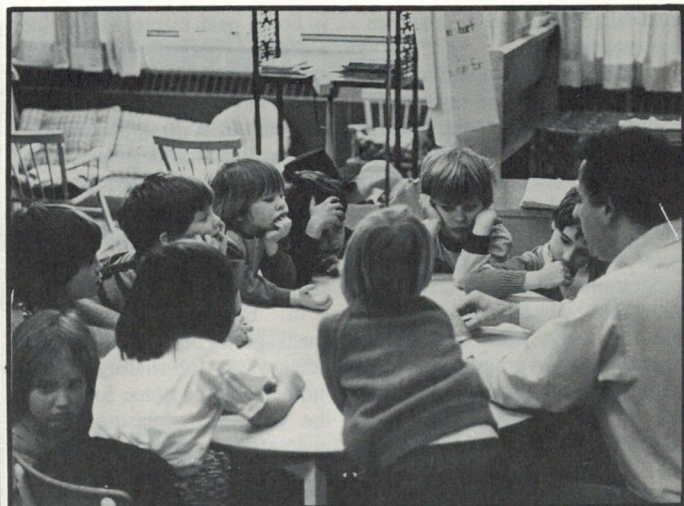
Personal fulfillment is not found making the minimum wage in a non-union shop, which is where far too many women are forced to work. Families living below the poverty line would increase by 60 per cent if it weren't for a second income. And 60 per cent of mothers who work are single, widowed, divorced or married to men who make less than \$10,000 a year.

Economic conditions have forced the nature of family life to change. Most children are now raised in a two-income family. But those same economic conditions have not produced a corresponding social compensation system: an all-encompassing childcare "package," which would address itself to all the problems of the new family: working parents, shift work, after school care for older kids, care of sick children at home or children with special needs or handicaps.

In fact, if anything, we're falling further and further behind in providing care for our kids.

The Ontario government's policy of cutbacks in the social services has forced childcare centres to close or be shabbily maintained. The number of spaces available compared to the number of kids who need care is shrinking dramatically. Childcare workers are paid poverty-level wages, and the subsidies for poor parents do not go far enough around. Low and mid-income families get no help at all and pay an annual average fee of \$3,500.

Corporate money has moved in to take up some of the slack, providing childcare at great expense and turning child-rearing into a profit-making, "marketable" commodity. It's "hamburger" childcare. (Of course, business is lobbying hard



B. GUINN

for the staff-child ratio to be lowered. No surprises.)

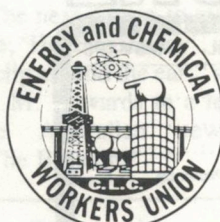
The only solution is for childcare to become the great public issue that free, universal public school education became in the last century. The experts say that childcare before the age of six, the age that kids enter school in

Canada, should be regarded as an extension of the school system, publicly-run, publicly-funded, accessible to every child at no cost to their parents. The labour movement agrees.

Although this may be a revolutionary proposal, just such systems have existed in many in-

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**ONTARIO COUNCIL
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dustrialized European countries for decades.

A full-paid six-month maternity leave is the norm in Europe, with unpaid job-protecting leaves going as high as two years.

But families still need childcare once their child reaches six months. Most children in Europe enter a free, public, pre-school programme when they are three years old, whether or not their mothers work. Most of Europe regards these programmes as being good for children and they are provided as a social right, just like the three Rs are here. As a result, working parents in Europe have few childcare hassles once their child is two or three.

Under the age of two in Europe the situation varies from country to country. East Germany cares for 60 per cent of its under 2's. In France, that figure approaches one-third, with most of the care being provided by licenced family childcare mothers.

In Europe, too, more attention

is being paid to providing older children with before-school and after-school care to alleviate the "latch key" syndrome. In Sweden and Germany these programmes are conducted at "leisure centres" situated adjacent to the preschoolers' facilities so that different aged children can mingle, just as they do in families.

In Europe the childcare "package" is being fleshed out in other ways. Job-sharing, so that mothers can be home for part of the day, is increasing. So is guaranteed part-time work. Parents are allowed so many days of paid leave during a year to stay home to care for sick children. Industry is responding by allowing for flextime scheduling of work.

Not so in North America. As in the past, workers themselves have to pay the entire financial and emotional cost of industry transforming itself for the sake of profit. In this case, where

mothers have been forced into the workplace to feed their families, this cost is being borne by small children on a scale unparalleled in history.

There have been, however, some recent developments that may prove to be the light at the end of the tunnel.

In 1981 the Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee sponsored a massive cross-Ontario childcare campaign with public forums in key communities and the formulation of a childcare policy paper which was passed overwhelmingly at the 1981 OFL convention. The Women's Committee called for a two-front childcare push: one at the bargaining table, the other through political action.

Since then there has been a noticeable increase in the sensitivity of the labour movement to this issue. More and more unions are routinely providing childcare at union conventions and conferences, or subsidies are given to assist with childcare expenses while a parent is out of town on union business.

Childcare is also raised at the bargaining table with increasing effectiveness. In 1983, UAW Local 1325 won from American Motors the agreement that the company would deposit two cents for every person-hour worked in the plant into a childcare fund. In the 1984 auto talks at GM and Ford, both companies agreed to pilot childcare projects at selected facilities. The Canadian Union of Public Employees and other public sector unions have also won contract language covering childcare, vouchers being a common forum that the subsidy takes.

Gains have also been made on the political front. Under the terms of the recent "agenda for action" agreed upon by the Liberal and NDP caucuses this spring in Ontario, the new Liberal Government has made a commitment to work-related childcare. The task for the next two years is for unionists and childcare activists to make sure that commitment is met — and surpassed.

But these gains, however significant, are small when compared with the enormity of the problem. There is no question that inadequate childcare is a ticking social time bomb. Howard Clifford says: "We pay every time unmet social needs boil up into violence. We pay for the one in six Canadians who become mentally ill. We pay each time some significant contribution is not made because the person's potential was squashed early in life."

But in the union movement we have at least made a beginning.

Wendy Cuthbertson

Percentages of children in daycare

Canada

5% under 3 years
16% 3 to 6 years

East Germany

60% under 3 years
100% 3 to 6 years

U.S.A.

11% under 3 years
68% 3 to 6 years

France

31% under 3 years
10% 3 to 6 years

Sweden

30% under 3 years
55% 3 to 6 years

Childcare has now become a central issue for trade unionists across Canada. Part of the success of labour's campaign has depended on its clearly defined goals. An example is the 1981 policy paper produced by the Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee.

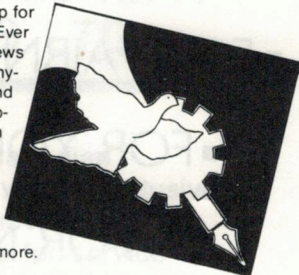
The policy calls for:

- free universal, publicly-funded childcare for every child regardless of age as a social right
- neighbourhood childcare centres supplemented with licenced private home childcare
- adequate parental leave so that parents can remain home to care for young children without incurring severe financial stress or loss of seniority or pension credits.

- at least 10 paid days of leave for the care of sick children

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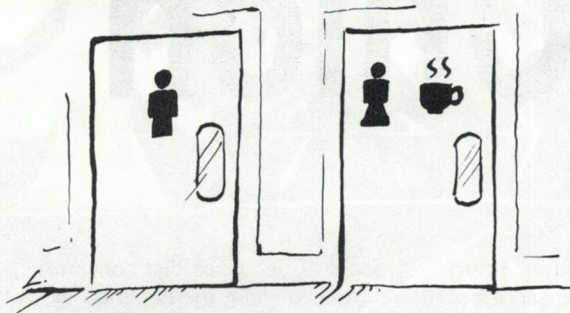
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SPECIAL FAUCETS

Sexism in the workplace even prevades the bathroom. The Corey Winston Company did renovations to a Washington D.C. building which included "special faucets in the womens' restroom of each floor that allow filling of coffee and tea pots, and make it easier to clean coffee cups and large kitchenware."



NEED TO KNOW

In the view of some elements of the media, women have yet to reach the mainstream of society. R. Lawrence Mills, a working Englishwoman, wrote to the London "Financial Times" and asked what the word "marginalized" means when used to describe women who work. "It does really sound most unpleasant, and I feel that I ought to know," she wrote.

COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT

If in need of an excuse after being caught escaping from prison, blame your keepers. Two women who briefly escaped from the Women's Detention Facility in Milpitas, California, did exactly this. "We were (in the exercise yard) for 45 minutes to an hour before we decided to leave," said one of them. "There should have been someone watching us."

SOVIETS IN THE BUFF

A Baltic sea resort in Lithuania shows that Soviet women aren't afraid of enjoying life in the buff. Some entreprising nude women run a black market for foreign goods from a "Women's Beach." Men are barred from the premises and most of the female customers are nude as well. One Soviet writer pointed out to a friend that because the operation is illegal and some police officers are women, the business is vulnerable. The friend retorted that few officers are female and, "Besides how would she prove she is a policewoman if she had nothing on?"

HOME BREWED SPIRITS

Drinking at funerals has become a major problem in Zambia, writes the Lusakan "Zambia Daily Mail." It's gotten so bad the Catholic church decided to cancel beer drinking at last rites. But the paper reported that one tribe continues to brew beer, "about a month after the burial. . . to appease the spirits of the deceased."



GARETH LIND

COMMUNAL LEISURE

Mao Tse-Tung's ghost is now being conjured up by Canadian developers to sell condominiums peasants could never afford. Skymarkplace Condominiums runs ads in big Toronto newspapers which contain Mao's beaming face. "He would have loved our communal leisure centre," the ad copy reads before noting that the condominiums sell for \$166,400 and up.

HAVE A NICE DAY

"The next person to twitter at me, 'Have a nice day', will get a clip around the ear," snorted E. M. Edwards in a letter to the Australian newspaper "The Bulletin."



Our Times welcomes readers' submissions. Please send UPDATES items to Stuart Crombie with your name and phone number. SAY WHAT items should be sent to Bruce Livesey with the name and date of publication.

NOT YET An Equal Union

By Nancy Porter

Having worked several years in a non-union workplace, I took my new status as a union member as seriously as my new job. Comparisons of my working life with that of my unionized friend had revealed a number of differences. Wage increases in my workplace always followed hers, and were always lower. I could discuss complaints with my supervisor; she had the right to grieve. While I could ask my employer for improved working conditions, she could demand them through collective bargaining. I had no difficulty understanding the importance of these rights, but I knew little about the collective strength necessary to maintain and enforce them.

Subsequent years of union activity revealed that the strength required to substantially improve our working lives depended on the collective work of women and men. Often uncomfortable with women's disproportionately small numbers at planning and decision-making meetings, I resolved to try to convince more union sisters to join us. This article deals with some of the questions that arise in the pursuit of such a goal.

Why interested?

During times of crisis, women are expected to sacrifice the most: to be pushed out of paid jobs to provide a short-term solution to inadequate employment levels, to be frozen into low wage jobs and unequal conditions of work by wage and bargaining controls, to be the first laid off in traditionally male industries because we're the last to be allowed in, and to provide free social services to subsidize

changes to government spending priorities. Women can't afford these sacrifices.

Women understand the value of organizing to protect our jobs, our income and our rights. The average woman union member earns 14 per cent more than her unorganized sister. The wage gap between union women and men is seven per cent less than elsewhere in the labour force. Organized women have led the way to improved legislation and policies by winning contract clauses that ensure equal job access, equal pay and equal employment benefits. Our fight for freedom from assignment to duties of a personal nature and from penalties imposed because we are able to bear children become stronger when unions support us. Unions have helped thousands of women win equal pay for work of equal value despite the resistance of employers and governments. Labour centrals and unions have helped us push for advances in child care, affirmative action and our right to decide whether we have children, when and how many.

Trust unions?

Women are aware that brotherhood and justice are not the only reasons for labour's interest in helping women organize. Jobs and dues-paying members are decreasing in traditional union occupations. By helping workers organize in the service, finance and retail sectors, labour organizations can maintain their membership levels. Women occupy a large proportion of jobs in these sectors. Although we know that an organized fight can help us win recognition and fair compensation for our work, women want to be part of the

process of decisions that concern us, and we want to share the benefits, as well as the dues, the work and the risk involved in organizing.

Build trust

Unions can earn women's trust by being receptive to our concerns and by integrating women at all levels. Women who struggled to establish shelters for victims of sexual assault and family violence respect organizations that help prevent similar sexual bullying in the workplace. Women who set up centres to help sisters gain the confidence and services required to re-enter the paid workforce respect organizations that defend those sisters' right to fair incomes and working conditions. Women who have worked with intelligent, articulate sisters respect organizations that encourage women to speak out, join in and assume leadership positions. And finally, women who wish to participate in roles other than leadership respect organizations that are responsive to that wish.

Although significant numbers of union members are women, leadership is often dominated by men. Is this the result of women's apathy? Women's actions best answer this question. For example, when an Ontario union member demanded a work environment free of sexual harassment, she refused to be intimidated by the reaction of her employer and the inaction of her co-workers. Instead, she built a network of supportive individuals and organizations to help her fight for women's right to harassment-free jobs. Such careful planning and effort exposes



SUE MEGGS

the weakness of the argument that women are apathetic.

Women throughout history have refused to comply with rules that were imposed without consideration for their effect on women's lives, health or position. Women fought for the right to a formal education, the right to vote and the right to hold public office despite rules that gave women no such rights. Women practised birth control and terminated unwanted pregnancies, despite laws declaring that these were criminal acts. Such desperate but deliberate defiance warns against the foolishness of claiming women's apathy as an excuse to ignore our perspectives and needs.

Withdrawal from an insensitive or sexist culture should not be confused with apathy. Less confusing is women's strategy to help each other overcome deterrents through women's committees.

Divisive or unifying?

Women's committees can help women overcome real and perceived obstacles to participation in traditionally male organizations. Here, we can discuss our concerns, while developing the skills and confidence to present our issues in mainstream organizations. Far from being divisive, women's committees provide a positive introduction for sisters who have not been active in their union, and reassurance for

active sisters who feel isolated. In fact, resistance to women's committees can be seen as divisive because it limits the means to encourage participation.

Supportive brothers?

Supportive brothers have an important role in humanizing structures and procedures and in encouraging women to take our equal place in labour organizations. By offering to help without attempting to set the schedule and assume leadership, brothers assure us that they are seeking cooperation, not domination.

How can labour organizations remove the obstacles to women's participation? While attitudes may be difficult to change, behaviour is influenced by education and example. Sister members and staff must be introduced as brothers are: in terms of accomplishments and abilities. Equal partners are not defined by physical appearance or sexual availability. Similarly, sisters must receive the same respect as brothers at conventions. We do not interrupt a bartender's convention speech to send him for drinks; neither must we interrupt a burlesque employee with cat calls during her discussion of a tough organizing drive. Further, when sisters appeal to a labour body to help stop divisive sexual harassment, support is in order, not groans or snickers. If procedures fail to ensure this respect, they require amendment.

Women's grievances must be taken seriously, as must women's bargaining demands. This is best assured through election of representatives and negotiating team members who have demonstrated a commitment to get these demands into collective agreements and to enforce them.

Women have an interest in unions as a potential route to a better life. We begin to trust unions when their concerns are similar to ours. While women have seldom been wimpy or apathetic about decisions affecting our lives, the methods we choose to express our support and dissent are sometimes misunderstood. Rather than become isolated as the sole woman in a group or as one of a few spokespeople for women's concerns, many women prefer to work together in small supportive groups. Women's committees should be encouraged because they can provide a positive means of participation for women and help reduce drop-outs. Supportive brothers who are willing to cooperate rather than dominate help make mainstream union activities more attractive to women seeking equality. Finally, labour organizations can encourage more members to participate by eliminating barriers to women's equal participation.

Nancy Porter is the president of Organized Working Women, Ottawa Chapter.

No Laughing Matter

The growing recognition of sexual harassment is the result of women organizing themselves.

By Penni Richmond

*Imagine the Day...When Sexual Harassment Did Not Exist
The more I held it all inside, the more I took the blame.
Every ounce of silence carried its full weight of shame.
My body was degraded, it tore apart my soul.
I thought never again would I be whole.
Now we are many women and our souls are bared.
We're reaching out to millions with the stories that we share.
Our circle's ever growing, our power's growing too.
It's amazing what women can do!*

These verses are about sexual harassment. They are from a song written collectively by women from the Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU-PSAC) and Arlene Mantle. The emotional devastation, the shame, the tendency to internalize and to live in silence when sexually harassed are movingly captured here. But the song also portrays the excitement and power women feel standing together to fight against sexual harassment. Women know that the more often we come together to share our experiences, and develop strategies, the more often we confront this issue at our workplaces and within our unions, the less often men will feel able to harass.

Recently, because women have become visibly organized, unions have recognized the insidiousness of sexual harassment, and have acted to address it. Clauses have been won in contract negotiations, union constitutions have been amended to provide internal disciplinary procedures and education campaigns are being waged to sensitize members to the issue. As well, unions are starting to provide financial and organizational support for members who

take their cases to Human Rights Commissions and the courts. Certainly these are crucial steps.

However, the struggle is just beginning. Increasingly, union members, particularly women, will be mobilizing to confront the problem within the context of their locals. To do this, we need to find creative, effective methods for eliminating the disease, not simply dealing with the symptoms.

Over the past year and a half, CEIU Women's Committee has been developing a rank and file campaign against sexual harassment. This article is about that ongoing experience and about related experiences within PSAC.

The CEIU focus on sexual harassment came out of our first Women's Conference in March '84. While all the issues raised there — child care, tech change, affirmative action, for example — are essential ingredients in the fight for equality, there was unanimous support to begin with a plan of action around sexual harassment. It was clear that most of the women participating in the conference had experienced sexual harassment and wanted it stopped. In coming together to design a campaign, the Women's Committee spent time talk-

ing about the issue. We discussed the fact that sexual harassment is not about sex but about inequality and power. At work, most women remain in positions of unequal power to men — we get paid less, we work at undervalued jobs and we are usually supervised by men. If we resist advances, or speak out about them, we may get fired, we may mysteriously never get promoted. And though not all men are in powerful positions at their workplace, they still may, consciously or unconsciously, relate to women in a manner which expresses superiority, privilege and control. We realized that a challenge to the existence of sexual harassment is a challenge to the status quo, a challenge to sexist attitudes and traditional sex roles which have been carried over into the workplace.

Where to start? What to do? Through our own discussion and with the help of women in other unions who are working around sexual harassment, we identified concrete things to do:

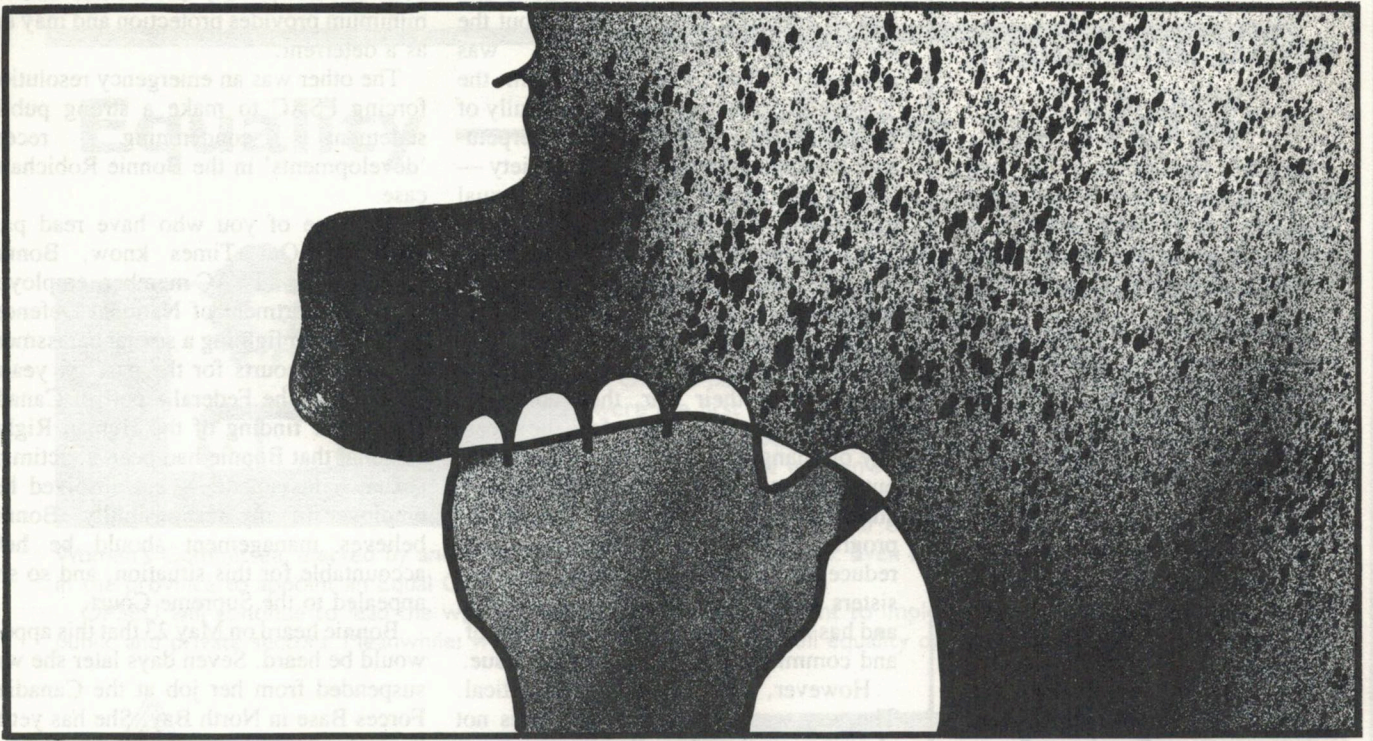
- pressure management to implement clear policies to ensure a harassment-free workplace;

- pressure our union to go to the bargaining table with non-negotiable demands to deal with and prevent sexual harassment;

- work toward changes in our union's constitution which would afford protection to members and set up clear supportive procedures for complaints;

- work towards having full-time women's coordinators on staff with our union;

- develop extensive education programs for members; ensure education on sexual



harassment is included in stewards' and other union courses;

- work in coalitions inside and outside of unions.

This list is not exhaustive and every item is crucial.

However, we decided that the main focus of our work would be with women at the local level. We felt that the building of support networks would encourage women to come forward and to develop their own strategies for dealing with their experiences. The momentum provided through coordinated local programs would make the objectives above more attainable.

With this in mind, a two phase plan of action was adopted by the Women's Committee. The first phase consisted of the training of 14 rank and file sisters who had previously indicated both an ability and interest in becoming facilitators. The second phase, just recently underway, consists of two-day weekend workshops with women at the local level.

The Phase I training session, in which I participated, was incredibly powerful and intense. The environment was safe and comfortable, a factor which proved indispensable. Through the telling of our own experiences, many of us, myself included, realized how often we had not acted upon — and subsequently blocked — incidents which had happened to us. Through the enactment of role plays, we were able to better understand why that happened and

to release some of our anger. Through the analysis of those and other problem-solving exercises throughout our four days, we began to figure out (emotionally and intellectually) why sexual harassment occurs, and what steps to take to confront it.

It was at this session we collectively wrote the song, part of which opens this article; it provided inspiration. Thanks to the direction of our facilitators, Deirdre Gallagher and Arlene Mantle, the last day of the four was spent evaluating and planning Phase II. We developed a timeframe for Phase II, discussed workshop content and developed an outline for a manual, which women from the group subsequently put together with great skill. This last day also provided an opportunity for some of us to express our anxiety about conducting workshops, and made us realize we would have to come together again for support and further learning. I think we all left feeling drained — I know I did — but reassured about the bond between us.

With some modifications, the local workshops are similar to the Phase I training session. At this time, we have conducted one weekend workshop, attended by 15 women from one local. The women who attended this workshop are facing a particularly poisoned work environment. By coming together in this context, they have become excited about confronting the problem; they have formed a Women's Committee and have organized educa-

tional. They are discussing interventions.

The Women's Committee is presently evaluating this workshop and will use that evaluation as the basis for other workshops throughout the fall and winter. We are talking about how to provide follow-up, and how to create and sustain a regional support network. In contacting locals, we have received a response far greater than we had ever imagined. It is not surprising women recognize the problem; it is exciting they are committed to confronting it.

The decision to focus on sexual harassment within the Ontario region of CEIU has met no expressed resistance on the part of our brothers — and has received solid support on the part of some. However, there has been an uneasiness in the air, a sense that the issue is too threatening and potentially explosive to discuss openly.

Certainly, because of the highly emotional and personal aspects of sexual harassment, it has been, and will continue to be, important that women meet separately to discuss and strategize. But it is also crucial to start bringing the issue to our brothers.

Knowing this, the Women's Committee apprehensively conducted a (mixed gender) plenary session and workshops at our annual Local Representatives Conference at the end of April. In the plenary session, we showed the video of Deirdre Gallagher's wonderful speech on sexual harassment given at the first PSAC Women's Conference in March 1985. We

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: WHAT IS IT?

Sexual harassment is any sexual advance that threatens a worker's job or well-being. It is usually an expression of power made by someone in authority.

Most victims of sexual harassment are women, primarily because most people in powerful or authoritative positions in our society are men. They are able to use their authority to take sexual advantage of their female employees.

Sexual harassment can be expressed in a number of ways. It includes, but is not limited to the following:

Unnecessary physical contact such as touching or patting;

Suggestive remarks and other verbal abuse or threats;

Leering at a person's body;

Demands for sexual favours;

Compromising invitations;

Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendos or taunting;

Displaying of pornographic or other derogatory pictures;

Condescension or paternalism which undermines self-respect;

Physical assault.

All of these may or may not be accompanied by direct or implied threats to the victim's job or career.

Sexual harassment means being treated as a sex object rather than a worker. It means being judged on physical attributes rather than skills and qualifications when seeking a job, a promotion, a raise or training.

Sexual harassment should not be confused with workplace flirtation, which is generally based on mutual consent and attraction. Sexual harassment is coercive — it may be accompanied by threats, promises or abuse. Sexual harassers bring sex into the workplace to use as a tool of control or abuse.

had expected some nervous laughter and lack of attention. Instead, throughout the presentation, the auditorium was absolutely silent. One sister from the Women's Committee spoke powerfully of the traditional roles which have perpetuated women's unequal status in society — linking this to our workplace and sexual harassment. She also had the courage to speak publicly about her own experiences and had a strong impact on those who listened.

The workshops were also positive as a starting point. Men spoke cautiously but openly about their fear, their confusion and their anger at having to face the necessity of change. Women felt able to speak out and to confront those brothers whose attitudes were dismissive and non-progressive. Overall, this initiative helped reduce the tension that existed between sisters and brothers around the campaign, and has helped foster an understanding of, and commitment to deal with, the issue.

However, further education is critical. The way we look at the world does not change over night. Responses to a questionnaire we distributed at this conference showed a substantial disparity of perception about even the existence of sexual harassment in the workplace. Fewer than 50 per cent of the men who responded thought it existed in their workplace, while over 90 per cent of the women said that it did. However, almost all of the men indicated education of brothers is essential. Supportive brothers could work to ensure this need is met.

I have said that while the extent and impact of sexual harassment may not yet be fully comprehended by our brothers (and some sisters, too), there is a growing awareness of the need to take the issue seriously. This was also apparent at the recent PSAC triennial convention in June.

While overall the convention was difficult and divisive, resolutions dealing with 'women's issues' were taken seriously — though we did not win them all. However, the two resolutions on sexual harassment passed — unanimously! I do not for a minute believe that all delegates were in favour of these resolutions. Yet the fact that delegates in opposition did not feel able to stand up and speak against them, and, in fact, felt compelled to vote 'yes' is a victory. This is a clear sign that members are beginning to understand sexual harassment is not acceptable.

One of the resolutions passed at convention was the inclusion of sexual harassment within the disciplinary section of the union. While we did not come out with a

detailed disciplinary procedure, this at minimum provides protection and may act as a deterrent.

The other was an emergency resolution forcing PSAC to make a strong public statement condemning recent 'developments' in the Bonnie Robichaud case.

As those of you who have read past issues of Our Times know, Bonnie Robichaud is a PSAC member, employed by the Department of National Defence. She has been fighting a sexual harassment case in the courts for the past six years. This spring the Federal Court of Canada upheld the finding of the Human Rights Tribunal that Bonnie had been a victim of sexual harassment — but absolved her employer of any responsibility. Bonnie believes management should be held accountable for this situation, and so she appealed to the Supreme Court.

Bonnie heard on May 23 that this appeal would be heard. Seven days later she was suspended from her job at the Canadian Forces Base in North Bay. She has yet to be given a reason and has been asked to undergo a psychiatric examination. Bonnie has now filed a complaint with the Public Service Commission, the department responsible for hiring federal government workers. Her claim is based upon personal harassment; she is demanding a transfer and cash settlement. PSAC has issued a press release about this Kafkaesque situation. It is not known at the time of writing when the union will bring demands directly to the employer.

Support for Bonnie's case has been growing within the ranks of the PSAC membership and the trade union movement generally. This latest retaliation on the part of National Defence cannot go unopposed. The winning of Bonnie's case will be a landmark decision for the entire labour movement. Through her fortitude and courage, Bonnie Robichaud has shown that sexual harassment will be fought until it disappears.

The growing recognition of sexual harassment as a major workplace issue by the union movement has been and will continue to be the result of women organizing ourselves at local, regional and national levels of the labour movement. We are on the road — albeit a long one — to a day when sexual harassment does not exist.

There are our bodies

This is our spirit

It's amazing what women can do. . .

Penni Richmond is a PSAC activist.

Equality — the time is *now*



The Ontario Public Service Employees Union has 77,000 members across Ontario. Half of them are women. Like women workers everywhere, they have suffered from pay discrimination and denial of equal opportunities for advancement.

OPSEU hasn't waited for a reluctant government to act. We were the first union in Ontario to negotiate paid maternity leave and health protection for VDT operators. In the Public Service, we've negotiated women's wages 80 per cent of men's, and the gap's closing every year.

Since 1980 our push for equality has been led by a Provincial Women's Committee, elected by and from our members across Ontario. Even before that, we were the first union in the province to appoint an Equal Opportunities Coordinator.

OPSEU will continue to lead the way in pressing the new government to implement equal value laws in both public and private sectors. Meanwhile, we'll continue to bargain for full equality of opportunity. The time is now!



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WOMEN SPEAKING

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Initiated by the OFL Women's Committee, the Speakers Bureau, which was officially launched the end of last month, has speakers on a variety of issues of concern to working women and their unions. **Contact Janis Sarra at the OFL, 15 Gervais Dr., Don Mills, Ont. (416) 441-2731.**

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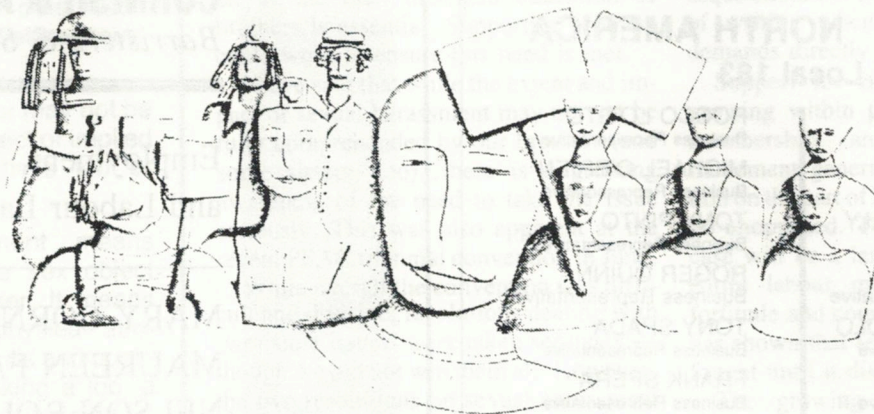
100 YEARS OF UNION WOMEN

In 1885, the Knights of Labour initiated an organizing drive which resulted in the chartering of Toronto's first local union composed entirely of women. Toronto membership in the Knights increased from 358 to 4997 in 12 short months.

The Knights' commitment to organizing women workers and their willingness to open their executive ranks to women members were exceptional. So was their record of growth.

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LABOUR WOMEN OF DISTINCTION

The September/October issue of Our Times is a tribute to women's struggles for full equality; a tribute to women active in the workers' movement, in politics, in community organizations, and in peace and solidarity groups. Many of our readers took this opportunity to nominate women who have made important contributions to the movement for these pages which list Labour's Women of Distinction. We present this list here, fully aware that it's incomplete.

Shelley Atcheson
Former Human Rights
Director, OFL

Alison Acker
COSPES

Frances Arbour
United Church

Lillian Allen
Dub Poet

Bonnie Armstrong
Past President Brantford
Labour Council

Evelyn Armstrong
UE, Founding President, OWW

Evelyn Babineau
CUPE 292

Roxie Baker
UAW Local President

Deborah Barndt
Photographer, Educator

Margaret Baron
United Church Coalition on
South Africa

Catherine Barrette
CUPE 2504

Eleanor Barrington
Midwifery Groups

Nancy Bayly
Women in Trades-Toronto

Lois Bedard
OSSTF Retired, Former
President OWW

Pat Biggar
Exec. ONDP Women

Bonnie Biteen
CWC

Anne Blair

Marusia Bociurkiw
Video Artist, Artists Union

Deborah Bourque
CUPW, Vice President-OWW
(Ottawa)

Dionne Brand
Dub Poet, Writer

Angela Browning
Against Cruise Testing

Varda Burstyn
Writer

Marion Bryden
MPP, Ont. NDP

Barb Cameron
OWW Executive

Bernice Cameron-Hill
IWDC — Durham

Joanne Campbell
Toronto Alderwoman

Shirley Carr
Sec. Treasurer CLC, Vice
President NDP

Maria Cavali
RWDSU

Marjorie Chmiel
CEIU 595

Kathleen Chung
Durham I.W.D.C.

Commerce Visa Strikers

Pearl Chytuk
Mine Mill & Smelter Workers

Dr. Nikki Colodny
OCAC

Carole Condé
Visual Artist, Artists' Union

Mary Cornish
Labour Lawyer, Equal Pay
Coalition

Paige Cousineau
Exec. OWW Ottawa

Sue Craig
SONG

Catherine Craig-Bullen
Exec OWW Ottawa

Wendy Cuthbertson
UAW, Executive Federal NDP

Ruth Danzinger
Action Daycare

Judy Darcy
CUPE Metro Toronto Council

Karen Davies
UAW 673

Libby Davis
Vancouver Alderwoman

Tina Deming
CWC 45

Jacqueline Desrochers
Exec. OWW Ottawa

Liz Dewar
Exec OWW Ottawa

Marion Dewar
Ottawa Mayor, President Fed.
NDP

Joan Doiron
Toronto School Trustee

Mary Beth Dolin
(Deceased)
Former Minister of Labour
(Manitoba)

Trudy Don
Co-ordinator OAITH

Lissa Donner
MFL Occupational Health
Centre

Noreen Dunphy
CHFT

Eaton Strikers
RWDSU

Roberta Ellis
Manitoba Action Committee on
Status of Women

Nancy Farmer
USWA 2900, IWDC

Lynne Fernie
Poet, Visual Artist

Marg File
Musicians Union 467

Pat Finlay
President, Spadina NDP

Pamela Fitzgerald
Exec. OWW Ottawa

Paula Fletcher

Colette Forest
OWW

Francis Fox
PSAC

Deirdre Gallagher
PSAC

Monica Gallagher

Sue Genge
CUPE

Linda George
Wives Supporting the Strike,
Women's Centre Sudbury

Susan Giampetri
PSAC

Evelyn Gigantes
MPP, Ont. NDP

Louise Gilliam
CUPW, Sec. Guelph & District
Labour Council

Geraldine Goyer
SEIU

Heather Grant
CUPE

Bonnie Green
United Church

Frances Gregory
Anti-poverty activist

Ruth Grier
MPP Ont. NDP

Julie Griffin
CUPE

Meg Griffiths
ACTRA, NDP Candidate

Clair Guilbeault
OPEIU 451

Georgina Hancock
OPSEU 415, CAAT Academic

Irene Harris
Labour Council of Metropolitan
Toronto

Susan Hart
Exec Sec. MFL

Grace Hartman
Past President CUPE

Bonnie Heath
Occupational health activist

LABOUR WOMEN OF DISTINCTION

Carmencita Hernandez
CAMD

Karen Herrell
Alderwoman Etobicoke,
Exec. ONDP Women

Sherry Hewison
Solidarity Leader, B.C.

Marg Hewitt
Pres. Brampton,
Mississauga & District Labour
Council

Pat Higgins
Centre Stage

Mary Hodder
Exec. OWW Toronto

Audrey Houston
CUPE 292

Sandy Howell
Exec. OWW Ottawa

Lynne Hulley
UE Office

Jennifer Humphries
CUPE 2595

Nadine Hunt
Sask. Federation of Labour

Diana Hunt
Lawyer, NDP Candidate

Debra Hutcheon
ACTWU 1967

Wendy Iler
Confederation of Canadian
Unions

Lil Ilomaki
Retired

Barbara Jackman
Immigration Lawyer

Axelle Janczur
AMES, Exec. ONDP Women

Pauline Jewett
MP NDP

Donna Johansen
RWDSU

Sheran Johnston
OPSEU Pres. Region 5
Women's Caucus

Mary Kardash
CUPE Retired

Brigid Kemp
Silvia Platoon (Toronto)

Susan Kennedy
PSAC

Maureen Kenney
Farmworkers' Union

Alice Kolisnyk
OWW

Ellen Kruger
Coalition for Reproductive
Choice, Manitoba

Irene Kuusela
CUPE 79, Exec. OWW

Joan Kuyek
Sudbury Community Legal
Clinic

Arja Lane
Wives Supporting the Strike,
Sudbury

Frances Lankin
OPSEU

Caroline Lee
CUPW

Pam Lee
OPSEU 518

Lilly Leforte
Activist Native Women

Barbara Linds
Exec OWW Toronto

Nan MacDonald
CUPE, CPC

Valerie MacDonald
Exec. OWW Toronto

Dorothy Mackinnon
CUPE, Exec OWW Toronto

Catherine Macleod
Writer, Poet

Kay Macpherson
Voice of Women, Peace Activist

Arlene Mantle
Singer, Songwriter

Mary Mayes
PSAC 70180

Paulina Macciulis
Centre for Spanish Speaking
People

A Tribute to Canada's Working Women From The Men of Steel

Remembering History

I think my grandmother's life was more simple.
I think she had problems that were more concrete.
Tend the children, tend the furnace
so we don't freeze, don't catch fire.
I think she let morning roll towards her,
got up and set the yeast rising.
She mended grey socks with black wool,
sewed a fine seam between the cloth and nothing.
I think the war ended, she went out,
buttoned every button on her coat,
touched her hat and it was a fine day.

© Rhea Tregobov, Canadian Poet
From **Remembering History**
Guernica Editions, 1982.



Dave Patterson
Director,
District Six

LABOUR WOMEN OF DISTINCTION

Kay Mazrtell
RNA Strike, Sudbury

Janice McClelland
CWC

Bev McCloskey
UAW 222 Retired

Pat McDermott
Exec. OWW Toronto

Lynn McDonald
NDP MP

Sheelagh McDonald
UE

Linda McLaren
VP OWW

Sheila McNeill
Exec. OWW Toronto

Anna Maria Menozzi
Working Skills Centre

Gail Misra
Vice President ONDP Women

Margaret Mitchell
NDP MP

Joan Morris
UE

Marilyn Mosgrove
CUPE 2440

Dr. Linda Murray
CUPE

Paddy Musson
OPSEU

Peggy Nash
CALEA-UAW

Rena Newberry
Project Ploughshares, Amnesty International

Lucie Nicholson
President CUPE Ontario

Winnie Ng
Chinese/Cdn. Community Activist

Jan Nolan
President, St. Andrew St. Patrick NDP

Linda Nykor

Yvonne Obansawin
Wives Supporting the Strike, Sudbury
Exec. ONDP Women

Eleanor O'Connor
Centre for Labour Studies

Maureen O'Halloran
President OWW

Madelaine Parent
Retired, Confederation of Canadian Unions

Anna Pashka
Retired

Laura Pascoe
Peace Activist

Janice Peterson
OPSEU 422

Abby Pollonetsky
P.O.W. Rep. NDP,
President Dovercourt NDP

Marcie Ponte

Nancy Porter
Ottawa Exec. OWW

Renata Pratt
Inter-Church Cttee on Corporate Responsibility

Claudine Pyke
Ottawa Exec. OWW

Arlene Perly Rae
CALFAA

Judith Ramirez
Co-ordinator Intercede

Judy Rebick
O.C.A.C.

Nancy Riche
NUPGE

Beth Richards
Candis

Sue Ricker
CUPE 2424

Kay Riddell
Latin American Solidarity activist

Penni Richmond
PSAC

Laurel Ritchie
Confederation of Canadian Unions

Donna Robinson
CWC 51

Joyce Rosenthal
OPSEU, URW, OWW

Bonnie Robichaud

Lori Rotenberg
PSAC

Mary Rowles
OPSEU, Exec. ONDP Women

Janis Sarra
OFL

Norma Scarborough
CARAL

Carol Ann Sceviour
USWA, Exec. ONDP Women

Ruth Scher
Ottawa Exec OWW

Pauline Seville
OPSEU

Geri Sheedy
RWDSU

Gloria Sheppard
I.C.H.R.L.A.

Harriet Simand
D.E.S. Action Canada

Ann Skinner
Alum. Brick & Glass 202G

Laura Sky
Filmmaker

Mildred Smith
Ont NDP Womens Cttee

Lynn Spencer
USWA

Leslie Spillet
ILGWU

Marilyn Spink
CUPE 79, Equal Pay Coalition

Mary Spratt
USWA 2900, retired

Mercedes Steedman
Pat Co-ordinator of Women's Studies, Laurential University, Sudbury

Jennifer Stephen
Filmmaker, Exec. ONDP Women

Heather Stevens
PSAC 70101

Lisa Steele
Interval House, Video Artist, Writer

Jane Stinson
Ottawa Exec. OWW, CUPE

Linda Squires
UAW 397

Ann Swarbrick
Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto

Ester Szeto
Industrial Training Centre for Women of Sudbury

Marie Terese Larrain

Dorothy Thomas
Toronto Alderwoman

Vi Thompson
Peace Activist

Virginia Thomson
CUPE 79, CCW

Linda Torney

Joy Thorkelson
UFAWH

Millie Trufal
Welland Alderwoman

Jean Vatour
CUPE, Peace Activist

Sue Wakeling
Trustee Newmarket, Exec. ONDP Women

Jayne Walker

Heather Webster
ACTWU

Nancy White
Singer, Songwriter

Marilynne White
CALFAA

Marjorie Whitten
OPEIU 131

Ruth White
ACTWU 1606

Linda Wilton
CWC

Marilyn Youden
Toronto Exec OWW

Elaine Ziemba
NDP Candidate

Astrid Zimmer
OPEIU 343

David Smiley
PHOTOGRAPHER
1501 Woodbine Ave.
Suite 111,
Toronto, Ont. M4C-2H1.
429-3162



THE WOMEN'S LEGISLATURE

by Kathleen Chung
with Bernice Cameron-Hill
and the
Durham International Women's Day Players,
1985
With thanks to Nellie McClung

Cast:

10 women: 5 MPPs

Ms. Speaker/M.C.

Minister of Labour

Parliamentary Assistant

Treasurer

Minister Responsible for Men's Issues

4 or more men (only one speaks)



INGRID MAYRHOFFER

M.C.: Welcome to our futuristic political drama.

Historians among you remember our foremothers, who fought for the vote, presented a thoroughly researched docu-drama called "The Women's Parliament."

Tonight we follow in their footsteps. We carry on their cause. In our play, economics and political conditions have been reversed, and women are in power.

Some of us visited the Ontario Legislature last April, to research the subject under discussion tonight.

Now, sit back, and enjoy our updated version of "The Women's Legislature."

Curtain rises.

(Women legislators at desks on stage.)

Ms. Speaker: We have several private members bills on our agenda tonight:

MPP #1: 1. Whereas work place safety is endangered by the multicoloured stripes of cloth men are required to wear around their necks; and whereas these strips of cloth tend to get caught in office copiers and typewriters; and whereas some employers have been known to nail them to the desk to keep their male employees from straying;

Be it resolved that neck ties be banned in the workplace.

Ms. Speaker: All in favour?

(All raise hands)

MPP #2: 2Whereas flaunting of the male body in public has reached nuisance proportions, with resultant distraction of females,

Be it resolved that bare breasts, shirts open to the belly-button, and tight revealing pants shall not be allowed in public.

Ms. Speaker: All in favour?

(All raise hands)

Note: This play may be used by any group to work for justice for women. It is not to be used for private profit.

MPP #3: 3. Whereas facial hair is a public health hazard, and a tickling nuisance,
Be it resolved that beards and mustaches be prohibited.

Ms. Speaker: All in favour?

(All raise hands)

MPP #4: 4. Whereas men with beer bellies have been seen to allow their pants to fall so low that cheeks and cracks of buttocks show,
Be it resolved that all men with beer bellies be required to wear girdles, suspenders, and fully-buttoned shirts.

Ms. Speaker: All in favour?

(All raise hands)

(Wheelbarrow full of petitions, brought in by delegation of men, including all candidates in upcoming Provincial election.)

Leader of delegation: Ms. Chair, whereas men have been relegated to secondary and dead-end positions, and whereas men earn only 63 per cent of the average woman's wage, we are here to demand that the Government of Ontario legislate mandatory affirmative action for men and require employers to pay men equally with women. We seek equal pay for work of equal value.

We men have big appetites. We need our steak and pork chops.

Thousands of men slaving in the stock brokers' offices and board rooms of the nation surely deserve a better fate than this.

MPP #1: Who the devil are these people?

MPP #2: Just a bunch of opposition party hacks, who disguise themselves as representatives of the men's movement. They are simply playing games.

Ms. Speaker: I must congratulate the members of this delegation on their splendid appearance. Any civilization which produces such magnificent manhood as my friend, Mr. Macho, should not be interfered with.

As I listen carefully to Mr. Macho's every word, I find evidence to prove that women have made sacrifices in order for men to have the culture and accomplishments demonstrated here today.

However, we cannot do what you ask us to do — for the facts are against you.

There are two sides to every question. I could make a speech in favour of equal pay for men, for we all agree with the principle. I can see reasons that cause me to hesitate as to the advantages. Every good citizen will tell you that the fundamental of national greatness is the home. If the home life of any community or nation is not perfect, there will not be and cannot be peace and prosperity.

Now, how does economic equality for men make that better home?

Man is made for something better and higher than taking money out of our faltering economy. What is the true mission of manhood, except to buttress the home, to keep it in good repair?!

The man who repairs the faucet and mends the fence rules the world.

Too much money unsettles men, and unsettled men mean unsettled homes — broken vows — divorce!

All: Hear! Hear!

(MPPs fly paper airplanes.)

MPP #3: What of that other noble purpose of manhood, athletic support!

What good is a hockey team without its devoted fans?

If men become too taken up with pursuit of money, they will neglect their farm teams and super bowls.

If men seriously pursue careers, three major industries will collapse: professional sport, health club development, and the breweries.

MPP #4: Men don't need affirmative action or equal pay. What this Province needs is road repairs.

Oh, and we need a disaster co-ordinator. Ontario Hydro generators are not dangerous, but we need a disaster co-ordinator to keep the voters quiet.

MPP #5: We must also realize that most men are only secondary wage earners. They are just looking for a little pin money.

MPP #1: The Board of Trade has, for some years, advocated a policy of equal pay for equal work. However, it is strongly opposed to the adoption of equal value considerations.



INGRID MAYRHOFFER

The importance of a job is best determined by supply and demand. Equal value legislation would undermine collective bargaining. Men need the freedom to bargain the value of a job.

MPP #2: Ontario must remain competitive. It is essential to avoid legislation that is costly, unnecessary, and unworkable.

(Bang on desks)

(One MPP falls asleep)

(Others shoot paper airplanes.)

MPP #1: It is basically a problem of implementation. It entails such bureaucracy that it is entirely too confusing. It is too complicated for us to get our minds and our office system around it.

MPP #2: We must measure our step by the distance the average corporation is prepared to go. We must listen to what business has to say.

Several MPPs: Hear! Hear!

MPP #3: MEN will have to exercise patience, because it may take 10 to 20 years for a shift of cultural attitudes to take place.

MPP #2: It needs further study.

Minister of Labour: Ontario has a long and honorable tradition of promoting the rights of working MEN.

The Government, in its capacity as an employer, has pursued an aggressive program of affirmative action within the Ontario public service.

As for the issue of equal value, much of the income gap can be accounted for by non-sexist factors, such as: differing education, training, experience, and occupational segregation. MEN simply are not competing in equivalent types of work. Men have

lower educational levels than women.

What is more, the wage gap narrowed by 2.2 per cent in the last year. What more do these MEN want? Their salaries in government offices are 75 per cent of women's, and 23 per cent of management is MALE now. That is most encouraging.

Ontario is not quite ready for equal pay for men yet.

MPP #4: It is very important that members note the Government's dilemma.

We have to be mindful of the effects equal pay for men would have. It could raise levels of unemployment among MEN. It could worsen the situation of working MEN in our Province.

Treasurer: As I noted in my pre-budget statement, it would be injudicious at this time to bring in equal pay for work of equal value for men. This would wreak havoc in the new free enterprise zones soon to be established. In these zones, major tax concessions will stimulate local enterprise. Any legislation imposing pay structures would deter investment. What we really need to do is abolish the minimum wage!

MPP #5: I find it difficult to comprehend why men would need to be paid as much as women, when their expenses are so much lower. Show me a man who must buy make-up in order to look his best for work. And where is the man who must fork out precious dollars each month for sanitary pads?

MPP #4: Indeed, only this week I was talking to a man who assured me he felt blessed that he was not burdened by the expenses of child-rearing. All his children are cared for by his various wives and concubines, and the courts never force him to pay any support.

Minister Responsible for Men's Issues: My officials at the Men's Directorate inform me that our voluntary affirmative action and just pay scheme is effective. At least 15 major employers, out of total of 800, have instituted programs. I call that progress!

When we deal with the private sector, there is a certain confidentiality about it, so we do have some difficulty in follow-up with respect to the actual implementation. However, I am convinced that the good record of the MEN's directorate is worthy of commendation. I am very proud of Ontario's record.

MPP #5: Men who complain of low pay should educate themselves for high-demand fields such as child care, or secretarial work, or retail sales. The problem is education, career planning, and lack of initiative.

Premier: It may be that I am old-fashioned. It may be I am wrong. Perhaps the time will come when men may receive equal pay for work of equal value — in the meantime, be of good cheer. Advocate and educate! We will not legislate!

MPP #1: I move we adjourn for dinner!

(An MPP wakes up sleeping MPP.)



INGRID MAYRHOFER

HOTEL, RESTAURANT, CAFETERIA EMPLOYEES UNION LOCAL 75



TOGETHER WE'RE STRONG

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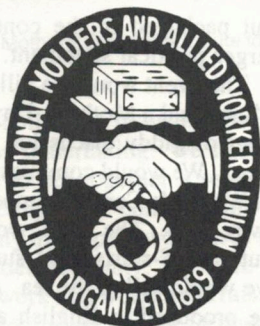
CALEA UAW

Victory Against Concessions

On July 1, the Canadian Airline Employees' Association merged with the UAW, gaining strength for the future.

*National Amalgamated Local
Union of Airline Workers
6520 Viscount Road
Mississauga, Ontario
(416) 678-1551*

REGION 8



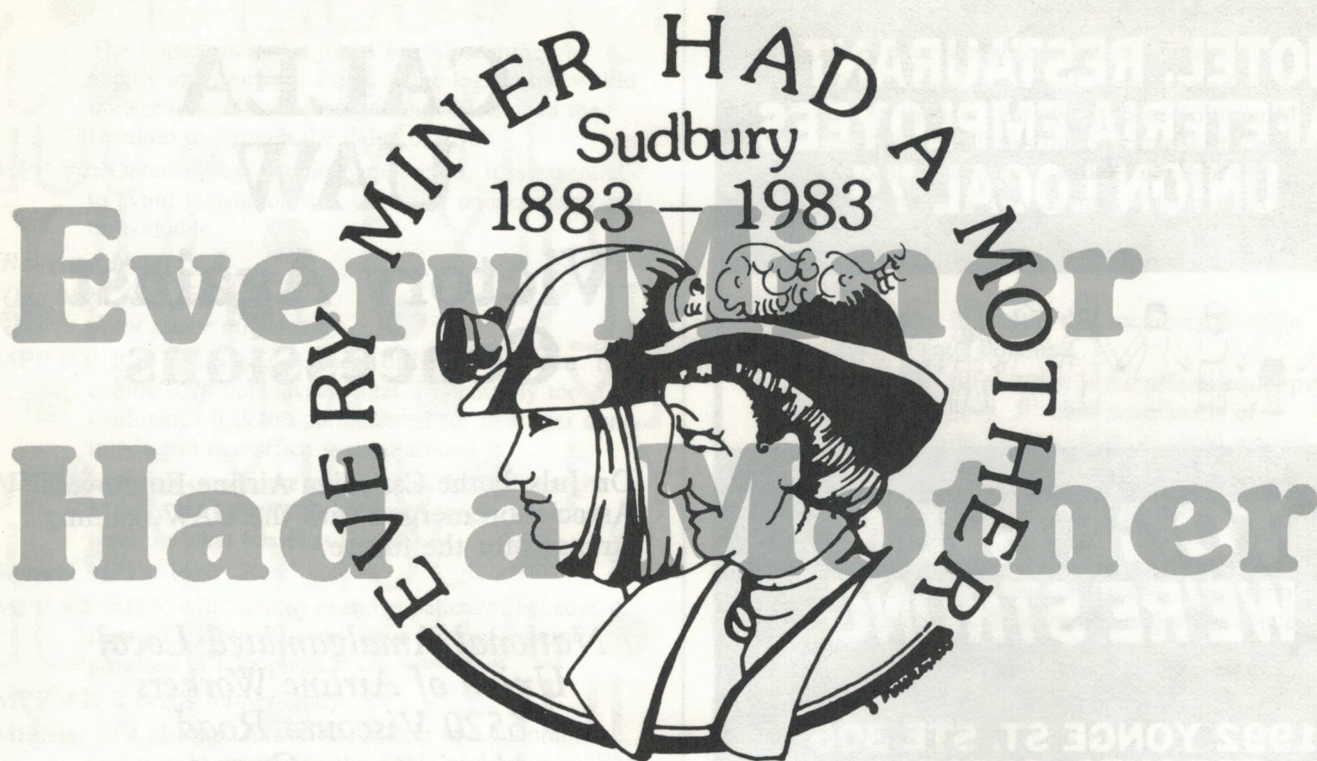
**INTERNATIONAL
MOLDERS AND ALLIED
WORKERS UNION**

.....
**EDWARD C. WITTHAMES
VICE PRESIDENT**

Office: 951 Dufferin St.
Toronto, Ontario
532-3264



**BY APPRECIATION
WE MAKE WOMEN FULL PARTNERS
IN THE EXCELLENCE
OF OUR UNION**



"Throughout history women have taken on the difficult task of looking after the physical and emotional needs of their husbands and children. In the paid workforce we have continued to support the largest needs of the community, again largely as caregivers and service workers. As mothers and housewives we labour alone, and as workers in the community our work is underpaid and undervalued. This despite the fact that our work has and continues to play a major role in building and maintaining a labour force."

By Susan Kennedy and Jennifer Keck

AN OBVIOUS STATEMENT — Well, not to everyone.

When the Sudbury Centennial Foundation unveiled their logo to mark the city's 100th birthday, their project sparked considerable debate and controversy in the local feminist community. The logo, depicting two male miners, one of the past and one of the present, was designed to honor the role that working men had played in the building of Sudbury. The fact that the town's working class was acknowledged in the logo was important; but the inherent sexism demanded a rebuttal. And we, at the Women's Centre, were up for the challenge.

In many ways the issue over the logo reflected a much larger problem that women organizing in single industry towns face on a day-to-day basis. How do women in a "man's town" educate and organize around the issues and needs of women? In this instance, we knew that the largely unpaid work that women had done to build this town was ignored, forgotten,

or most likely unknown. The work that women had poured into the town was largely hidden from the threads of traditional history.

To challenge this view, we had to find a way to make women's history known — in a manner that was exciting and novel, but that packed a good punch.

The Centennial Committee had invited various community groups and organizations to participate in a series of events planned throughout 1983. Aghast at the official logo, but with little idea of what we could possibly do, the Centre submitted a proposal. We claimed Mother's Day, Saturday, May 12th as the logical date and theme for our event.

We met in mid-January to decide what we were going to do. We wanted to attract local women to the event, and we wanted to show women's history. So, in the tradition of our mothers and grandmothers we decided to organize a Mother's Day tea — but one with a difference! This tea would have pink and green triangle sandwiches,

but packaged in the context of a much larger political statement.

The event would be billed as an "Every Miner Had a Mother's Day Tea." Another hour of giddy discussion produced more ideas. We would commission a local artist (a Women's Centre member) to design our own logo. The logo would be put on buttons, T-shirts, and sun-visors, which we would sell at the tea. All items would be produced in English and French. We would commission the same artist to design a mural featuring women in Sudbury's history that could be featured on the CN fence — to be displayed along with the 10 others depicting the contribution of prominent male figures.

But why stop there? We would put together our own picture collection — one that brought the contribution that our mothers and grandmothers had made in building this town. We weren't just going to tell them about it, we would show them. Let them argue against photographic testimony.



THOMAS OTTO PHOTO DAN WELCH/IMD PHOTO EXHIBIT

Miners' Mothers' Day was a tribute to our mothers and grandmothers which showed that there is more than one way to fight city hall.

The picture collection proved to be our most ambitious undertaking. We had initially planned to put together a series of pictures depicting the contribution of women, not only in the paid workforce but also in the hidden economy. We were interested in the work that women did raising families, keeping house, doing farmwork and a host of other activities related to volunteer work in hospitals, schools, unions and other community organizations.

It was one thing to decide on a picture collection, quite another to actually put it together. Our enthusiasm waned early as we searched the obvious sources for pictures — the local libraries, the university archives, prominent community organizations. We even advertised in the local media, with little success. With the exception of earlier work that had been researched for the production of "A

Wives Tale," a film on the participation of the wives during the strike against INCO in 1978, there was very little documented history in the areas that we were interested in.

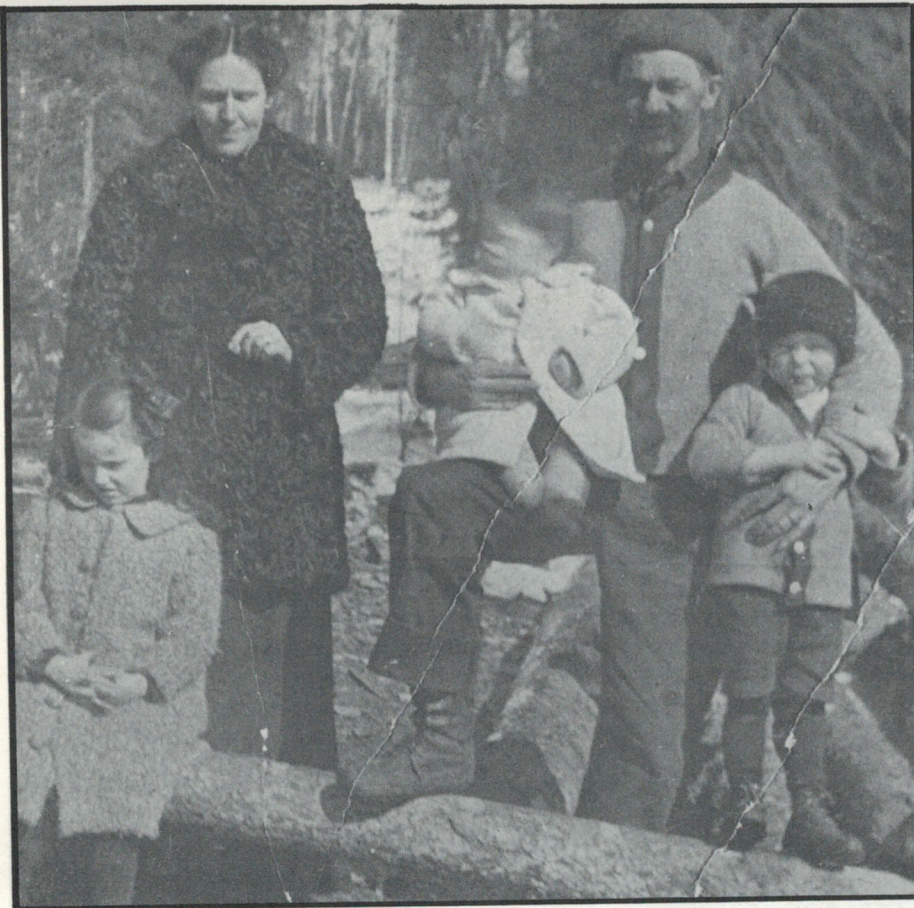
In retrospect, it is hard to understand our original optimism. The whole point of the project was to bring out the special contribution of women — we should not have been surprised that this history was not only hidden, but invisible from the mainstream of local "his-story."

Three weeks before the tea, with only 13 pictures in our possession, we began to seriously question the viability of the project. We decided to try an alternative approach. If traditional sources did not have the information, why not go to the women themselves? We were concerned with the city's social history, not a record of official monuments. We should go to women and their family records, talk to

them about their lives, and their mothers' and grandmothers' lives.

Themes became evident as we built up the collection. It was hard to explain to people that we were not only interested in "old" pictures with women working at wage employment. The other part of women's work — as mothers, wives, sisters and community members was harder to draw out. It took us several interviews to find someone who finally had a picture of a woman ironing — and we never did find one of a woman washing dishes.

Our searches may have challenged tenets of scientific research — but the results were overwhelming. Direct contacts through our own informal networks (and a series of 18-hour days) provided a wealth of information. In a period of two weeks we managed to collect over 120 pictures! By the end of that period we had



How do women, in a "man's town," educate and organize around the issues and needs of women?

amassed a series of written and taped interviews, gathered pictures of women working, and put together the beginnings of a chronological history. Each interview seemed to raise new issues and questions — not all of them resolved by the end of the project.

As we worked on the project and gathered more pictures, there was a change in the committee. What started as a spoof on city hall became a mission. We worked on it day and night. Many of us had supportive supervisors and co-workers who looked aside as we scurried around town after yet another picture. We spent long hours interviewing our aunts and our mothers, listening to long tales as time was spent on each photograph. Pictures sparked long personal histories — memories of the year their first child was born, the year their husband was laid-off, the first day they went to work outside of the home, and what life was like without a refrigerator.

There was the woman who had worked as a cook in a lumber camp at the turn of the century — long hours, little pay. There

was an interview with a woman currently living in a senior citizens' home. She talked of her work-day in the 30s, a day that spanned from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. when she would put her last child to bed in time to finish the last of the mending. There were dozens of pictures of women with children — we even had one of a woman who helped deliver children at home when the hospitals could no longer provide enough room.

We also looked for work in more traditional areas outside of the home — early pictures of women working as teachers, nurses and service workers. Another series of pictures dealt with women's work during the war — as volunteers selling war bonds, working for the Red Cross, entering the Armed Forces, and as industrial workers at INCO. The Women and Labour section highlighted the contribution of the women in the building of the Mine-Mill and Smelters Union at INCO, as strikers in the first restaurant strike and as members of the Wives Supporting the Strike in 1978.

The picture collection and logo became

a focal point for the Women's Centre's contribution to centennial year. Early publicity was well received. Our logo with the accompanying slogan was picked up by the media. People who had never considered the Women's Centre as anything more than a hangout for a ragtag group of feminists were suddenly intrigued. It captured their imaginations, it made them laugh but it made them think. Immediately the Women's Centre was bombarded with calls for buttons. An elementary school teacher came down to the centre (for the first time) with a request for 20 buttons to take back to her school to sell. The tea itself was attended by more than 450 people.

In the months following the event the picture collection was displayed several times — at city hall, at the local science museum, and at several senior citizens' residences. Later reproductions were made, the originals were returned, and plans were made to have the collection made into a permanent exhibit. As centennial year continued, local members of the media would often feature the Women's Centre logo with the official one when they covered a centennial event. Even the chairperson of the Centennial Foundation was seen sporting a Miners' Mothers' Day button. This, despite his initial apprehension about the project.

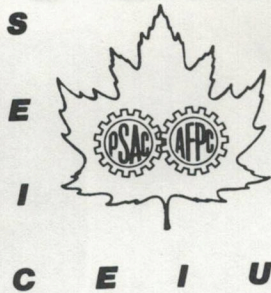
Miners' Mothers' Day marked a turning-point for many of us active at the Women's Centre. The exhibit was a first step in trying to regain our past. We saw it as a tribute to our mothers and grandmothers and the other women who had helped to build Sudbury and other communities like it. It also showed us that there was more than one way to fight city hall.

This project was successful in attracting a wider audience because it allowed us to tap that secret anger that most women feel, about the way that their work has been traditionally underpaid and undervalued. And who could challenge us? In the end we were able to show people why we were upset and why we wanted things changed — but with a bit of humor and imagination we were virtually unassailable.

Susan Kennedy and Jennifer Keck are active members of the Sudbury Women's Centre. Susan Kennedy is an executive member of Local 534, Canada Employment and Immigration Union. Jennifer Keck is a past executive member of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

Women's interests are not adequately represented in unions. But times are changing.

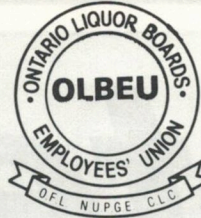
Canada's Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU/PSAC), 65% women, has established three national executive positions for women, a policy of regional women's conferences, and on-going organizing and an active women's committee.



These recent measures indicate a positive direction for the union movement as a whole.

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Sisters In the Brotherhood

Women's labour in the blue collar trades.

By Nancy Bayly

A little while ago, the company I work for switched me to a new location with a new crew. During the lunch break of our first day, 15 of us were sitting at the table, and eventually one of my workmates couldn't contain himself any longer. "Tell me," he said, "doesn't it feel strange to be the only woman here?" It was at that point that I realized — no, it doesn't feel strange at all. Lonely sometimes, uncomfortable, even awkward. But not strange. It has been eight years since I began working in the non-traditional field, and as far as work is concerned, it's basically all I know. What would seem strange on a new job, is if no one said to me "So what ever made you decide to be a carpenter?"; if, the first time someone cut loose with words that are used regularly in most popular movies, every pair of eyes within a half-mile radius didn't turn in my direction to see how I would bear up under the shock. It would be decidedly strange if I didn't have to fight with every new partner about whether I would manage to pick up work material that weighed less than a loaded purse.

My response to that question asked at lunch made me realize with amazement that I am a survivor. I made it through my apprenticeship. I am a real journey-woman, and not even my most incredulous workmates assume that I am only in the trade as a neat summer job.

I feel that I owe my survival to two very

important influences in my life. One is my association since 1980 with Women in Trades-Toronto, a support group for women in non-traditional blue-collar jobs. The second is my five-year membership in the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

If we look back over the decade, it may seem that there has been significant progress for women in achieving equality of opportunity in the workplace. Kate Braid, a carpenter in B.C., did a study for her MA thesis in which she pinpointed 1974 as the year that women in that province began to make the first significant inroads into non-traditional work. Her figures coincide with the year of the establishment of the revised Human Rights Code and its enforcement by the Human Rights Branch. This certainly fits with my experiences in Ontario, where every employer I have ever approached for a job muttered "Human Rights Commission" under his breath somewhere in the conversation. However, at least in Ontario, the dreaded words "Human Rights" have not meant that a world of job opportunities have opened up to me. In general, it has only meant the difference between "We don't hire women here," and "Sorry, there are no openings at this time."

What few statistics there are, bear this observation out. Across Canada, the proportion of registered female apprentices has remained constant at three

per cent of the total between 1970 and 1980. Of that small group, if we subtract the 74-85 per cent who are apprenticed in the more traditional occupations of hair-dressing and cooking, the number of women who are training in non-traditional areas drops to a measly 0.05 per cent. This statistic does not mean that women are not entering non-traditional blue collar work, but it does suggest that they have not yet broken, in any significant way, into the more elite, high-paying class of skilled trades.

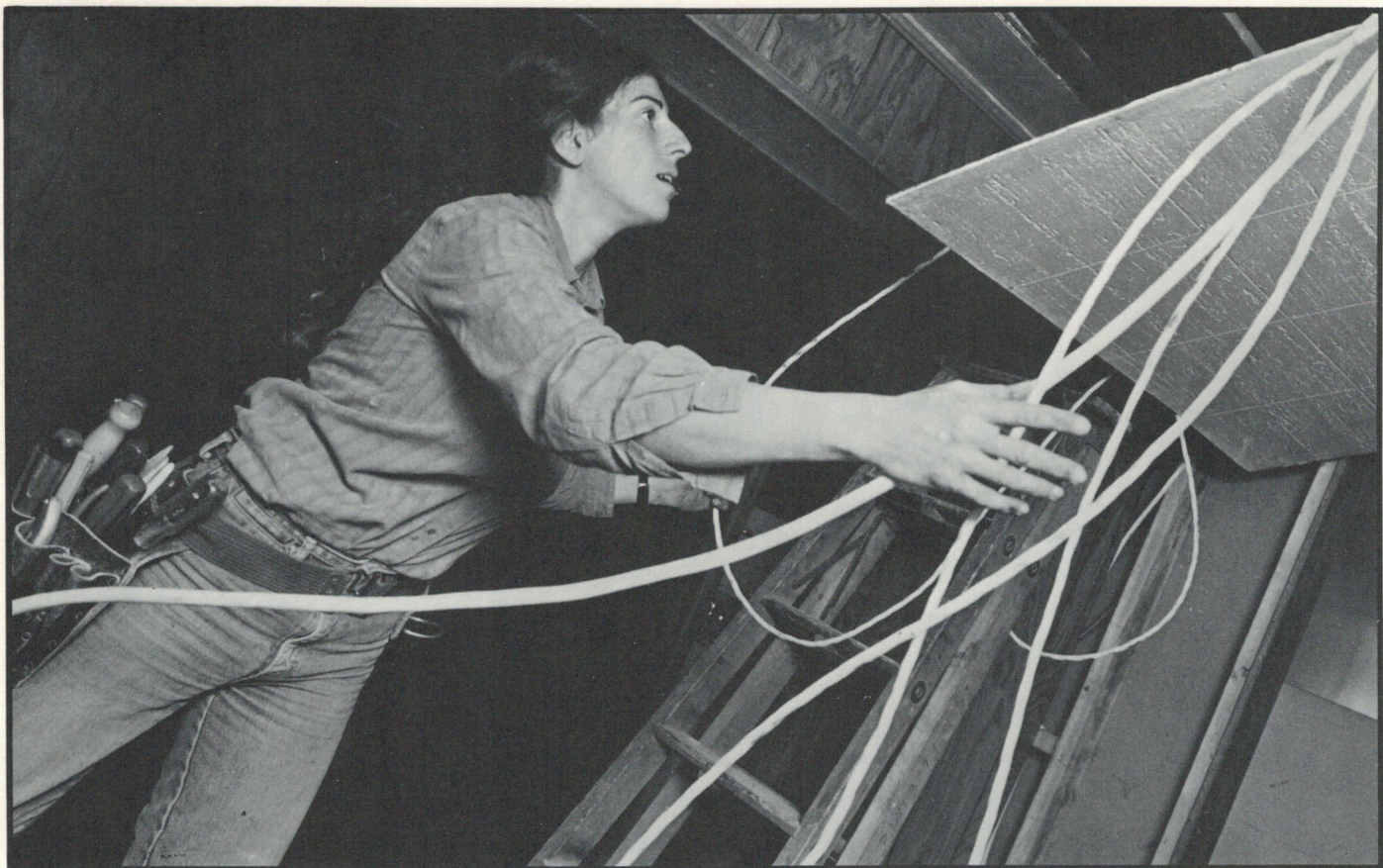
So maybe we can't treat the Human Rights Code as the answer to our prayers, but we can look on it as a good tool to utilize in our fight for equal access to jobs.

Since the Human Rights Code spelled out the fact, that women have the right to the same job opportunities as men, a wide range of options has been open to unions in using this legal right. One of the possibilities is aggressive lobbying for more explicit legislation requiring hiring quotas in all areas considered "non-traditional." The white collar public service unions, with their large proportion of women members, have played the most significant role in this area. A second possibility is for a union to seek out women to apply for these jobs, using media campaigns, contacting community colleges, and educating their own members. It could be the driving force in launching and organizing a class action suit against a discriminating



DOLORES HERRERA

JAREN MCLEOD



company, and, ultimately, a union could include affirmative action (in both hiring and upward mobility) as a key demand in contract negotiations.

Ontario has certainly seen some affirmative action fights with this level of union support. There was the 1979 Women Back Into Stelco Campaign in Hamilton. Although Stelco had employed many women workers back in the Second World War, they had not hired a single woman since 1962, although estimates are that over 10 per cent of all applicants over the years have been women. Six years ago, Cec Taylor, then president of Local 1005 of the Steelworkers in Hamilton, virtually initiated an affirmative action fight with the company by suggesting in an article in a local paper how curious it was that Stelco had not hired a single woman in production in the last 20 years. Stressing that nothing could be done unless women complained, Taylor invited any women who wanted jobs at Stelco to contact him. About 10 women responded to his offer.

It is a serious problem for women trying to get into non-traditional jobs that they are isolated and have no way of contacting each other. Local 1005 served this vital function, giving women seeking entry into Stelco a route for finding each other and

organizing themselves. Together the women charged Stelco with discrimination through the Human Rights Commission, and turned their case into a massive public advertising campaign, obtaining the support and endorsement of as many unions as possible — including a number of all-male locals in the Hamilton area. By 1980, Stelco was forced to hire about 100 women as industrial workers in the plant. Although Local 1005 did not organize the campaign, they did give the Women in the Stelco Committee the use of their facilities, and the organizers credit the Steelworkers' support with having been absolutely essential in the success of their campaign.

This level of commitment, however, has not been exhibited in the vast majority of cases where union support has been critical to the employment of women in non-traditional jobs. A class action suit launched by a Montreal-based women's group against Canadian National Railways for systematic discrimination in the hiring of blue collar workers was recently won at the Human Rights Commission. This action was in no way initiated by any one of the large conglomerates of unions that represent railway workers. Individual actions previously launched and won

against CN were often not even initially supported by the various CN unions. Liz Marshall was one of five women in Winnipeg to file a complaint against CN. Following the same general approach as "Women Back Into Stelco", she and her sister complainants wanted to publicize their campaign. As part of their effort, they approached the leadership of various CN unions, but the response was generally very negative. However, even though the leadership avoided contact with the campaign, the women were permitted to address most of the local membership meetings. It was at these meetings, according to Marshall, where the Women Into Rail Committee found their union support. All the local meetings where women were allowed to speak endorsed this campaign — many overwhelmingly.

Speaking personally, it is difficult to discuss non-traditional blue collar jobs without looking at construction. Historically, the building trades have been the most intransigently closed to women. According to one American study I read, construction was the only industry during the Second World War that retained its 'purity' by refusing to admit even one woman into its ranks. It also happens to be the one industry where the unions have

considerable input as to who gets hired. The way the construction industry in Ontario is set up at the present time, there is no seniority on the job site. Workers can basically get laid off in any order, although the union does have the right to grieve what it considers an unjust dismissal. On the other hand, companies are usually required by contract to hire their workers in a particular trade through a central hiring hall set up and run by that union. Theoretically, the hiring hall works on the basis that the worker who has been out of work the longest will be the first to be sent out on a new job when a contractor phones in a request.

Over the past decade, construction unions have not exactly thrown open their gates and welcomed women into the brotherhood. The most positive support for women has generally come from enlightened individuals within the organization. Linda Ambroise was a secretary in the office of a unionized building contractor in Sarnia. She approached the business agent for the Carpenters Union one day about the possibility of an apprenticeship for her boyfriend. "Forget the boyfriend," he said, "What about yourself?" It was directly as a result of his encouragement — and, no less important, of his influence at the hiring hall in finding her a job — that she was able to gain access to the skilled trades.

Recently, a number of construction locals have indicated some interest in providing support for women wanting to enter the trades. A rep from the Ironworkers recently contacted Women in Trades-Toronto specifically looking for women to train as apprentice ironworkers. A member that we steered in the union's direction was delighted with the way she was treated by the local. She was guided supportively through the testing procedure, and within a very short time, had been placed in a long-term job with a large contractor.

Unfortunately, in the majority of cases, the construction unions' response to women's demands for success in the trades has not been lukewarm, or even neutral. When women have somehow managed to gain entry, it has often been with a reluctant acceptance by the union rivaled only by the company's reaction.

In my own local of the Carpenter's Union, I am the first and only woman to have gone through the apprenticeship program in the five years of my membership. Although I heard rumours from time

to time of some mysterious 'other woman' in the local, I have yet to see her or have any direct confirmation of her existence. I do know, personally, at least 10 women who applied to the union for acceptance into the apprenticeship program. Not one was given the slightest encouragement: "Too many apprentices out of work," or "You need to find your own job," with no guidance as to where they might look. In one particular instance, the apprenticeship rep from the Carpenters' Union contacted George Brown College to see if there were any particularly likely candidates among the recent graduates of their carpentry courses. Ann Gibson was the student given the highest recommendation by her instructor, but her interview with the apprenticeship rep and subsequent contact with him had all the appearances of an elaborate run-around. When it appeared that her application was going nowhere, I eventually asked the rep in question about her. His reply was a curt, "Oh, that pain in

the neck."

I completed my apprenticeship in the Carpenters' Union last August; just recently I learned that one more woman has been brought into this program — it seems, literally, to take my place. The question in my own mind has been why I was accepted as an apprentice in the first place if the union continues to remain so unenthusiastic about women. Marcia Braundy, a sister carpenter from B.C., gave me some idea of what might be going on, when she told me about her initiation meeting into a Kootenay local of the Carpenters' Union. She was asked to leave the room while a decision was made as to her eligibility, but she learned later that the clinching argument for her acceptance, despite considerable opposition among the membership, was concern about the possibility of a human rights case if she were rejected. In my local, perhaps one token woman every five years out of 250 carpenter apprentices is enough to prevent

KIRSTEN EMMOTT

"Who Looks After Your Kids?"

"Who looks after your kids when you work?"

"Who does the housework?"

"How do you manage working those long hours with a family?"

"How do you manage with the kids?"

Well, there's their father, and a nanny and a day care centre but they don't really hear, the people who ask. They don't want to know about it.

What they want to hear is:

Who does the housework? My henpecked worm of a husband.

Me,
until four in the morning. A Jamaican wetback whom
we blackmail
into slaving for peanuts. Nobody, we all live in a huge tattered
ball of blankets like a squirrel's nest.

Who bakes the bread? Never touch it. Mac's Bakery.

The pixies.
A little old Irishwoman named Kirsten Emmott comes
in every week.

How do you manage with the kids? I don't. I neglect them.
I'm on the verge of a nervous breakdown, please help me.
I'm drinking heavily. I don't give a damn about the kids,
let them go to hell their own way.

Who looks after the kids? Nobody, I tie them to a tree in
the back yard every day. My senile old grandmother. The
Wicked Witch of the West.

Kirsten Emmott (b. 1947) is a doctor who practices family medicine in Vancouver, and is the mother of two children. Her poems have appeared in various magazines, medical journals and anthologies, including the new release Shop Talk (Pulp Press 1985).

a few legal complications in the long run.

I don't want to give the impression that industrial unions are free from discrimination and hostility towards women entering non-traditional jobs. Joyce Hannah operates a fork lift in a glass factory in Toronto. She was being harassed on her job, but when she complained to her union representative, she was brushed off with the advice: "That's what you get if you take a man's job."

In general, then, it appears that blue-collar unions have, at best, played no more than the role of a catalyst in the struggle for

women to gain equal access to work. Individually or collectively, women have had to organize from the outside using all the legal means and support they could muster (which has included community, left and women's groups, as well as unions).

So the performance of blue collar industrial and skilled trades unions has been less than satisfactory in taking up the cause of women at the point of hiring. However, I would stress that there is a vital role of protection that unions, both friendly and hostile, have played for women entering

non-traditional occupations after the initial hiring hurdle has been passed. Many of the contract provisions that have been fought for by men for the protection of male workers are precisely the same provisions that give women the protection they need from sexual discrimination.

Though the building trades unions leave few openings for women to gain entry, once that's achieved, the hiring hall set-up virtually guarantees access to jobs. Since contractors must contact the hiring hall when they need workers, they do not get to pick and choose among the work pool. I can state categorically that not one of the dozen or so companies I have been sent out to work for since 1979 would have hired me off the street, although they were generally quite happy with my work and kept me on till the job was completed. In one case I remember, when the contractor saw me, he threw his hat on the ground screaming, "Christ, they sent me a woman!" After he had his tantrum, he put me to work, because the contract is specific and he had no choice.

Equal pay is another of those protections that benefits women in a specific way. A blue collar contract setting down wage scales for all types of work virtually guarantees equal pay for equal work to any woman gaining entry to the traditionally exclusive workplace. At least, it does while there are still just a token handful of women — too few to be ghettoized into a particular job category with the attendant lower wages.

Another union protection of special importance is the provision of seniority, which women can use with real success to gain access to jobs from which they have previously been excluded. Seniority in McDonnell-Douglas or de Havilland Aircraft companies can mean the opportunity to move, once hired, from a production line non-traditional job to a skilled trade apprenticeship.

In the plant operations department of Toronto Hydro, for example, the contract specifies that all permanent staff must be hired first as labourers, and, according to seniority, are able to bid into skilled trades jobs as they become available. This seniority system is very strict, and would allow women considerable opportunity to gain access to the trades.

The problem is, that without an affirmative action program, it is doubtful that any women would be hired into these jobs in the first place, even at the labourer level. And although there are many women

KIRSTEN EMMOTT

Susie

Susie's in love again
She's told me all about it

in fact she can't stop talking about it.

"I can't stop thinking about him," she moans.

"It's terrible, I can't even do my work without
a tremendous effort."

It's the same old story, this time it's a surgeon,
Susie saw him sprawled in an armchair in the coffee room,
he had a tan from his vacation,
his brown arm hung over the side of the chair so carelessly,
and Susie fell, he looked so wonderful in his greens, she says.
Even the drawstring pants fit him beautifully, she claims,
he has great legs (actually he wears baggy suits but she didn't
know that then;)

she loves to follow him down the hall to the O.R.

"I can barely control myself around him, I love him so.

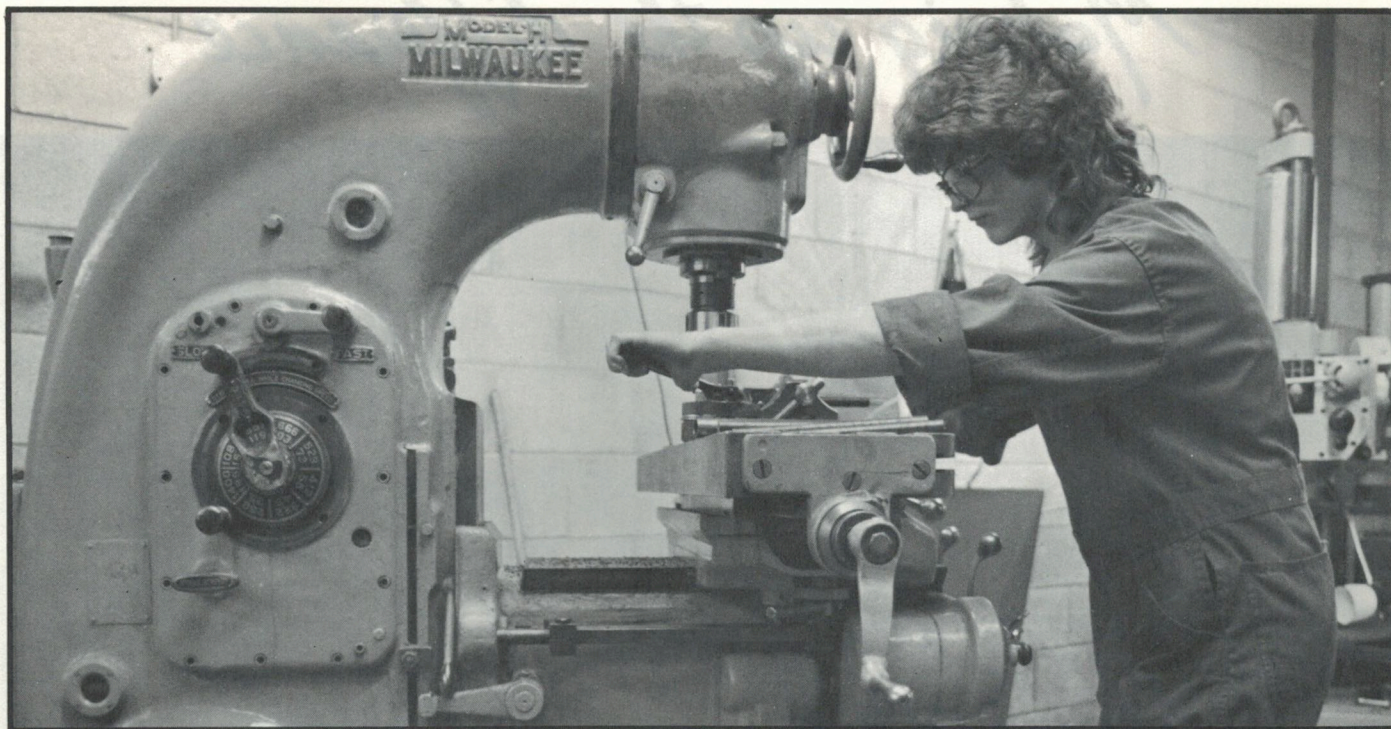
Every time I have to talk to him this weird double conversation
goes on in my head:

'Yes Dr. So and So' (the name changes every six months)

'look at these creatinine levels, aren't you worried about
her kidney function,
let's get an anesthesia consult, to see if they're willing
to put her to sleep, to sleep, perchance to dream, take
off your clothes.'

I go home and try to study, what the hell's this,
endocrinology, steroids, sex hormones, sex.
gynecology, that's even worse, how do they stand it?
I can't even get into the bath without studying my body
and dreaming about what it wants;
making love to the man I already have is an absurd waste
of time,
but when I come home from work every day I'm ready
to burst,
What'll I do?"

I press feminist tracts into Susie's hands but she can't
read them,
she can't read anything, it's like walking through glue.
She knows it's crazy, she doesn't even like this guy, he's a drip,
all the nurses think so and the interns too,
I tell her to go into emergency care, that keeps you too busy
for this sort of thing,
or pediatrics, those fellows seem a pretty steady lot,
but it's no good, last year she fell in love with a pediatrician
whom everybody in town hated, including the babies.
All we can do is wait for her to grow out of it,
or at least start another rotation,
preferably in some other hospital.



JAREN MCLEOD

working at Toronto Hydro in the white collar department, there seems to be a very solid barrier of departmental delineation which seniority does not cross. To effect a true integration of the work force, seniority must cross white/blue collar lines to allow all workers equal access to all jobs. The most obvious way to break down the barrier is through contract negotiations.

Consistent with the principle of giving priority to longer term workers, seniority also means that the last hired is the first to be laid off in times of production slowdown. To put it another way, "the last hired is first fired," a refrain that is all too familiar in the history of working women. That chorus was played again when Stelco's plant in Hamilton had a period of production slowdown in the early 80's and most of the 100 women so recently hired were laid off. Right of recall time is limited at Stelco, so when production did not pick up within a year those women lost their right to be automatically rehired in the future.

Does seniority mean, then, that women will never be able to hold on to the precious gains that they are able to make in job access? Discussions raged at the time of the Stelco lay-offs over whether women's long-standing job discrimination meant a separate seniority list should be established for women in order to compensate for this disadvantage. To me, this seniority system is such a vital aspect of

protection for workers that it should not be altered in any way which would make it more vulnerable to management attack. Rather than make exceptions to the system, the system should be extended. The unions at CN have negotiated *permanent* seniority as a response to the regular long lay-offs that occur on the railway. Seniority continues to be accumulated during lay-offs with no time limit, and the workers have the right to refuse two call-backs before they are required to accept a job offer. Had this kind of agreement been in place at Stelco or McDonnell-Douglas, lay-off would have meant only temporary set-backs to the introduction of women into these industries.

The final point I would like to make is that quotas are necessary. Affirmative action programs and permanent seniority are important, but women will never be able to gain access to well-paying, non-traditional, blue collar jobs in any significant way unless mandatory long-term quotas in hiring are established. In Canada, a breakthrough was achieved in this respect with the successful class action suit launched against CN. In the first ruling of its kind in the country, the Human Rights Commission specified that CN must hire one woman for every four blue collar positions that become available until women occupy 13 per cent of such positions. Before this decision, women had been filing and winning individual

actions against CN for years, with no appreciable change in the company's acceptance of women. [Ed. note: The Supreme Court recently overturned the rights commission's decision. See the Updates section in this issue.] We won't see any real gains being made for women until we begin to talk numbers. In the CN decision, we may argue with the size of the numbers, but the ruling itself is of tremendous significance.

The union movement can and should get involved in the fight for quota-based affirmative action. There could be aggressive lobbying for the kind of federal contract compliance laws that exist in the U.S. Specifying that federal contracts will only be awarded to those companies with an affirmative action program actively in place, the U.S. is probably a good 10 years ahead of us in terms of the proportion of skilled tradeswomen and female blue-collar production workers in the labour force. An even more exciting prospect might be to follow the example of the Swedish trade unions who have successfully negotiated effective equal opportunity clauses into their individual contracts.

Nancy Bayly is a member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America who has been associated with Women in Trades since 1980.

Making up the difference



Why did I become so radical? Well, I'd worked in the industry for ten years trying to save for a home, then I lost it because of the system we're living under. We organized the Women's Auxiliary at the time of the '37 strike. I felt so good that morning the strike broke, I could see the workers were going to get a better standard of living. Where there's unity, there's strength.

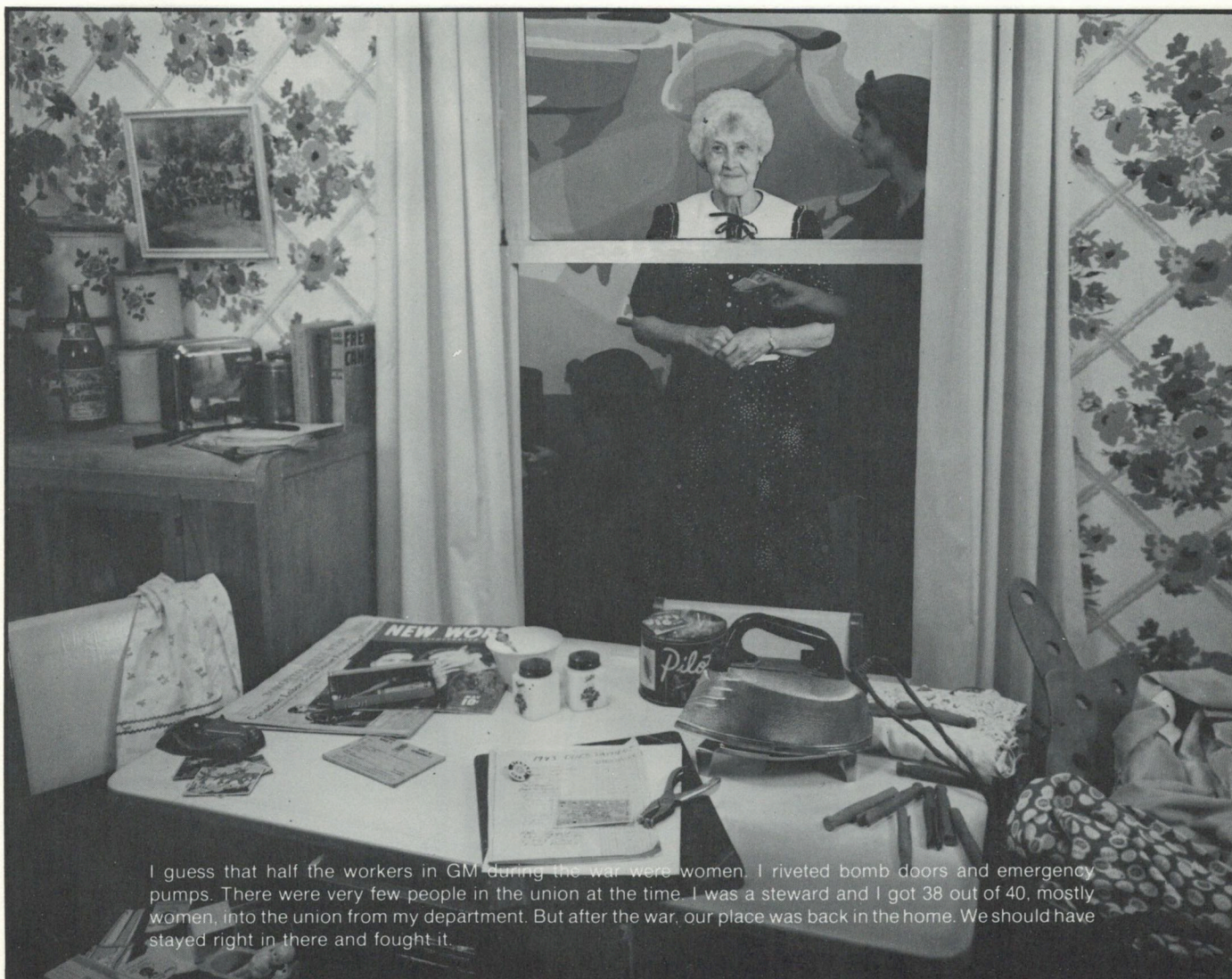
**ETHEL THOMPSON: FOUNDING MEMBER FIRST
UAW LADIES AUXILIARY (No. 27) IN 1937**

**Portraits of
Ethel Thompson, Mary Turner, Maureen Shorten,
Bev McCloskey and Mary Anne Greene
Members of Local 222, United Autoworkers, CLC, Oshawa**

**by
Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge
with**

**Robert Kaiser, Derrik Kaiser, Leslie Sharpe, Edith Beveridge, Simara Beveridge,
Cynthia Grant, Maureen White, Tanya Mars, Shirley Josephs,
John Greyson, Kevin Porter, Carmen Palumbo.**

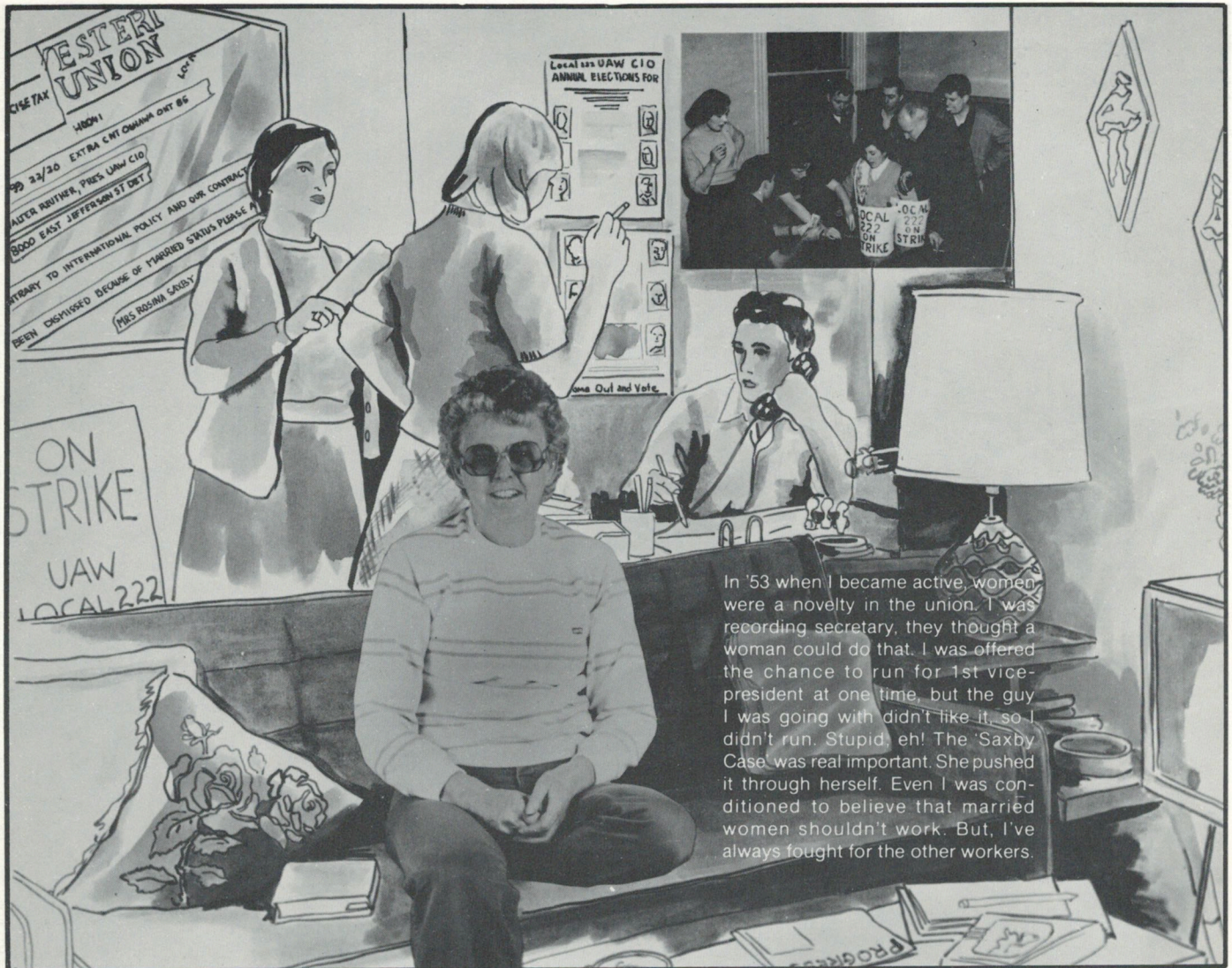
© 1983



I guess that half the workers in GM during the war were women. I riveted bomb doors and emergency pumps. There were very few people in the union at the time. I was a steward and I got 38 out of 40, mostly women, into the union from my department. But after the war, our place was back in the home. We should have stayed right in there and fought it.

**MARY TURNER: SHOP STEWARD, 1942-45,
AIRCRAFT ASSEMBLY DEPT. MEMBERS LADIES
AUXILIARY**

Making up the difference



In '53 when I became active, women were a novelty in the union. I was recording secretary, they thought a woman could do that. I was offered the chance to run for 1st vice-president at one time, but the guy I was going with didn't like it, so I didn't run. Stupid, eh! The 'Saxby Case' was real important. She pushed it through herself. Even I was conditioned to believe that married women shouldn't work. But, I've always fought for the other workers.

**MAUREEN SHORTEN: FOUNDING MEMBER
WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, 1963 (NOTE: ROSE
SAXBY WON A GRIEVANCE WHICH ALLOWED
MARRIED WOMEN TO WORK IN GM IN 1954)**

Portraits of
Ethel Thompson, Mary Turner, Maureen Shorten,
Betty McCauley and Mary Ann Grady,
Members of Local 222, United Autoworkers, CIO, Detroit

by
Cynthia Grant and Karl Beveridge

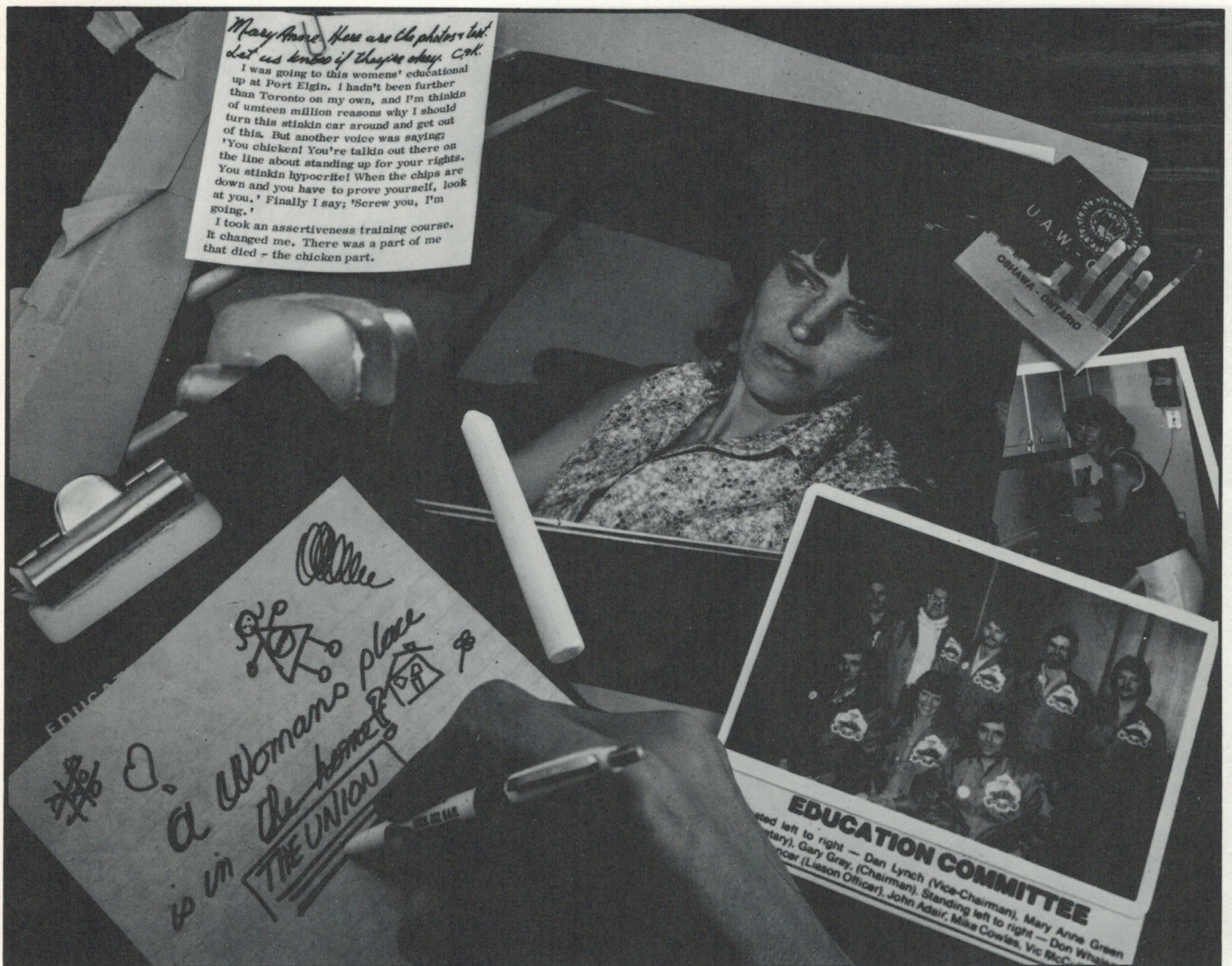
With
Robert Kaiser, David Kaiser, Leslie Sharpe, Edith Severidge, Elmore Beveridge,
Cynthia Grant, Maureen Wells, Tanya Sharp, Shirley Josephs,
John Greyson, Kevin Porter, Carmen Pantoja

© 1985



You could only work in the womens' departments. If your job was gone, out the door. In 1970, the law was changed. During negotiations, unless they had that damn 'female' clause taken out, we were going to chain the doors. After they put me on all the heavy lifting jobs and, I mean, you had to prove yourself. It just about killed me. But, now, there's the satisfaction of looking through the plant and seeing women in every department.

**BEV McCLOSKEY: FOUNDING MEMBER
WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, 1963**



MARY-ANN GREEN: MEMBER EDUCATION COMMITTEE AND INSTRUCTOR CLC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge are artists living in Toronto. They have completed several projects with trade unions including UAW, USWA, and OPSEU, and are members of the Artists Union and the Arts and Media Committee of the Labour Council of Metro Toronto.

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country () full packed to the rafters with
roof over in head, () like anyone, ()
the ground it stands on, () knows what's
going on, () feed the hungry, () grow
old gracefully, () see suddenly with a
bang, () play fair () and keep easy on its
pillow at night, () safe in our own
lived time, ()

À L'HEURE QUE NOUS VIVONS

Notre pays à nous () possède une vision, ()
il a un avenir () large comme un champ de
blé () profond comme nos rizières () plein
de rêves d'enfants dans, () comme nous et
chacun () notre pays à nous voudrait en
avoir sa part au-dessus de sa tête, () mais
seul tout ce qui se passe () nous nous
qui nous fait, () tout son plein en dépit ()
en nos pas à l'heure que nous vivons ()
() à l'heure que nous vivons () ce pays
voudrait travailler dur, () nous faire, ()
s'endormir tranquillement () à l'heure de
nos () en paix, ()

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Global Assembly Line

By Maureen Simpkins

The alarm on your digital watch rings early in the morning. Yawning, you get up and get ready for work. While eating breakfast you listen to the ghetto blaster in the kitchen. On the subway you idly watch the overhead computers announcing the news headlines. At the office, you log in at the VDT terminal that replaces the desk and filing cabinet you used to have. By 9:20, you're ready to start inputting invoices for the insurance company you work for. Your high-tech day has begun.

Most of us in developed countries don't question why the products or microtechnology are becoming more and more inexpensive. But when we look at the ways in which the microtech industry is shrinking the world, the way in which distances of thousands of miles can disappear at the blink of an eye, knowing what is happening globally becomes more important than ever.

The international assembly line begins in developed countries such as Japan, the U.S. or Europe — goes to Third World countries for production and assembly — then back to developed countries for final assembly and consumer use. Women at all points of the line are connected, for microelectronic technology changes and shapes the work environment for everyone. But, thousands of miles from the factories where tiny electronic parts are first assembled under Third World microscopes, we in North America are often unaware of these connections.

It is estimated that there are approximately two million Third World female industrial workers employed in the world. Millions more are looking for work. The young women are used as cheap labour during their prime years. Their working lives are short by our standards — five or less years. Too often they are abruptly terminated when their health begins to fail from occupational health hazards. Ex-

are peasants or junior civil servants. With a group so young and inexperienced, companies find it easy to influence their habits by propaganda programs. Recruiting personnel, companies often go to the rural areas promising women a taste of Western culture, good working conditions, accommodation, all kinds of benefits and eventual promotion.

When women start work they soon realize the pay is low, benefits nonexistent and the work monotonous. Production quotas are often imposed and competition encouraged. Failure to reach quota targets often means dismissal. There is also the insecurity of constant lay-offs. Often companies will lay off employees for a few weeks to save money. Employees then must work overtime during heavy production times to make up some of their financial loss. Companies have been known to dismiss hundreds of workers on the pretext of a work shortage, then hire a whole new group of workers a few weeks later. It costs less for them to hire new workers at starting wages than to maintain the old workers at wages that increase with experience.

Julie K. is a typical microtech factory worker. She works in Malaysia for an American-owned company. She wakes at 5:00 a.m. to begin breakfast for her family before she sets off to work. Julie has been working for the company for several years and now at the age of 21, is afraid she can't



hausted and in poor health, these women are quickly becoming a class of young unemployed workers.

A profile of women working in Third World electronic factories, in countries such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia or the Phillipines, shows that they are usually single and between the ages of 16 and 23 years old. They are generally from rural areas, their parents



PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH GROUP

see very clearly. Her job involves peering through a microscope all day bonding hair-thin gold wires to a silicon chip.¹ The silicon chips that Julie helps produce end up inside our pocket calculators — office computers.

Sylvia works at the Intel Philippines Manufacturing Corporation, an electronic equipment-exporting firm. The factory produces spare parts for military equipment such as war planes, microcomputers, missiles, micro-processors — all use integrated circuits in their production. After eight years as an equipment operator, Sylvia was made a supervisor. There are very few women at this level. In the past few years, she has become involved in setting up a union. She sees the severe health problems caused by constant exposures to highly poisonous and cancer-causing gas fumes as the main issue prompting union organizing.²

"I was quite healthy and charming when I first came to work in this factory of semi-conductors. I spent four years in the patting and cleaning department, working with chemicals like chlorethylene and epoxy resins. When I developed tuberculosis, the doctor told me to take a six month vacation but since I needed the job and the pay, I was back working in the day fab department after three months. For eight hours a day, six days a week, I peered through a microscope. Now I have weak lungs, poor eyesight and my health

has given me headaches, dizziness, nausea — thanks to the technology of the electronics industry."³

Women working in Third World microtech plants are struggling for survival. Health and safety regulations simply do not exist, and many multinational companies are prepared to exhaust workers' health before implementing standards that could cut into their profits. Workers need safe and healthy working environments, and are prepared to struggle to win them.

Unions and other collective actions can force management to implement safety standards. But in many Third World countries, unlike North America, unions are illegal and workers who try to organize are severely punished. In many countries where unions are not actually banned, governments allow corporations to repress worker organizing, effectively making it impossible for workers to act collectively.

In Canada, women play two major roles in the microelectronic industry. We assemble the products of the global assembly line — TV's, computers, military equipment, and consumer items — and we are office workers who work on word processors and computers made possible by the electronic chips assembled by our sisters in the Third World.

The Ottawa-Carleton area is called Silicon Valley North, a reference to the

giant sprawl of microtech factories in California's original "Silicon Valley." The tiny components made by Third World women are shipped to Canada for assembly into larger appliances, computers, etc. Many American multinationals and their subsidiaries are located in Canada.

The conditions of women employed in the microelectronic factories in Canada are remarkably similar to women working in Third World plants. Employees tend to be immigrant and low-income women who are desperate for work — a large percentage are Asian and South Asian. As in the Third World, these women tend to be young. A minimum wage is paid, and the women receive few, if any, benefits. The plants they work in can be relocated within the space of a few weeks. Between 1970-1978, 15,000 Canadian workers in consumer electronics and telecommunications lost their jobs when plants relocated to cheaper Third World locations. For women who manage to keep their jobs, unionization is extremely difficult.

Very few of the 16,000 microtech workers in the Ottawa-Carleton Silicon Valley are unionized.⁴ Companies do everything in their power to stop workers from organizing. Many of these production workers are immigrant women working for minimum wage. As in the Third World, attempting to organize means risking their jobs. That is a big risk, particularly for women who are the sole family

supporter.

Probably the most visible effect of the microtech industry can be seen in the office. Canadian workers have experienced tremendous changes in the past few years. As office automation grows, so too does job loss, job deskilling and health problems.

In some cases, microelectronic technology improves working conditions. But technology is implemented unevenly — some people have it imposed on them. Most employees have a lot to lose when high tech is introduced, unless they can negotiate implementation, retraining, skill upgrading and other protections.

With microtech in the office, many women office workers have found that their daily routines have been reduced to one or two procedures performed over and over again. This is known as "deskilling." For others, jobs have been totally eliminated, leaving women to look for work in a shrinking, competitive job market, where their former skills are outdated and in low demand. Heather Menzies, author of *Women and the Chip*, calculates that nearly a million Canadian female clerical workers will be unemployed in 1990.

The number of women working on computers at home is likely to increase as computer network communications becomes less costly. The decentralized office is cheap to operate, because companies don't have to pay rent, equip offices, or maintain a work environment. For women, home working will likely mean lower wages, no benefits and no job protection at all. Perhaps one of the greatest advantages from a company's point of view is that women doing home work have no possibility of collective action or organizing. A woman could work for years for a company, and never meet another co-worker.

Around the globe women working in the microelectronic industry and on microtech products experience similar health hazards. Women working in Third World microtech plants suffer from extreme vision problems, stress, tuberculosis, cancer and arthritis. Women working on VDT monitors have reported eyestrain, headaches, chronic fatigue, nausea, and other possible effects of prolonged ex-

posure to radiation. There have also been reports of birth defects as a result of operating VDTs for prolonged periods of time. Estimates suggest that about 250,000 video display terminal devices are in use across the country, and at least 100,000 Canadians, mainly women, spend up to eight hours a day in front of them.¹

Women in offices are fighting to ensure a safe and healthy workplace by demanding contracts and legislation regulating the number of hours one can work at a video display terminal or ensuring the right of a pregnant woman to transfer to another job with no salary reduction or loss of

Women are struggling to gain control over the microtech process all around the world — despite repressive governments, coercive propaganda techniques and anti-union policies. The forms of women's resistance varies from country to country and from situation to situation. Some fight back informally in an environment where women are not expected to express strong reactions, especially anger or aggressiveness. In other situations women are organizing and giving support to each other. The common thread that ties women microtech workers together is a desire for more control over their worklives.

Women microtech workers around the globe have a lot in common — we are all part of the global assembly line and often work for the same bosses. This assembly-line can also be used as a global solidarity network to unite against mass unemployment, health hazards and the oppressive conditions.

Please contact us if you are interested and/or active in issues affecting women and the global assembly line. We need to know what you or your group is doing. Through this network, we will be able to help people find contacts and information. This way we can build contacts for people within their own regions and internationally, as part of a long-term plan to build a Canadian network of microtech activists.

Notes:

1 Ehrenreich, Barbara and Fuentes, Annette. *Life on the Global Assembly Line*, in January 1981 Ms. magazine.

2 Interviews with women microtech workers, Philippine Women's Center, Manila, Philippines (unpublished).

3 Philippine Women's Center, Op cit.

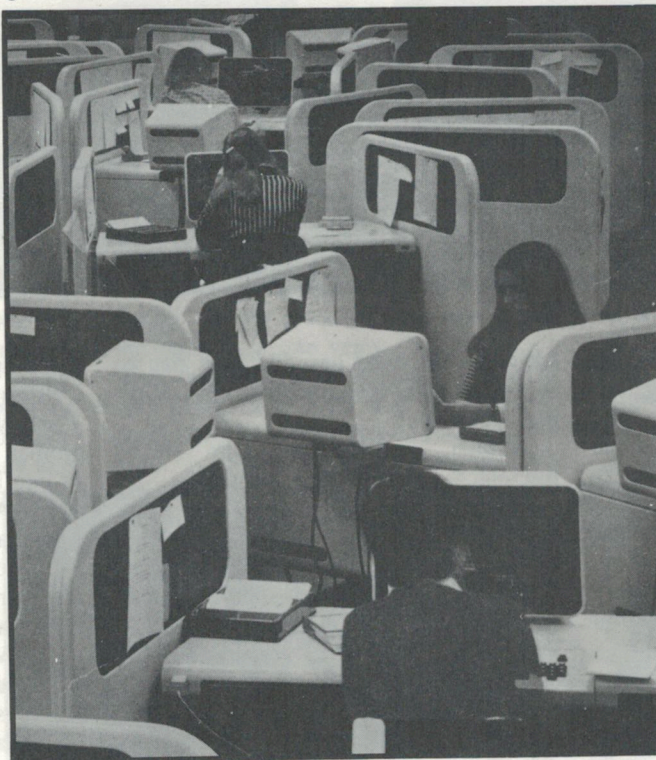
4 Belanger, Paul. *The New Electronic Canada*, CUPE — The Facts, Vol. 5, No. 7, September 1983, p. 36.

5 Chenier, Nancy Miller. *Reproductive Hazards at Work — Men, Women and the Fertility Gamble*. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1982, p. 27.

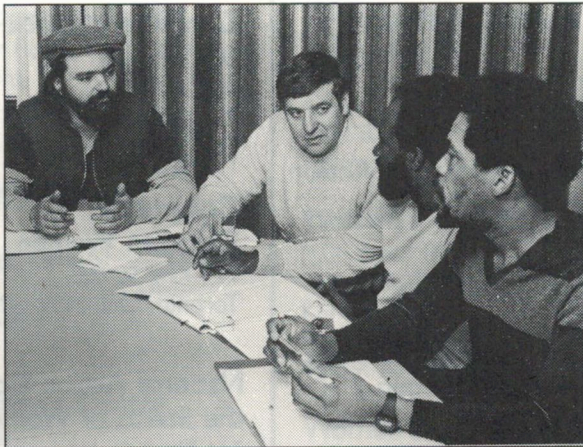
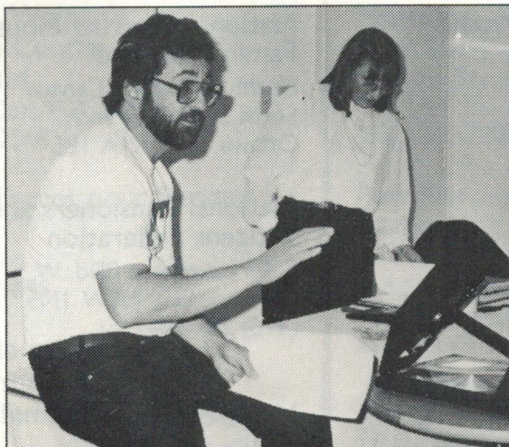
6 Siemiatycki, Myer. *The Microchip Battleground* — C.B.C. Radio Program "Ideas," March 25-April 7 1983, p. 6.

Maureen Simpkins is a member of the Participatory Research Group. Short Circuit: Women in the Global Assembly Line is a collective work by the PRG. They can be reached at 229 College St., 3rd floor, Toronto M5T 1R4, (416) 977-9118.

(This article is excerpted.)



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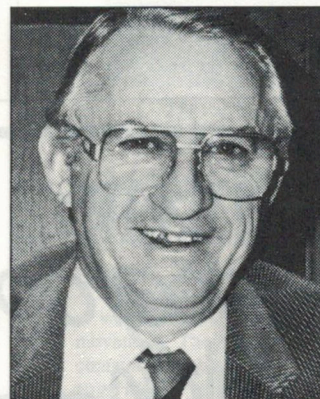
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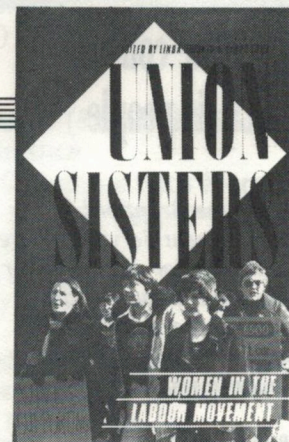
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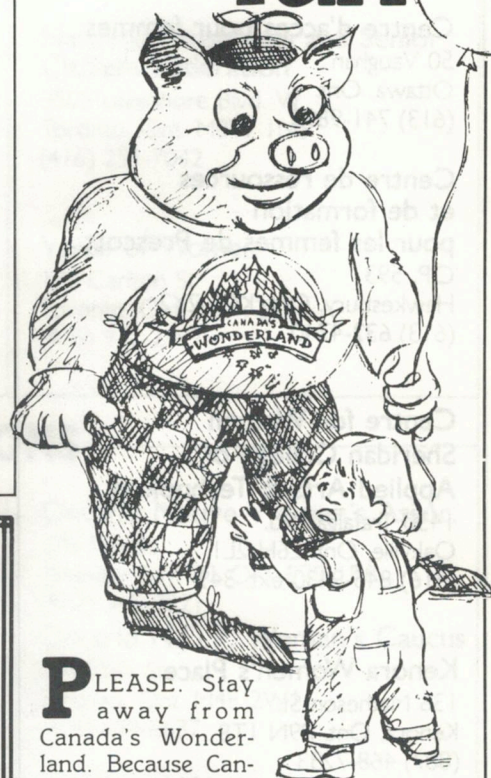
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Over The Years

By Eleanor O'Connor

The purpose of this chronology is to provide an easy-to-use review of the major factors of significance to union women in Canada. It traces their participation in the workforce and in the labour movement.

It is not complete. Not every "first" by a woman or group of women is listed. The list of strikes where women formed the majority of the strikers could be as long as this chronology. Significant breakthroughs or setbacks often occurred in bargaining or in arbitration awards and these are not included.

The compiling of a full chronology would be a lengthy but worthwhile project. In recent years there has been an expansion of articles and books containing information about the history of working women in Canada. But there is a need to put this information in an easily accessible format. Biographical sketches of our sisters who led the way would be a useful addition to such a work. Sketches not only of women who achieved national prominence but also those who accepted the responsibilities and burdens of leadership at the local level.

I would like to encourage the readers of Our Times to use this chronology. To share it with their friends and colleagues and to add to it.

I would welcome any additions and comments and of course corrections so that the process of collecting material for an enlarged version may continue.



1500s Establishment of permanent European colonies in Canada.

Prior to the development of the capitalist labour market, the working-class was engaged in autonomous production. Producing most of what it needed to consume. In this structure the role of women was central to economic organization. One of the few paid occupations available to women was that of domestic servant.

1750 Textile Industry established in Quebec. Women have always been a significant proportion of workers in Textile Industry.

1791 Constitutional Act — All persons with property allowed to vote. While this did not enfranchise working class people, it did allow *women* to vote. This was mainly exercised by women in Quebec.

1799 Combination Act. It became illegal for workers to 'combine' for increased wages or decrease hours of work, i.e. form unions.

1834 Women lost right to vote. Legislation was passed specifically removing the franchise from women in Quebec. Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, followed suit in 1843, 1848 and 1851 respectively.

1848 Women employed as printers at The Globe. They were hired because they were paid even less than male apprentices. But they did not become a permanent feature.

1850 By 1850 the essential structure of a capitalist market existed.

This market is one where employers hire workers on a short-term basis. For workers this means insecurity and unemployment. Employers need a surplus pool of labour to draw on and attempt to use female labour to create this pool, as well as immigrants and children and displaced landworkers.

1850s Day Care Centres established in Montreal to look after the children of poor working women. They were financed by provincial grants, charitable donations and fees.

1860s Factory production, based on machinery and unskilled labour rather than production by skilled-craft workers became the more common organization of work.

1863 Hamilton — Unions Form First Central Union body. Delegates were from constituent unions. Hamilton Trades Assembly lasted until 1875. Prior to 1859 all unions seem to have been local. There is evidence that during the 1860s province-wide organizations of unions in the same industry were formed e.g. shoemakers in Ontario and coalminers in Nova Scotia.

1870 First woman was employed by federal public service as deputy matron in Kingston Penitentiary. In 1886 only 24 women held permanent status in the public service.



Attempts to organize women shoeworkers into the Daughters of St. Crispins roused management opposition in Toronto.

1871 More than 50% of workforce in light manufacturing (shoemaking, printing, tobacco) were women and children.

In Montreal, 42% of industrial workforce were women and children. In Toronto, 34%.

1872 In Ontario, legislation was passed permitting women to earn wages free of their husbands' control.

Toronto Printers' strike — strikers were charged with seditious conspiracy. To appeal for the workers' vote, the Conservatives legalize unions. But actions of unions were not legalized (Trade Union Act).

1877 Emily Stowe established Women's Literacy Club. Primarily a consciousness-raising group, this was a forerunner of women's suffrage organizations. In B.C., an active suffragist was Helena Gutteridge, a union organizer and member of the Garment Workers' Union and Vancouver Trade and Labour Council. Gutteridge however believed that working women would be better protected by organizing into unions and opposed 'protective' legislation for women.

1881 First Canadian Assembly of Knights of Labour formed in Hamilton. This was the forerunner of the Industrial Unions.

The Knights organized skilled and unskilled workers — male and female. They formed 'mixed' Assemblies that took in all occupations.

1882 Toronto Trades and Labour Council supports equal pay for equal work.

Leona Barry, General Investigator of Women's Work for the Knights of Labour, came to Toronto to investigate the working conditions of women and to help organize them.

1882 Women shoemakers in Toronto went on strike against 5 factories. Male unionists supported them and male shoemakers held a sympathetic walkout.

1883 First women delegates joined Toronto Labour Council. They represented the Female Shoe Fitters. The Council attempted to encourage unionization of female workers, but the small and varied nature of industries employing women made this difficult.

1883 Formation of National Trades and Labour Body

1884 Ontario Factories Act passed

This Act and the Ontario Mines Act 1892 and the Shop Regulations Act, 1888 had specific sections relating to female employees. These included:

- restriction of hours to 60 per week
- efficient sanitary conditions
- seats to be provided for sales clerks
- raises minimum age of work to 14 years
- Women prohibited from working in and around mines

1885 Royal Commission Investigation into Relations of Capital and Labour.

1889 This commission visited 465 mills and factories, where 13,627 females and 27,675 males were employed.

Evidence given before the commission indicated that attempts by women to unionize were strenuously resisted by employers.

1886 Hope Assembly Knights of Labour was chartered. This was the first local with an entirely female membership.

1891 41% of women in labour force employed as domestics. Census listed 10 leading occupations of women as servants, dressmakers, seamstresses, etc. (All traditional homemaker type occupations.)

1892 Legal ban on dissemination of information about contraception. The Criminal Code of Canada also made illegal the sale and advertisement of contraceptives.

1896 Trades and Labour Congress Platform of Principles Adopted.

Royal Commission indicated that many women were employed in home work, where factory laws did not apply. The TLC platform included abolition of all female labour branches of industrial life such as mines and factories.

1901 Census figures showed 16% of Canadian women over 14 years of age participated in the labour force, and that women made up 13.4% of total labour force.

Women's Bindery Union had 250 members.

1902 There were attempts to organize domestic servants, waitresses and clerical workers.

1904

1904 Montreal bookbinders, male unionists, led strike to force employers to fire women.

1907 Bell Telephone Strike — operators at Bell, in Toronto, went on strike to protest long hours. A Royal Commission was appointed but the results proposed no significant changes in working conditions for the women.

1909 TLC supports women's suffrage.

Women's Labour League, made up of husbands and daughters of union members, had branches in some Canadian cities. The League encouraged working women to join or form unions.

1911 19% of women were labour force participants. Women made up 13.2% of labour force.

1911 TLC supported equal pay for equal work.

1913 Suffrage organizers carry 'Votes For Women' banner in Labour Day Parade

1914 World War I

1918 There was no significant increase in the number of women employed but there was a temporary influx and change in occupations away from domestic service. Attitudes toward single women working outside the home also became more favourable.

The District Labour Council of Toronto hires Laura Hughes to investigate conditions in plants manufacturing war goods.

1917 Female British subjects with close relations in Armed Forces were allowed to vote in Federal Election.

1918 Federal Franchise extended to women. Provinces established their own laws for women's suffrage. It was not until 1940 that women in Canada were able to vote in every province.

Manitoba and British Columbia passed minimum wage laws for female employees.

1919 The Canadian delegation to the Founding Conference of the International Labour Organization included one woman, Kathleen Dewry. Dewry reported to TLC convention in 1920.

1921 20.5% of Canadian women were labour force participants. They comprised 15.4% of the labour force. 21% of women in labour force employed as domestics.

B.C. passed legislation granting women 6 weeks maternity leave before and after giving birth. It was not until 1964 that any other Canadian jurisdiction legislated maternity leave. Then New Brunswick did.

1924 Formation of Women's Labour League. The League's members included women union members and housewives who were in auxiliary organizations. In Toronto, they were affiliated to the District Labour Council from 1924-1927.

1929 British Privy Council overturns the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and women are deemed to be 'persons' and therefore eligible for appointment to the Senate.

1931 23.6% of women were active in labour force and comprised 17.0% of the work force.

During the depression, female workers who were protected by legislated minimum wages were replaced by boys. However, most female workers were not eligible for relief.

1932 Elizabeth Bagshaw, M.D., became Director first birth control clinic in Canada — Hamilton.

Nova Scotia and Ontario Executive Committees of T.L.C. called for government to dismiss married women whose husbands were employed.

1939 World War II

1945 To encourage women to join the labour force, child care centres and tax incentives were provided. These promptly disappeared at the end of the war. Although many jobs previously done by men were now done by women, any modification to equipment or organization of work was used as an argument to say that work was no longer the same, therefore not equal, thus pay differentials continued.

1941 Labour Force Participation of women was 24.5% and women comprised 19.9% of workforce.

1942 Single females age 20-24 were registered for labour reserve.

1943 P.C. 1003 passed — Guaranteed Labour's right to organize, laid basis for Canada's Labour Law.

1945 Women actively encouraged to leave workforce to create jobs for returning veterans.

1947 Married women were restricted from holding federal public service jobs.

1948 Mabel Mayne became first woman president of local Labour Council.

1951 23.6% of women were labour force participants. They comprised 22% of the workforce.
Ontario Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act.

1954 Women's Bureau of Federal Department of Labour was established.

1955 Restrictions on married women in the federal public service are removed.

1956 Canadian Labour Congress formed by merger of the Canadian Congress of Labour, The Trade and Labour Council and the One Big Union.
Federal equal pay legislation.

Huguette Plamondon, UFCW was elected one of vice-presidents of CLC. Plamondon had been a staff representative with UPWA, forerunner of UFCW since 1953.

1960 First contraceptive pill was licensed for use. 29% of women were in labour force. They comprise 27.3% of workforce.

Quebec passed the first law in Canada prohibiting discrimination in employment on grounds of sex, but it did not apply to all types of employment.

1964 Riverdale Hospital, Toronto, set up a nursery for its employees in order to attract staff to meet its shortages.

1966 ACTWU negotiated a Health and Welfare Fund which included provisions for daycare.

1967 Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established.

1969 The Criminal Code was amended to legalize dissemination of information regarding birth control.

1970 Report of Royal Commission on Status of Women was published.

1971 40% of Canadian women were in the labour force. The largest part of this increase came from women between the ages of 20 and 34, indicating an increase in married women in the labour force and a longer duration for women in the labour force.
21.4% of women in workforce are unionized, representing 23.5% of union members.

Amendments to Canada Labour Code included principle of equal pay for equal work, 17 weeks maternity leave provisions and prohibition of discrimination because of sex or marital status.

1972 Canada ratifies the Equal Remuneration Convention of the International Labour organization. The convention was introduced 20 years before. Income Tax Act amended to allow working women to deduct the cost of child care.

1974 100 women hired by INCO in Sudbury.
Shirley Carr, (CUPE) became first woman Executive Vice-President of the CLC.

In 1974 women represented 31.6% of the labour force but only 22.7% of them were organized. Although they represented 25.2% of union members they were underrepresented as executive board members. In 1975 only 9.9% of executive board members were female.

1975 Grace Hartman, elected National President of Canadian Union of Public Employees, Canada's largest union, with approximately 80,000 female members.

1975 Public Service Superannuation Act provided equality of status and equal rights and obligations for male and female contributors.

1976 CLC holds first conference for female union members.

1978 Nadine Hunt was elected president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. The first woman to serve as president of a provincial labour body.

1980 OFL convention adopts daycare policy and launches campaign for free universal quality daycare.

National Women in Trades Conference agreed to form National Women in Trades Association. Throughout the 70s women struggled to gain the right to be hired in areas which had been traditionally closed to women. Areas such as steel companies, mining and construction.

1981 The participation rate of women in labour force was 51.7%. Women now represented 40.1% of the work force. 60% of these women are married.
Section 27 of Canadian Charter of Rights is adopted unanimously by the House of Commons. But this approval only came after an extensive two month lobby by women's groups. In the original draft of the Charter, women's rights were not included.

1983 OFL adopted a resolution establishing a minimum of 5 vice-presidential positions — to be held by women. Five women were elected, this was the first time that more than one woman had held a seat on the OFL executive board.

UAW local wins first per diem check off for child care in an industrial workplace.

1984 CLC convention adopts a constitutional change calling for a minimum of 6 female vice-presidents.

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Breaking poetry's academic traditions

SHOP TALK

By the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union

Edited by Zoe Landale

Pulp Press

128 pages, paperback

The Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union is a coalition of people who share a different attitude toward poetry than that of most writers in Canada today. The people who regularly write and publish most of the poetry you can read in Canada today are university professors. The poets in this book represent a break with that academic tradition. These poets work: as teachers, doctors, fishermen, and cooks; they also write.

Work shapes our responses to the world around us. Often it dictates where we live, or points we travel between, and it has wide-ranging effects on our families and friends. We continue to reflect on incidents at work long after they have occurred. We dream about work, we take our jobs on

holiday, and we carry memories to our next place of employment. Although the writers in this book do not write exclusively about their work, it is a central experience which is touched upon from a number of different viewpoints.

VIWU was founded in the summer of 1979. Sharing a common interest in work-related material, they originally gathered for mutual support and to share one another's writing. From there they progressed to giving readings around Vancouver. This book took several years and involved two completely different manuscripts. Unlike many anthologies which contain a few pieces from a great number of people, Shop Talk offers a wide selection from each poet. Only nine writers are represented, which gives the reader a chance to recognize individual styles, politics and goals.

The poems, for the most part, avoid an academic and selfish tendency to ironic detachment. At the same time they also avoid the sentimental and moralistic tone found in most union songs. These people

speak openly and directly and they write from a knowledgeable inside perspective about our lives as workers. For example Tom Wayman in "Surplus Value Poem" writes about getting off shift at the end of the day, the race to the time clock, the tangle of cars at the lot gate, all the while reflecting on the relationship between those in production, the guys from maintenance, the security guards, and the men in the executive offices. There is a life away from the shop floor though. In another poem, Kirsten Emmott asks: "Who looks after your kids when you work?" And Zoe Landale writes about the difficult love life of a couple who both work different shifts. A strong concern for the welfare of others can be traced in these poems, especially for those with whom they work.

As Landale says, "The poems, curious, questioning, sometimes horrified, track from personal concerns to landscape to society and back again. This is what we dream of, what we fear. Here's our reality."





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Hazardous chemistry

A WORKER'S GUIDE TO SOLVENT HAZARDS

By Cameron Wright
Waterloo Public Interest Research Group
94 pages \$2.00 paperback

By Bonnie Heath

We've all heard the office joke that goes: "The difficult jobs we do right away; the impossible ones take a little longer." Well, it seems some people actually take on the impossible jobs, like Cameron Wright and the Waterloo Public Interest Research Group (WPIRG) who have

written *A Worker's Guide to Solvent Hazards*.

The use of hundreds of chemical solvents in workplaces as varied as office buildings, garages, manufacturing plants, machine shops and construction sites attests to the need for a guide like this. Add to this situation a host of mystifying chemical names, some serious health and safety problems with fancy medical terms and an inverted sense of priorities which gives more importance to industry's right to protect its "trade secrets" than its workers' health, and you have a taste of the Solvent Hazard stew.

Despite these difficulties and in fact, because of them, Wright and WPIRG have put together a useful general purpose guide covering 23 common industrial solvents. The booklet is a handy size: It easily fits into a back pocket for quick reference on the shop floor. The information is reliable, though not infallible, coming as it does from all the accepted "Bibles" of industrial hygiene and toxicology. One example of the fallibility of this information is "methylene chloride." While the authors note that it is considered one of the least toxic chlorinated hydrocarbons, the UAW is currently fighting a serious case in the U.S. involving this very substance. This serves as a reminder of how quickly chemical information can be outdated by new evidence and incidents.

The "Solvent Summaries" section of the guide is the heart of the matter. The guide wades through the sea of "ethylenes" and "ethanes" we run into in solvent names by organizing them in chemical families — alcohols, esters, ethers, glycols, ketones and aliphatic, aromatic and chlorinated hydrocarbons. If this still sounds confusing, don't despair. There are a number of ways to use the booklet. At the back of the guide is a solvent index which lists more than 250 common synonyms for solvents alongside their chemical names. Once you know the chemical name of the substance from this index, you can go back to the solvent summaries to dig out the very pertinent information they offer: description, Threshold Limit Value (TLV), uses in industry and toxicity (health effects). Most of the summaries include a case



study of what happens when a solvent is improperly used or stored like: "A 20-year-old apprentice electrician was found dead in a workroom where he had been using 1,1,1-trichloroethane as a degreasing solvent in an open bowl..." A very handy, if disturbing, item to be able to pull out of your back pocket when convincing management and co-workers of the need for hazard controls.

This is a timely publication coming as it does as the Ontario Ministry of Labour is announcing its intention to make 134 solvents a "designated substance." Twenty-two of these 134 are covered by the guide. The proposed regulations for solvents is subject to the weary criticism that they "do not go far enough." The principles for controlling solvent hazards laid out in the regulations could easily have been adapted to a general chemical hazards regulation which would cover a much more extensive number of chemicals. Some other provinces already have general chemical hazard regulations. Given the Ministry of Labour's track record in this province, many Ontario workers are rightly skeptical of the positive impact provincial regulations may have on their workplaces but *A Worker's Guide to Solvent Hazards* will no doubt be a useful tool in upcoming struggles over solvents as a designated substance.

Bonnie Heath is a Toronto occupational health educator.

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COMMENTARY

Coming back from Nairobi, Kenya

Sheran Johnston

The UN declared 1975-1985 a decade for women. The decade was to help improve the health, economic, social, educational and political status of women throughout the world. During the decade the UN sponsored three major forums in Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985. There were two conferences at each forum, one with an official government delegation and the other with representation of non-governmental organizations. In Nairobi 4,000 delegates from 150 countries attended the government conference and 14,000 delegates at the non-governmental forums (NGO) with 1,500 news people (mainly women) there to report the event.

The theme of Forum 85 was Equality, Development and Peace. There were four official languages — English, French, Spanish and Swahili.

With the support of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and the Ontario Federation of Labour, plus OPSEU's Region 5 Women's Caucus and many OPSEU locals, I was able to attend Forum '85. As a Canadian feminist and trade unionist I felt working people should be represented and should talk about the gains for women made in the trade union movement here.

After travelling for two days several of us from Canada arrived exhausted but excited. Nairobi was humming, "the women" were arriving and everyone was abuzz questioning: "What are these women going to do?" I too wondered what several thousand women would be able to accomplish, especially since the U.S. official delegation had taken a position that they did not want three areas discussed — Zionism as racism and the role of Israel, the South African apartheid regime, and the U.S. role in Central America. The U.S. official delegation had indicated that if they did not get what they wanted that they would leave, withdraw funds or take other measures (whatever that meant).

Our first day was registration, a surprisingly uncomplicated procedure. Hundreds of women milled around the lawns of the beautiful campus of the University of Nairobi — African women in bright printed hangas, East Indians in delicate saris, Islamic women in chadors of every color and, yes, women from every-

where in western dress, blue jeans and bright cotton prints. It was a day of greetings, thousands of women meeting and beginning the process of finding out about each other "networking." It felt good to see and meet capable, articulate, determined women who in many instances had made great efforts to get to the conference and for some from South Africa and the Philippines who had risked their lives to come and tell their stories.

The conference officially opened the next day at the modern Kenyatta conference centre. Everyone was accepted — the atmosphere dampened only by the introduction of security checks. There was music, dancing and speeches. Some of us were surprised to have Dame Rita Barrow, the convenor of Forum 85, tell women we were good at singing and cooking, realizing that she was serious. I personally got a bit edgy when she also suggested how women were to talk only about women's issues and not get involved in politics.

It was to be the beginning of a debate that continued for two weeks. "What are women's issues and what is politics?" It became clear that those who insisted on women talking about women's issues were displaying the worst forms of male chauvinism and ideologically followed what Maureen Reagan, the head of the U.S. official delegation and her daddy Ronnie said. It became clear that the U.S. and its friends wanted women to stick to **kuche, kirche and kinder**.

It became equally clear that a large majority of women attending the NGO, including one-half of the non-governmental U.S. delegation (1,000 women) saw the liberation of women linked with the simultaneous liberation of society as a whole from exploitation, hunger, disease, ignorance, racism, colonial oppression and war. The degree to which women are liberated is the degree to which society as a whole is free.

The next day we began attending workshops. In any given day you could attend up to 100 formal and several informal workshops.

Women discussed such topics as migrant workers, violence against women, the role of women in trade unions in Africa, women under apartheid, disarmament, women and peace and many

many more topics. The workshops were lively places to gather information, exchange ideas and meet.

Meeting women face to face, such as the Iranians, who have been so badly maligned by the western press was useful in dealing with stereotyping. While some may find it difficult to believe, I found Iranian women to be warm, educated, caring groups of women who are deeply concerned about the war with Iraq and its impact on their lives and who also care deeply about the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the rights of Palestinians and many more issues.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the conference was the security which included constant bag searches and X-rays of our person, as well as police and army on the campus and in the workshops. Kenya, a strong ally of the U.S., obligingly kept strong security "to protect us for our own good." Some of us reflected that this security for our own protection was hazardous to our health because of the constant exposure to radiation and it intimidated and prevented any large gatherings of women.

In short it was used by UN organizers to prevent demonstrations. Dame Barrow made it clear there were to be no demonstrations or people would be dealt with.

The UN organizers also did not allow for plenaries so that women could come together and vote on resolutions. It is clear that if there had been a plenary the U.S. would have been severely criticized by the majority.

There were several gatherings on the lawn during the last three days. Perhaps one of the most impressive was by the Nicaraguan women who conducted themselves with a severity and intellectual razor which comes from having fought heroic struggles against an armed enemy. Nicaraguan women are warm developed people concerned about the advancement of women in such areas as health and literacy and who daily face an enemy "the contras" backed by U.S. help. I extend my solidarity to them and thank them for the understanding that they gave me.

Venceremos to the Nicaraguans.

Sheran Johnston is the president of OPSEU's Women's Caucus in Region 5 (Metro Toronto).

UNION WOMAN

Women have yet to make significant inroads into the well-paid, highly unionized manufacturing sector. UAW-Canada figures reflect that.

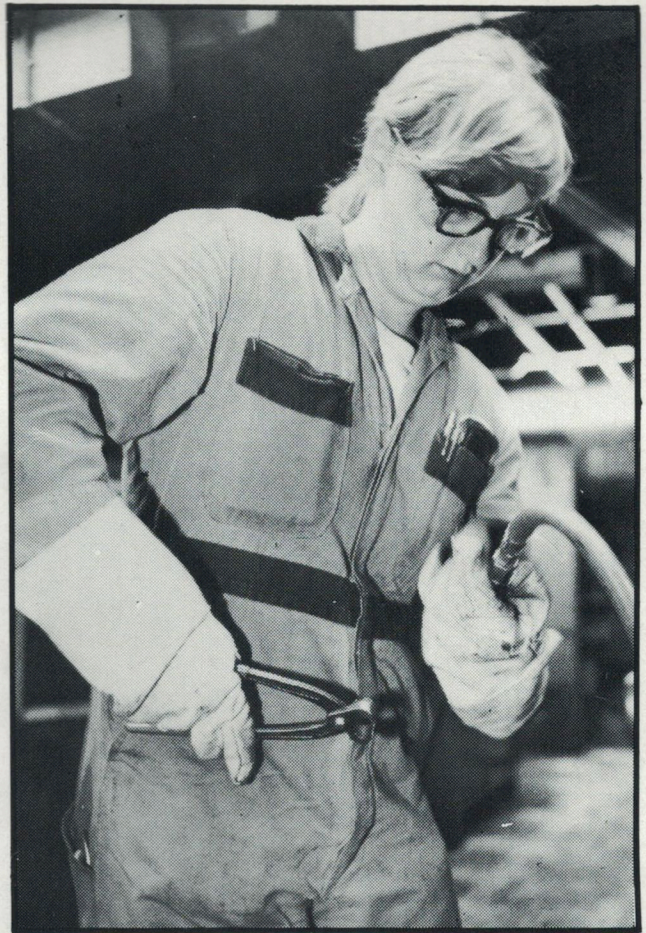
Of the more than 130,000 UAW-Canada members only about 11 per cent or 14,000 are women. Most of these women work in offices or in light manufacturing such as auto trim and electronics. Fewer than a dozen are skilled tradespersons. (Among them, pictured here, is Local 199 member Susan Harrison, a pipefitter at GM in St. Catharines.)

More than 30 years ago the UAW acknowledged that the circumstances of women warranted special measures. Women's committees were enshrined in the constitution, annual women's conferences were inaugurated, and women's advisory councils set up to advise the union's national leadership on women's issues.

As the growing strength of the women's movement sparked new directions for working women, the union responded.

The now-historic 1978 Fleck strike was fought as a women's strike, only a first, dramatic example. Women's issues became part of the union's education program. Childcare became a regular feature of union meetings. Our language changed: chairman became chairperson, skilled tradesmen became skilled tradesperson. Special affirmative action provisions were taken to ensure that women had access to the top leadership of the union. Strong policy stands were taken in all areas affecting women, including choice.

And perhaps more importantly women's issues were being fought effectively at the bargaining table: sexual harassment in 1980, maternity leave and VDT protection in 1981,



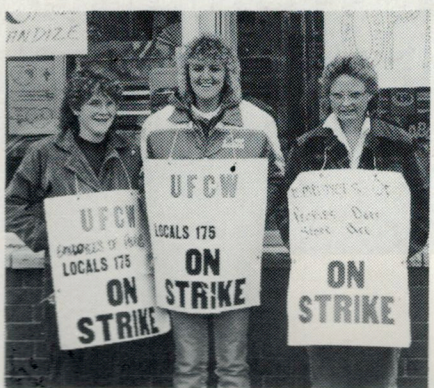
childcare and equal pay in 1983, affirmative action in 1984. These were some of the milestones noting the union's direction.

We're not calling it a revolution — yet. But there have been breakthroughs, even in the tough economic times of the recession. It happened because of the commitment of local union leadership, working with the full support of the union's national leadership. Most of these unionists had benefitted from the groundwork laid 30 years ago, from the courage of pioneering UAW women, from the union's willingness to work with the women's community and to learn from it, and from the incredible allegiance that union women have built amongst themselves.

We have come a long way. We have a long way to go. But we are doing it together, in a union made stronger by its efforts to ensure that women participate fully.

UAW-Canada women. Hardworking women working hard together

UFCW Women. . .



Making us Proud!

UFCW women work in packinghouses, poultry plants, tanneries, offices and food processing plants. They are also supermarket cashiers, meat wrappers, shoe workers, waitresses, cooks and department store workers.

Within their union, UFCW women are working to better their lives and the lives of their fellow members. They are stewards, committee members, negotiators, service representatives and union organizers.

The UFCW is proud of the contributions made by our women members. We recognize and appreciate their hard work and their commitment to building a better society for working people. UFCW women make our union a stronger and more dynamic organization.

Frank Benn
Canadian Director
UFCW Region 18



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UNION WOMEN



**A DECADE OF STRUGGLE
A DECADE OF CHANGE**

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J Rosenthal