

# WOMEN AND WORK

A BROADSHEET BY THE B.C. FEDERATION OF WOMEN

produced by Working Women Unite      September, 1979

## \* Out of every 10 Women in Canada Today:

One never  
marries



Of the nine that do marry, eight work thirty years or more



3 will be  
separated  
or  
divorced



One will be  
widowed  
before 50

## Work Expectancy

Today a woman can expect to spend nearly 5 times  
as many years working outside of the home as she  
does working full time in the home.

full time at home	—————	7 years
work outside of home	—————	34 years

Of the 58 years of a Canadian woman's adult life  
seven or less are concerned with the care of pre-  
school-aged children.

Average number of years spent working outside the home:

- a) married women with children      - 34 years
- b) married women without children    - 38 years
- c) single women                            - 48 years

\*Source: Labour Canada, Women's Bureau, 1976

# SOME MYTHS ABOUT WOMEN AND WORK

## .... AND THE FACTS

MYTH: Women don't need to work

FACTS: There are many versions of this myth including "women only work for luxuries." The facts show that women are not secondary wage earners. In 1975 61% of the Female Labour force of Canada were single, divorced, separated, or married to husbands earning less than \$10,000 a year. (Labour Canada, Women in the Labour Force '76) These women's wages make it possible for their families to maintain a decent standard of living, or their wages may be necessary to bring the family income above the poverty line. There is another argument about the issue of women as secondary wage earners. If women are to be regarded as equal, then we have a right to paid employment just as men do.

MYTH: Mothers should stay at home with their children.

FACTS: "Women's place" has varied in different historical periods, depending on the nature and the state of the economy. During World War II, women were recruited into the workforce. At that time the Federal Government set up daycare centres to help mothers enter the workforce. The myth that working mothers harm their children has been disputed by many studies. Children can benefit from the opportunities provided by good day care. A 1973 Canada Labour Force survey indicated that of those women in B.C. who wanted to work but were not, one third listed the lack of satisfactory childcare arrangements as the reason.

MYTH: Women's position in the workforce is improving.

FACTS: In the 1970's we have seen the first women phenomena-the first women electrician, the first women pilot etc. but despite these breakthroughs women are becoming more segregated in job ghettos;

- in 1971-45% of workers in the service sector were women
- in 1974-51% " "
- in 1971-68% of clerical workers were women
- in 1974-73% " "

Full time women workers in Canada earn on the average 55-65% of what men earn. In terms of dollars this gap between women's and men's wages is increasing. In 1965 women averaged \$2694 less than men; by 1975 this gap had widened to \$6060. Of course women's wages increased during this period, but much less than men's did. ( Equal Pay Coalition, "Equal Pay for work of Equal Value," 1977)

Wage controls introduced in 1975, held the wages of women back further. While the Anti-Inflation Board limited all workers wage gains, this worked to the particular detriment of the lowest paid workers, mainly women.

All the Canadian provinces have had equal pay legislation since the 1950's. Such laws have been ineffective. Women are still being paid less than men for doing the same job. The other problem with equal pay laws is that they do not address the fact that women work in different jobs than men. The jobs that employ almost all women have been traditionally paid less. Employers need only employ all women in a job category and pay them all the same low wage, in order to avoid the issue of equal pay.

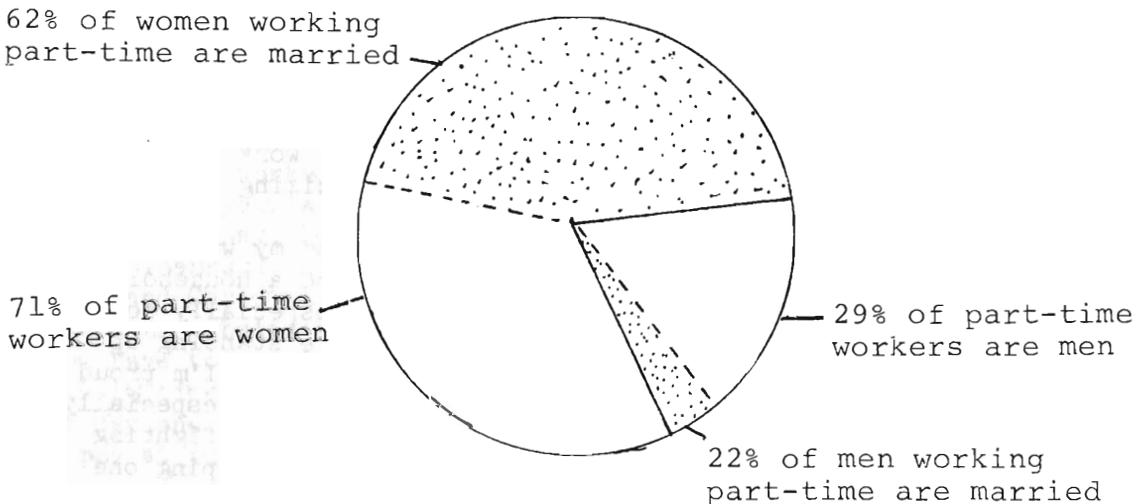
Although it may be generally accepted that women should have equal pay, there remains great resistance. Employers save an enormous amount of money by paying women less than men. It is to their advantage to maintain female job ghettos with their resulting low pay.

# 'WOMEN'S WORK'

The following statistics are taken from "Women In The Labour Force-Facts and Figures, 1975"- Labour Canada, Women's Bureau)

Occupation	Women as % of Total
Welfare & Community Services	36.5%
Secretaries and Stenos	97
Typists and Clerk/typists	94
Bookkeeping/accounting Clerks	62
Tellers and Cashiers	88
Insurance, finance, bank clerks	79
Office Machine Operators	76
Sales Clerks - Commodities	50
Waitresses, stewards: food/bev	71
Teachers - Kindergarten/Secondary	60
Nursing: Nurses	94
Assistants	89
Aides/Orderlies	67

## 1976 PART-TIME WORKERS



Women, particularly married women with children, tend to need more flexible work hours than men. For this reason part-time work is very useful to them. However, employers also find it very advantageous. Full worker benefits are not always paid to the part-time worker. Often part-timers are ineligible for pension plans and only receive a percentage of their wages for holiday pay. Opportunities for promotion or training are rare. Job security for part-time workers is almost nonexistent.

# FARM AND DOMESTIC WORKERS

Farm and domestic workers are the only workers in B.C. who are 'unrecognized', i.e. who are not covered by basic labour standards legislation. This means that there are no laws which say how much or how often they are paid, how many hours they work, when or if they get holidays, what happens if they get hurt on the job; children are not protected from harsh working conditions and women workers have no job security if they become pregnant.

Farm and domestic workers are also 'unorganized'. They do not belong to a union or other organization which bargains with employers for wages and working conditions.

Almost all domestic workers and 60% of farmworkers are women. As well, many of the women who work as farm and domestic workers are immigrants, either in Canada permanently as "permanent residents" or temporarily on "employment visas". Because these jobs are mainly done by women and by immigrants, and because of the lack of legislation and union protection, the work these people do has been generally devalued and degraded. Farm and domestic workers are not seen as 'real' workers who do 'real' work.

The wages and working conditions in these jobs are lower than in any other type of employment. Wages are usually below the minimum wage, particularly for live-in domestic workers and farmworkers. Some live-in domestics make as little as \$100 per month plus room and board. Room and board often means a shared room and not enough to eat. Seasonal farmworkers average between \$2.00 and \$2.50 an hour. Most domestics work more than a 40 hour week, some being on call virtually 24 hours a day. Farmworkers usually work a 10-12 hour day with as much as 6 hours transportation time to and from work each day in addition. Employers often delay paying wages for as much as six months, and some workers are simply not paid at all. Neither farm nor domestic workers usually receive holiday pay or the usual general holidays. Children as young as 10 years old can be found in the fields and cleaning office buildings. It is common for workers to be fired with no notice, leaving them in serious financial difficulty.



Besides suffering these conditions, farm and domestic workers have to deal daily with the commonly held views about the work that they do - that it is not important work, that it is degrading to have to do it and that they deserve the poor wages and working conditions that they get.

But farm and domestic workers all across Canada and the United States are beginning to recognize the strength they can gain through organization and are coming together to demand that their work be recognized as 'real' work and that they be ensured a living wage and a decent working situation. One woman who did domestic work for 20 years and is now organizing domestic workers says:

"I've found my work. I'm proud to be a household worker - especially now that we are standing up for ourselves. I'm proud to be a woman - especially now that we are fighting together and helping one another."

For information on the rights of farm and domestic workers in B.C. contact the Labour Advocacy and Research Association, 253 East 11 Ave. Vancouver, B.C. 879-0117 or 251-3872.

There is also a group formed to assist farmworkers to organize for better conditions. They are the Farmworker's Organizing Committee, P.O. Box 2443, New Westminster, B.C. Raj 524-2703; Gurcharn 524-0493; Amrid Pal 525-5906.

# IF YOU ARE NOT IN A UNION....

and do not have your wages and working conditions spelled out in a contract, there are some basic labour standards laws which apply to every worker in B.C. (except farm and domestic workers). These laws provide some protection for unorganized workers:

THE MINIMUM WAGE ACT sets down the minimum amount that every worker must get paid. In May, 1979, the minimum wage is \$3.00 per hour for people 18 and over. It is \$2.60 for those under 18.

THE HOURS OF WORK ACT says that no worker can work more than 8 hours a day or 44 hours a week without receiving 'overtime pay'.

THE PAYMENT OF WAGES ACT says that you must be paid at least every two weeks and that you must receive, with your paycheque, a slip of paper showing all deductions which were made from your cheque (UIC, CPP, income tax, etc.).

THE ANNUAL AND GENERAL HOLIDAYS ACT says that if you have worked 225 days for one employer you are entitled to a two week holiday and 4% of your earnings that year as holiday pay. If you leave a job before you have worked 225 days, you are still entitled to 4% of what you have earned over the time you have worked. On General Holidays (New year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Dominion Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day and Christmas Day), you must get either a holiday with pay or, if you have to work, you should be paid 1½ times your regular wage for that day and should get a holiday with pay at some other time.

THE MATERNITY PROTECTION ACT says that if you are pregnant your employer cannot fire you during the 6 weeks before your estimated due date, or during the 10 weeks after your delivery, for any reason connected with your pregnancy. If you are fired during this period your employer must prove that it was for a reason other than your pregnancy. If you have not returned to work after this 16 week period your employer is allowed to fire you.

THE WORKER'S COMPENSATION ACT provides compensation for workers who are injured on the job. Under this law an injured worker can claim the full cost of all medical expenses and rehabilitation care, and compensation for lost earnings. Employers must pay into the plan on behalf of workers.

THE CONTROL OF EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN ACT says that it is illegal for children under the age of 15 to work in certain jobs, unless a special permit is granted by the Ministry of Labour.

It is very common for employers to violate these labour standards laws. This is especially true in industries where a lot of women and/or immigrants are working, such as garment factories, laundries, restaurants, hotels, etc. The government department which handles complaints about violations of labour standards laws is the Labour Standards Branch, Ministry of Labour, 4946 Canada Way, Burnaby, B.C. 299-7211. If you are going to make a complaint you may want to contact a Community Law Office for advice or assistance before you do it.



# YOU STILL TRYIN' TO GET A JOB?

Unemployment among women now exceeds that among men. Women tend to work in areas of the labour force which are underpaid and undervalued, such as the clerical and service sector, and are easily laid off. Lack of training in marketable skills makes women more vulnerable to unemployment. The poor wages and working conditions in those jobs designated as women's work, as well as domestic responsibilities create high turnover. The social services that would help alleviate such things are sadly lacking. Daycare is becoming less and less available. Moreover, since women less often belong to unions, they have less protection against layoffs. Employers often hire women in a period of boom and lay them off during a period of recession.

In 1947, the Canadian economy was undergoing expansion. The unemployment rate was 1.7% for women and 2.9% for men. The service sector of the economy continued to grow, so increasing numbers of women entered the labour force. In 1967, the unemployment rate was 3% for women and 4.6% for men. In the 1970's the government began cutting back in the social services, education and health fields. This greatly affected women. The unemployment rate for men in the years between 1975 - 1978 was 7.5% while the rate for women was 10%. In May '79 it was 4.5% for men over 25 and 7.2% for women.

Women are also unemployed for longer durations than men. In 1978 men were unemployed for an average duration of 13.8 weeks and women for 14.1 weeks. While women's unemployment rates are higher than men's, unemployment rates for younger workers are very similar. Between 1975 -78 the unemployment rate for women between 20 - 24 was 12% and for men it was 12.4%

These figures are based on government statistics, which define the unemployed as someone who had worked or looked for a job in the past 26 weeks. This ignores the 40% of unemployed women in B.C. whose most recent classification was not in the labour force. Homemakers who do unpaid work in their homes are excluded from government figures. If the hidden unemployed were added to the official figures the unemployment rate for women in 1976 would have been 14.5% instead of 8.4%. Taking "hidden unemployment" into account, the true state of unemployment among adult women is 110% higher than it is among adult men.

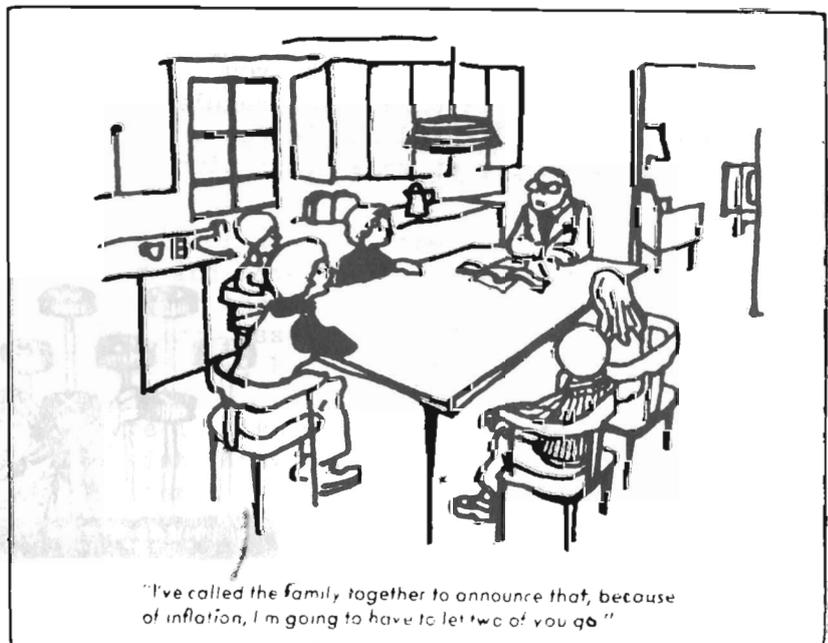
The recent changes to the U.I.C. Act also adversely affects women. These include higher entrance requirements both in terms of minimum weekly hours worked and number of weeks worked. These changes will bump 250,000 people from U.I.C.

## Inflation

The Consumer Price Index shows the increase in the cost of living from the previous year.

Figures for Vancouver:

1972	4%
1973	6.7%
1974	11.6%
1975	11.1%
1976	9.7%
1977	7.2%
1978	7.8%
July 1979	7.6%



# EXCERPTS FROM THE B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is difficult to define. It ranges from sexual innuendos, often in the guise of humour, to coerced sexual relations. Harassment at its extreme occurs when a male in a position to control, influence or affect a woman's job or career uses his authority and power to coerce a woman into sexual relations, or to punish her refusal. It may include:

1. Verbal harassment or abuse
2. Subtle pressure for sexual activity
3. Sexist remarks about a woman's clothing, body or sexual activities
4. Unnecessary touching, patting, or pinching
5. Constant brushing against a woman's body
6. Leering at a woman's body
7. Demanding sexual favours accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning one's job
8. Physical assault

Because the male is in a position of authority, as a supervisor, a woman, therefore, may be at a great risk if she objects to the behavior or resists the overtures. It is this context which underlies the gravity of the problem of sexual harassment.

Whereas in rape cases, the man overpowers a woman with a weapon or threat of loss of life, in sexual harassment he overtly or implicitly threatens her with loss of economic livelihood. A woman cannot freely choose to say yes or no to such sexual advances. The fear of reprisal looms formidably for many women when deciding how to react to sexual harassment. To refuse sexual demands may mean jeopardizing her future or her career. In the case of the working woman, the decision to simply quit a job is a luxury she may not be able to afford. Like rape, sexual harassment has been a hidden problem, treated as a joke or blamed on the victim herself. Because of a long history of silence on the subject, many women feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or ashamed when they talk about personal incidents of harassment. They are afraid that it will reflect badly on their character, or that they will be seen as somehow inviting the propositions.

When women do speak out they are often ignored, discredited or accused of "misunderstanding" their superior's intentions. Many women attribute their silence to practical considerations. The most common reasons given for not reporting the incidents are that they believe nothing will be done, that it will be treated lightly or ridiculed, or that they will be blamed or suffer repercussions. These fears are justified.

The Women's Committee makes the following recommendations:

## INTERNALLY

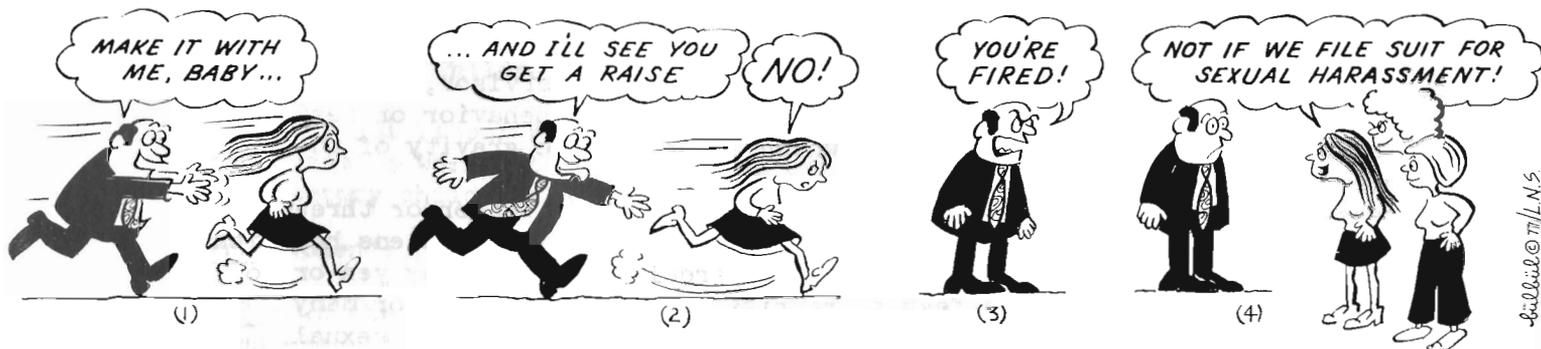
- affiliates should adopt policies opposing sexual harassment.
- stewards and officers should be trained to deal with this type of problem in an effective manner.
- the membership must be advised that the union is opposed to sexual harassment and that union officers and stewards are trained to handle the problem.

policy cont'd

EXTERNALY

- negotiate language in collective agreements to provide protection against sexual harassment.
- develop a separate grievance procedure if necessary for these complaints to ensure protection for the members.
- insist that the employer issue a statement prohibiting sexual harassment on the job and post this on bulletin boards.
- issue a pamphlet advising women of their rights and warning male supervisors of the repercussions of incidents of this nature.

Sexual harassment is not a joke. It's an issue that will not go away. The labour movement must recognize the seriousness of the problem and effectively represent our members who are its victims.



## B.C. FEDERATION OF WOMEN

B.C. Federation of Women is a federation of women's groups whose objective is to bring about the liberation of women through fundamental change in our society.

The Federation will work to implement legal, social, economic and cultural changes necessary for the eradication of sexism. Only through the strength of united action can the BCFW achieve more than individuals or individual groups.

Our next provincial convention takes place in Victoria on the 10th, 11th and 12th of November. Registration must be done in early October.

For further information:

Box 24687, Station C  
Vancouver

## WORKING WOMEN UNITE

Working Women Unite is a group of women concerned specifically with issues of women and work. We are a member group of the B.C. Federation of Women, and seek to forge links between the women's movement and the trade unions. We are all working women and some of us are union members.

For further information contact:  
65563 Station F, Vancouver