

# Women face discrimination

A major report has been released by the Nelson Outreach committee, on the subject of women and work in the Kootenays.

The report was written by Ms. Vita Storey, who was employed by the Canada Manpower sponsored committee and is the result of two years of work in the women-related employment field.

Ms. Storey said her report is based on extensive travel she has undertaken throughout the Nelson Canada Manpower district, specific cases she has undertaken, conversations with women, who are both employed and unemployed, employers, government officials, and many different groups in the Kootenays.

The reports says that women in the area face discrimination in getting jobs primarily because the area is dominated by primary, resource extractive, industries. The job available in industry are sex-typed and in primary industry are male sex-typed.

As example of this type of sex-typing the report cites the example of Celgar in Nakusp who will not employ women in bush operations and says the manager of bush operations actively discourages women applicants "because women don't fit into the social aspect; all that logger language; besides, it's hard physical work, and there are enough jobs around for girls with clerical experience."

The report also claims that women are the first to be laid off when they do get jobs usually reserved for men and says that in the summer of 1975 Triangle Pacific at Slocan City had a total of 12 women of approximately 300 employees but that after the

summer lay-offs, only three were left.

The report says that Kootenay Forest Products in Nelson does not hire women on either the green chain or planer and that, on the average, 15 to 20 women are employed in the plywood plant. The total number of employees at the plant is approximately 420.

The report says it is extremely difficult for a woman to be hired at KFP because there is so many applicants for available jobs, about 15 per interview day, that only one out of 40 applicants are chosen and then IWA union members are given preference.

An example of the type of harassment suffered by women was cited in the area of job postings. When a job comes up, employees are allowed three days to apply for the position. In the case of women, says the report, management will encourage a male with more snority to apply for the position when it becomes known that a woman has applied for it.

A common method of applying discrimination against hiring women, as has been used in examples cited with Cominco in Trail and with the provincial Liquor Control outlet in Nelson is a lack of two sets of bathrooms for men and women.

The practice is outlawed under the B.C. Human Rights Act and Ms. Storey has actively engaged in stopping this type of discrimination in both cases mentioned.

Women are discriminated against in collecting unemployment insurance, says the report, and points out that women who have been employed in traditional, low paying jobs are forced, when collecting benefits to

accept this type of work as soon as it becomes available, and, because the turn-over rate in low paying jobs is so high, they are invariably forced into them, rather than being allowed to seek retraining or better-paying jobs.

The report claims this is the way in which women are kept in the role of a cheap available labor pool for service-oriented jobs.

The report says women face barriers in vocational, industrial, and apprenticeship training programs and claims that, although roughly the same number of men and women receive Canada Manpower sponsored training, that the women are primarily restricted to female sex-types skills like secretarial arts, hairdressing and day care.

Manpower statistics supplied to the Daily News bear this picture out to the extent that of 66 people who have taken Manpower sponsored training at the Nelson campus of Selkirk College in the pre-apprenticeship programs in auto-mechanics, heavy duty mechanic, and millwrights and in welding and welding upgrading, only two, from June of 1975 to date, have been women.

On the other side, this year's courses in hairdressing, pre-school training, business office training and business office up-grading, 44 out of 45 trainees were women.

In the Canada Manpower sponsored industrial training program (CMIPT) less than one-quarter of the trainees are women, says the report. The report then asks if employers say that women aren't being hired because of the availability of skilled men, why is manpower training so many men for these same jobs? ( )

The report also says that under the existing Human Rights Code of B.C. it is extremely difficult for women to prove discrimination solely on the basis of sex.

Sena Gates, currently employed by the Outreach committee, said the report is a valuable document in that it outlines very clearly, and in detail, possibly for the first time in the Kootenays Kootenays the kinds of problems women really face in seeking and holding down jobs.

She said the committee may now be able to go ahead with much more clear direction in trying to solve the problem.

Ms. Gates said she felt, however, that it is not only women who face a lack of opportunity in the resource extractive industrial base of the Kootenays. She said the local people would only be able to benefit more from our resources with the creation of secondary and tertiary industries based on resources in the area.

Ms. Gates also focussed attention on the fact that women find difficulty in retraining because of the

frequent necessity to relocate to get the training or the job. She said women have the primary responsibility for caring for their families and have difficulty moving children from one place to another to relocate. She said

that, in two parent families, the woman seldom has the option of up-rooting the family to further her own career, while at the same time it is more or less accepted that the women will follow the man to his job.

## Women surveyed support findings

In a sampling of working women in the area, the Daily News found the women questioned agree in large part with the specific references to job discrimination made in the report.

A woman working in a local bank said she felt that men in the bank are given unfair advantage in promotional opportunities and said she felt she was not trusted to do a competent job and that all her supervisors were men.

A working waitress said she has only worked as a waitress, despite the fact that she has tried to get retraining. She said she was denied the retraining opportunity by the local manpower office because all her experience was as a waitress and there "are always jobs available as a waitress".

The waitress said she would like to go into auto-mechanics but has "pretty much" given up hope of ever being able to achieve her goal. Another woman, working as a maid at a local hotel, said she has done her job for ten years and has never thought about being able to get other work, "because I don't have the education." The maid was asked if she worked to supplement her husband's earnings.

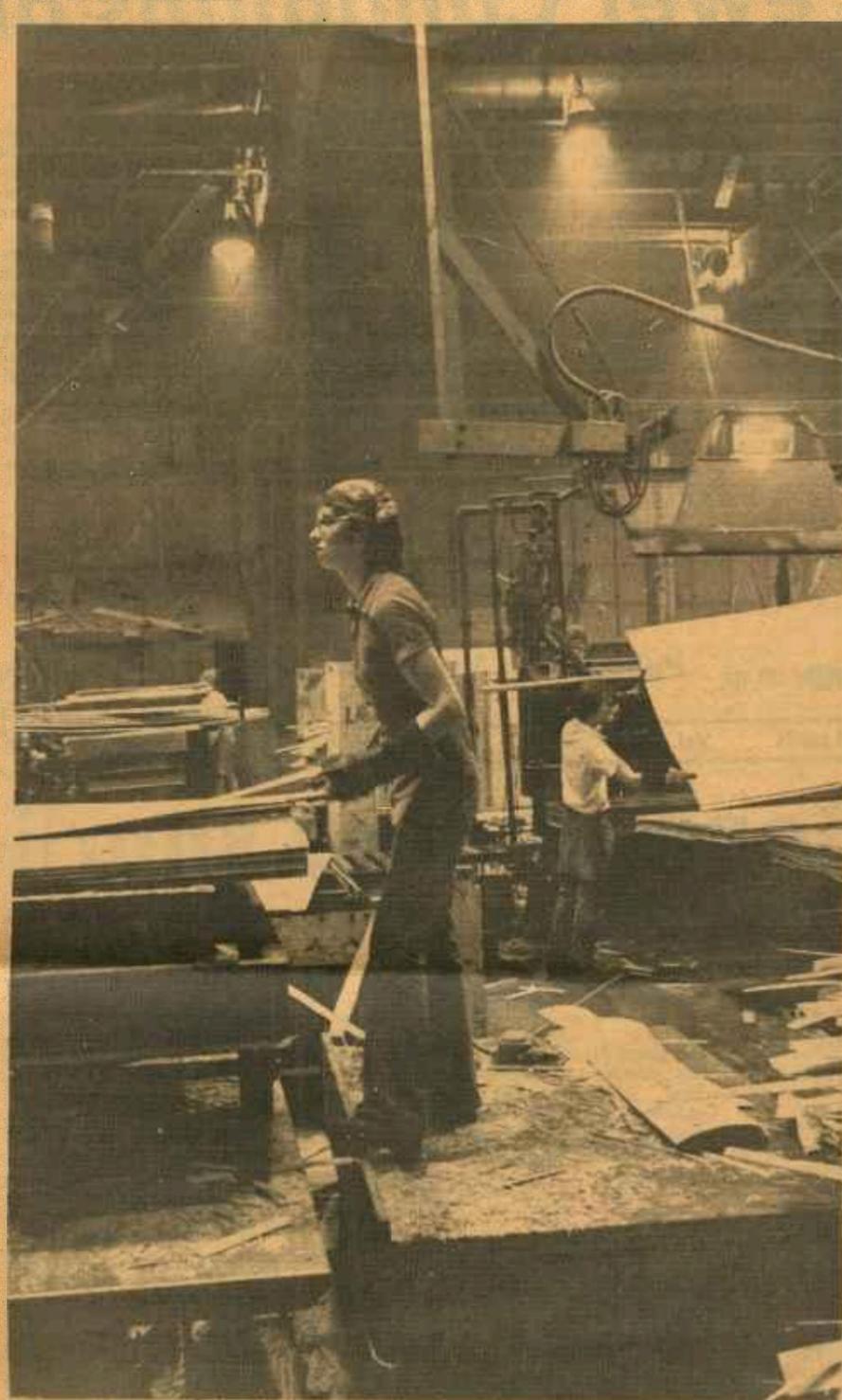
"No, I work because I have to; my husband earns good money but especially over the last few years, it's not enough."

A woman who works as a bar-maid in a local pub said she supported her family while the man remains at home to care for her child. She said she took the job because it is "relatively good money" but that she did not see the job as something she would always work at.

"All a man has to do, it seems, is simply show up and he gets the job; I have to really fight; the best jobs go to men," said a woman who works in a less traditionally female, administrative job.

The woman said that the lot of women in the working place has improved over the last three years and that she has seen government departments especially opening up more and more to women, "but only because women have fought for those opportunities.

"Yes, I guess I'm a feminist," said the woman, "but a lousy one; I don't practice what I preach."



Feeding plywood into the big machines at KFP is not the easiest job in the world. An average of 15 women are employed in the Kootenay Forest Products plywood plant at jobs like this one. — Bill Hastings photo



Dawn Hutchinson has gotten rther used to climbing up and down this ladder at KFP. In the report on working and women, one of Dawn's co-workers has quoted as saying that management tries to make an example of the women in the plant. Bill Hastings photo