

Research: Summer 1979

The following outlines the steps taken to prepare and carry through this year's project:

1. A detailed questionnaire was developed based on last year's bibliographic and primary research and last summer's interview experience.

2. Each union in B.C. with a history of female membership was contacted to enquire for possible research subjects and to ask for publication of information about the project in union newsletters and newspapers. Eighty-four unions were contacted as well as labour councils in the province. Political organizations were included as well as labour-oriented media. Several meetings were held with Ms. Astrid Davidson, Coordinator of Women's Programmes for the B.C. Federation of Labour.

3. Women who were interviewed in 1978 were written to follow-up last summer's work and ask for additional contacts.

4. Contacts made last year but not interviewed were followed up and sent material on the project and interview outlines.

5. Research was made into government and union resources from the 1930's and 1940's to uncover names of women officers and rank and file unionists who might be available for interviewing. Unions and retiree associations were written to request the current addresses of these women. Women were also traced through relatives, cultural and political organizations.

6. Interview material was again sent out to contacts (this process occurred throughout the summer).

7. Interviewing began in late May and early June.

8. New names were generated from the interviews and in correspondence from unions and associations and interviewing continued. Several trips to Vancouver Island were made to interview and arrange deposit of tapes with the Sound Archives.

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9. Detailed notes were made from the interviews (this required three weeks of labour). Some initial copies were made for women who required copies before they would sign the release form.

10. In total, out of the eighty-four unions contacted, twenty-eight wrote back and twenty made suggestions for interviews or supplied addresses. One hundred and fifty people were contacted this summer. At least two-thirds of these felt that they were not adequately experienced with the labour movement, were active at a later time period or were unable to complete an interview because of ill health. Five women refused an interview because of disagreements with the focus of the project or subsequent withdrawal from the labour movement.

Women's Labour History Project

Summer 1979

This summer, the Women's Labour History Project has accomplished a number of tasks. A set of thirty-four tapes have been completed; with five additional tapes to be completed in September and October of 1979. These latter tapes were delayed through illness or vacation schedules of the subjects. In addition to eight tapes completed last summer, this will bring the total to forty-two completed tapes, or approximately eighty-five hours of tape with an additional ten to be completed this fall. Several of the tapes include more than one interview subject. Five women gave personal interviews which they asked not be taped.

The tapes from this summer will be duplicated by the Provincial Archives of B.C. Sound Archives and will be deposited, with tape outlines, in the Archives. Deposits will also be made to the Simon Fraser University Library and the B.C. Federation of Labour Library.

A short precis of each tape is included with this report, briefly detailing the history of the women interviewed and the highlights of the tape.

The Annotated Bibliography, produced last summer through a grant from the Dept. of Labour, was updated twice this summer and after additions from the Provincial Archives of B.C. and current research will be published late in the fall. This is being made possible through money from the B.C. Women's History Writers Association. This foundation has also provided funds for the distribution of the published Bibliographies to public institutions, and for a start in transcribing the taped material.

The tapes will be transcribed over the course of the year and preparations are underway for publications of the transcript with additional contextual research, in book form. A short article on Women in the B.C. Labour Movement was published by Kenesis in June, 1979. As well, the material was used in a radio series on Vancouver Cooperative Radio this summer. It will be presented at Langara this fall at a conference for working women.

Women's Labour History Project

ANITA ANDERSEN

Mrs. Andersen was born in Princeton where she and her family experienced the collapse of the Princeton mines (the Granby Mines) and the disastrous economic consequences. She was subsequently orphaned and moved to Vancouver where, as a very young girl, she worked for several families as a domestic. This was one of the few alternatives for working class women who needed a place to live, food and work, and who were basically unskilled. Her sister also worked as a domestic. They both began to radicalize, due to the influences of the Longshore strike and for Mrs. Andersen, interest in Yugoslavian cultural activities. She became a busgirl and organized for the HREU at the Trocedero Café. The Café was struck, a contract was eventually achieved, but the central organizers were fired and black-listed, including Mrs. Andersen. She continued to work for the union until she moved to the Yukon in the 1940's. Returning to B.C., she worked for the Jubilee Summer Camp, the Yugoslavian community as a cultural organizer and with consumer organizations.

ANNA ARTHUR

Mrs. Arthur was born in Victoria, B.C. She graduated as a teacher during the Depression, but was unable to find a job. She married and returned to the labour force in 1943. She began to work at the Boy's Industrial School as a special education teacher. The staff began to organize into the B.C. Government Employees Association in order to have a say in teaching policy, wages and hours of work. They linked up with workers at nearby Essondale. Part of the demands made by women were for equal pay for equal work, but the BCGEA workers faced many setbacks; the hostility of employers and a refusal by the government to institute a check-off system. Anna Arthur was involved in organizing the union and was elected to the Provincial executive in the late 1940's representing the Essondale branch. Many of the issues concerned working conditions, for example, the lack of decent housing for student nurses. Later, while working for the Federal Government, she became Local President of PSAC, organizing for equal pensions for women and equal insurance benefits in her Local.

JACK ATKINSON

Jack Atkinson was active in Local 1-80 of the International Woodworkers of America, in the Ladysmith sub-local. He scribes the Ladysmith Women's Auxiliary, which followed the pattern of Local 1-80, and was a sub-local of the larger

local. Other sub-locals existed in Lake Cowichan and Youbou. Both the sub-local and the local met regularly. The prime objective of the W.A. was to educate wives of woodworkers to the benefits of unionism and provide a group of supporters for the union. Men initially called the W.A. meetings, bringing together a nucleus of women. The W.A. in Ladysmith prioritized organizing social functions. Not all women in the town supported the union. Some opposed their husbands becoming members, for fear of strikes and loss of pay. Few women came into the Ladysmith mills as wo workers and few men supported women working in the industry. The issue of equal pay was posed in relation to the different nationalities working in the industry.

ELLEN BARBER

Mrs. Barber was one of the first women active in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Congress (affiliate of the Trades and Labour Congress). She was involved in organizing laundry and communication workers during the World War I period. The tape describes union organization during WWI, work working conditions in the laundries, bargaining procedures, organizing the unions, the laundry strike and its defeat, the formation of the Minimum Wage Board, telephone workers' strike, attitudes to women within the unions, working in war industry in WWII, post-war lay-offs of women workers, piecework, CCF involvement in the unions, her family's roots and her decision to become a unionist, women's suffrage and its affect on working women, prejudice against oriental workers and parallel attitudes to women, the Shirtwaist and Laundryworkers' International Union in the 1940's, the streetcar strike of 1918, Depression use of female labour, the impact of the Russian Revolution on the labour movement, shipyard conditions, accidents in the laundries, women's organizations in the 1930's.

MYRTLE BERGREN

Mrs. Bergren was born in England, coming to Canada in 1925 when her family came to farm in the Okanagan. There they lived through the Depression. She left school at 13, working for 15 cents a day on an asparagus farm. She worked at housework for \$10/month until 1939, when she worked in a bakeshop, attending stenography classes in the morning. She then worked at the Kelowna Courier for \$65/month moving on to the Princeton Courthouse as a stenographer. There, she joined the Divil Servants' Association despite the anti-union atmosphere in her office and her own mistrust of unions. She spent two years in the airforce during the War. In 1946 she was offered a job with the International Woodworkers of America at \$35/week which she accepted. Her attitudes towards unions changed rapidly. She became a strong union militant when she saw unions in the context of class society. She also joined the Communist Party. She studied about the role of women in society with Becky Buhay. In 1946 she

married Hjalmer Bergren, an organizer for the IWA and moved with him to Lake Cowichan where she worked with the Women's Auxiliary. In 1948 the IWA leadership led a split and formed the Woodworkers Industrial Union of Canada, a Canadian union. The Bergrens had relocated in Vancouver, but now returned to Lake Cowichan where they organized for the WIUC and their house became the centre of union activity in the area until the dissolution of the WIUC. Women played a major role in many of the IWA's activities, including the 1946 march to Victoria during the strike. Mrs. Bergren lent a hand in organizing for the United Packinghouse Workers of America in her native Okanagan in 1946. She wrote Tough Timber, about the early organization of the IWA as well as many short stories. Mrs. Bergren was killed in a car accident this summer (1979).

DAISY BROWN

Daisy Brown was born in Saskatoon and came to B.C. in 1944. She found a part-time job with the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union in 1945 as an office worker, and then as Business Agent. In 1946-47, a joint campaign led by both the hotel union and building service union organized Vancouver hotels. Many women worked in the industry because they needed an income as single parents or deserted wives. The union in the restaurant and hotel area was weak relative to industrial unions or skilled craft unions where workers were not isolated from each other and could stand together. Problems in organizing included the transient nature of the work, and the continuous shifts. Issues which came up included overtime, shift changes, uniforms and seniority. The union set a precedent in establishing a forty hour week. The Only Fish and Chips and Love's Café were particularly militant restaurants. The hotel drive organized all but the Alcazar and Grosvenor Hotels. The campaign included leafletting the hotels. The HREU staff was organized into the OTEU but later shifted to the HREU. Mrs. Brown was active for a time in the OTEU. In 1947 the local HREU leadership was deposed, barred from office and membership in the union because of their left leanings. Mrs. Brown has held both staff and elected positions with the union.

RUTH BULLOCK

Ruth Bullock grew up in Beaton, B.C. She attended school until the age of 10½ when her father was killed in a mining explosion leaving her mother as the single support of 5 small children. The family later moved to a sheep ranch on Salt Spring Island. At 17 she left the farm and became a domestic in Hatsick for \$15/month. Later, she moved to another farm where she earned \$20/month. There were no unions for domestics and they were not protected by government legislation. She married in 1929 and soon had

a daughter. She first became interested in birth control after her daughter's birth, and difficult delivery. She joined the newly formed CCF in 1932-22, where she met Mrs. Vivian Dowding of the Parents' Information Service. At this time, unions were very weak. The Spanish Civil War further radicalized her and she helped to support the struggles of the unemployed and the Longshore strike. She later left her husband. In 1944, she became interested in the Trotskyists, disagreeing with the Labour Progressive Party's no-strike policy in the war industries. She worked in a canning factory where the workers resisted speed-ups and the distribution of poor quality food to the rank and file soldiers and high quality food to officers. She was a member of the IWA Women's Auxiliary and assisted in organizing clerical workers at Burrard Drydocks in the 1950's.

JOSEPHINE CHARLIE

Mrs. Charlie worked in the fish canneries for many years. She was a steward for the United Fishermen's and Allied Workers Union and active in the Native Brotherhood. The tape describes conditions in B.C. canneries from the 1920's to the 1950's, family life on the coast, healthcare, the roles of Native women, union organization and its impact on the canneries, preparation and processing of fish, race conflicts in the canneries, treatment of Japanese women after the War in the canneries, childbirth, strike situations in the fishing industry. Her husband worked on a seineboat and contracted labour for the canneries. Mrs. Charlie helped to organize Native workers into the Brotherhood which bargained for them. She helped to raise piece rates for \$6/ticket to \$10/ticket. While working, Mrs. Charlie cared for both her own and adopted children. The safety of children during the canning season while their mothers were working was a big problem facing cannery workers, and children were occasionally hurt or ill. She was active in the URRU as a steward. She argued against strikes for the most part, fearing that the workers would lose more than they would gain.

VIVIAN DOWDING

Mrs. Dowding was a pioneer of birth control in B.C. She was a member of the C.C.F. and is still active in NDP. Her work was influenced by Margaret Sanger and other early pioneers of birth control in North America. She was employed by the Kaufman Rubber Company, distributor of birth control devices in Canada. She describes conditions in working class communities during the 1930's, the distribution process for birth control devices, attitudes towards family planning on the part of Church and Kaufman, the role of the CCF in promoting birth control. She often faced harrassment by the police when visiting towns to see women. She only saw people who were recommended by word of mouth, as public distribution was strongly prohibited.

While Kaufman saw birth control as a way of freeing the government from having to support unwanted members of a surplus labour force, Mrs. Dowding and many women like her, saw birth control as a first step to liberate women and alleviate the misery and poverty of many working class families.

SUZIE FAWCETT

Suzie Fawcett grew up in Edinborough, Scotland coming to Canada in 1929 where she began work as a companion. She tried to learn nursing, but found the \$10/month impossible to live on. She became a salad maker at the Hotel Vancouver, then moved to take a position at the new Hotel, owned by CN/CPR, when it opened. After 21 years of CNR ownership the working conditions were good, although wages were lower than other less popular hotels. In 1942 the HREU tried to organize the Hotel, signing male waiters who then struck the staff children's Christmas party. This tactic did not endear them to the other workers and the union campaign was crushed. The waiters, many of whom were senior staff members, were all fired. This upset the other staff members who decided that a union was indeed necessary and proceeded to meet with the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway and Transport and General Workers, who had jurisdiction over other workers in CN's employ. In 1950, the workers at the Hotel struck in solidarity with other workers in the CBRT. The union improved wages and insured that there was no depreciation of conditions. Mrs. Fawcett was secretary-treasurer of the Local and represented the union at the CLC and BCFL conventions. She held other executive posts. She was strongly opposed to political unionism, believing that unions had to keep their autonomy from political organizations. She raised her two children while working full-time. She thoroughly enjoyed her work with the Hotel.

BUSTER FOSTER

Buster Foster was an engineer. Burned in an accident in the early 1930's, he was forced onto relief. Social workers harassed relief recipients throughout the Depression. During both World Wars he worked in the shipyards. He participated in the 1919 solidarity strike with the OBU in B.C. and during W.W.II he supervised 35-40 women in the shipyards as steward for the union. There were few grievances filed by the women. After the War he voiced his concern that two people in a family should not be working when there were only adequate numbers of jobs for one family member. Despite the no-strike pledge, the International Association of Machinists, which he represented, went out on a 7 day job action during the War, resulting in the Richards Commission. Conflicts existed in the IAM over Canadian autonomy and control by the International over Canadian funds and policy.

JOAN GILLATT

Mrs. Gillatt was born in 1929. She completed University in the early 1940's, working her way through school. She was first a bank clerk for \$65/month and then became a wartime replacement worker for the provincial government as a lab assistant. Women played an important role in the War effort. Their employment, however, was seen as a temporary phenomenon. Working for the government, she became a steward for a new association (BCGEA) and then the Vice President of the Victoria Branch after she transferred into a file clerk's job. The jobs which women held were dead-end and discrimination against both women and non-white workers was a problem. Issues facing government workers included the 'service' nature of the job, political patronage, establishing collective bargaining, and union recognition. Equal opportunity was the central issue women faced in the civil service. Mrs. Gillatt was the Vice-President and then acting President of the Association. She was a skillful negotiator, with the government. She was the only woman on the Executive for a number of years and fought hard to establish women's equality in the leadership field.

THELMA GODKIN

Mrs. Godkin was born Thelma Emblem in Nanaimo. At the age of 17 she began working as a waitress in Malahat. Her father got her a job in the sawmill in Chemainus and she worked as a sorter and a bandsaw operator. She was an IWA steward in the mill. She left the mill and preferring to work outside, became the first woman to work in the woods, as a whistle punk. She first worked for 'gyppo' operations, but because of her proficiency was hired on by the largest operation in the Chemainus area. On the tape she describes the attitudes of male workers to her entry into the logging industry, a near escape from a forest fire, the tasks she performed at work, working early shift, her childhood and attitudes towards traditional women's work, and the entry of more women into the logging industry.

JOSEPHINE HALLOCK

Mrs. Hallock was born in Nottingham, England and raised in Scotland. She came to Canada in 1931, to marry. The marriage did not occur and she entered the workforce, supporting herself through work as a grocery clerk, a housekeeper and later, a hospital worker at the General Hospital. She became involved in organizing domestic workers with the Trades and Labour Congress in 1943. The campaign centered on inclusion in the B.C. Labour Code, Minimum Wage Legislation, raising wages and securing decent conditions. The Provincial Cabinet rejected proposals for these improvements on the grounds that the government could not intervene into a man's home to organize or affect his servants; a man's home was his

castle. The campaign eventually faded out. Mrs. Hallock and her husband opened a small business and took out cards with the HREU. She had been involved with the Women's Unit of the Civic Employees Associations at the Hospital and considered returning to work, but did not do so. Mrs. Hallock was active later on in organizing office workers into OTEU Local 15. She served on the VDLC for many years and in 1954 became active in the Union Label Committee. She has focused on union label work for many years and has popularized the notion of buying union and displaying the union label.

GLADYS HILLAND

Mrs. Hilland grew up in Saskatchewan where she participated with her brother in the Farmers Unity League, an organization of farmers allied with the Workers Unity League, which fought farm foreclosures. She married and moved to B.C. with her husband to look for work, becoming a waitress and a domestic. She took a job in a B.C. Forest Products sawmill at Sitka as soon as women were hired, piling lumber and as a sawyer. She was active in unionizing the plant, arguing for the workers to leave the company union and join the IWA. She was elected Secretary-treasurer of Local 1-217 of the IWA and served in that capacity until the split in 1948. In that position she was one of the most prominent women in the labour movement. As Secretary-treasurer she continued to organize for the union, speaking to IWA workers and helping them organize in their plants. She was involved in the 1946 march to Victoria during a strike and participated in numerous provincial labour lobbies. The post-War period and the Cold War led to hostilities to the LPP leadership of the IWA. The leadership, dissatisfied with the drain of dues into the International led a breakaway, forming the WIUC. Mrs. Hilland went with WIUC. During her term as an IWA officer she fought for the payment of workers according to the job performed, not according to race or sex. Her own experience confirmed a belief that women were competent at all physical and intellectual tasks.

EFFIE JONES

Effie Jones was born in England and spent years of her youth in Wales where she came into contact with the miners' struggles of the early 20th century. She came to Canada in 1919 and married, settling with her husband in Vancouver. Mr. Jones worked for B.C. Telephone. The Jones' home, the only one in the neighbourhood with a telephone during the Depression, became a centre for people looking for work. As well, the Jones who had a vegetable garden and many chickens, as well as steady work, helped to support many of their less fortunate friends and neighbours. Mrs. Jones began her political work with the

CCF as a local executive member. Her experience with the CCF left her disillusioned and she left for the more active Communist Party. She worked in the Housewives' League, transforming it from a Liberal club into an organization with branches across Canada. The League organized support for the Post Office occupation, the defense of the men arrested in the occupation, fought evictions and mobilized to put people's belongings back into their homes. When the War began, they lobbied for soldiers' wives to receive an adequate and regular allowance. Effie Jones almost won the mayorial race in 1947. She ran for civic positions in other later elections as well. She celebrated her 90th birthday this year.

JANET JUDD

Janet Judd was hired as a part-time postal clerk and then became a full-time worker in 1960. She was one of the first women to achieve this position. The conditions at that time in the post office were 'horrifying': no air conditioning, working for hours standing, loss of hearing due to noise, mandatory examinations to determine wage increases. When she applied for work in the post office, she resisted placement in a clerical position and fought to become a clerk. Later, she fought to become the first woman dispatcher. Mrs. Judd was the sole support for eight children and was pregnant when she began to work at the post office. Her case helped to establish the principle of maternity leave for postal workers and through this the recognition by the post office that women were a permanent part of the workforce there. With other women clerks, she resisted male co-workers who opposed the entry of women into the public service and male supervisors who harassed women clerks. She became active in the Association as a steward. Some of the issues which came up consistently were racist attitudes towards herself and other non-white workers, discrimination and patronage in hiring, the establishment of mirror surveillance systems in the bathrooms, establishing union recognition and the right to strike, shift changes and services for women with children. During the 1965 strike, management tried to bring in scabs through an old CPR tunnel, but the union stopped this. Mrs. Judd had been a student at Strathcona School and was deeply affected by the Japanese internment, as many of her closest friends were interned. She has been active in many Black organizations, including the Negro Citizens' League and other civil rights groups.

PEGGY KENNEDY

Peggy Kennedy was born in Haida, Alaska, emigrating to B.C. and studying at University of Victoria. After the War was in its third year she began to work at Boeings Aircraft. She was first a stores clerk and then a secretary to the foreman. She became involved in the union (IAM) and protested the lack of rest periods, participating in a sitdown which led to a lock-out.

Women at Boeings worked in electrical sub-assembly but not as machinists. Sub-assembly involved putting together a part of an aircraft. Women were working both in the Sea Island plant and the subplant on Georgia Street, where Mrs. Kennedy worked. Men and women received equal benefits and were paid for the job, but did not receive equal promotion. Many of the women in war production were very young, both single and married and for many it was their first job. Many women left their children with relatives as childcare was a major problem. She worked monthly swing shift at Boeings and came to know many of the workers because of her job. She became involved with the IAM as a rank and file member and began to write for the newspaper. She became a steward, secretary for the union and editor of the paper. The issues which faced the workers were rest periods, raises, consultation on production and the abolition of supervision. After the War both men and women were laid off despite union efforts to shift the plant to consumer production through lobbies to Victoria and rallies.

LAKE COWICHAN WOMEN'S AUXILIARY

These are composite tapes with former members of the Lake Cowichan Women's Auxiliary: Eva Wilson, Lori Belin, Lil Godfrey, June Olsen and Mary Greenwell, who were active in the Women's Auxiliary of the IWA at Lake Cowichan during the 1930's and 1940's. In the tape the women tell of their family and work histories and their subsequent involvement with the Union Auxiliary. The women come out of very different experiences: some from strong trade union families (Nanaimo miners) and others from anti-union backgrounds. Most came to "The Lake" as young women married to loggers. June Olsen, however, came as a teenager, grew up in Lake Cowichan and joined her friends in the Auxiliary. Conditions in the 1930's were primitive: couples lived in shacks without plumbing or electricity, the hospital was in Chemainus and the road was terrible. The Womens' Auxiliary was pulled together in the 1930's by Edna Brown with the help of some of the organizers for the union. It helped to cut across the isolation which many of the young wives experienced and to draw them into the struggle to organize the woods. The organizers went from home to home and to isolated logging camps organizing the auxiliary. Women were concerned with safety, getting a better roads to the hospital, protecting and providing funds and cover for the union organizers. As the auxiliary developed its functions expanded and it became the central instrument in creating a community at Lake Cowichan: providing social events, education, political involvement, establishing the P.T.A., Red Cross, swimming lessons, a theatre group, doing War support work, getting fresh milk into the town, organizing a children's parade, Dominion Day and Labour Day events, a Lady of the Lake contest, and coordinating with other women's groups, as well as supporting the union's activities. The members attended conventions of the union and federated auxiliary in Vancouver and Eugene

and were instrumental in forming auxiliary policy across the IWA because of the large numbers and success of their organization. In 1946, during the strike march to Victoria, the Lake Cowichan women marched in the front of the trekkers. In Victoria, they organized food and lodgings with other auxiliaries. In 1948, the Lake Cowichan Auxiliary split, the majority of its members going with the WIUC. These years saw some violent confrontations, for example at Iron River, where the IWA crossed WIUC picket lines. The women and their husbands were excluded from the new IWA auxiliary at the Lake after the WIUC collapsed. Some of them became involved in the CO-OP, while others later did support work for the IWA when their husbands reentered the IWA.

VERNA LEDGER

Mrs. Ledger worked in a bank until 1953, when she moved to a job at Canadian Forest Products as a dryer feeder in the plywood mill, to better support her two children. There were 900 - 1,000 men in the plant and 400 women. In 1966 they won equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and the forest companies subsequently stopped hiring women. The number of women in her plant fell to 80. Women workers faced difficulties in finding decent childcare often relying on relatives to look after their children. Mrs. Ledger grew up in a strong IWA family. She became a shop steward and participated on the safety committee, grievance committee and plant committee. Now she is Regional Director of Safety. Mrs. Ledger was involved in job actions to achieve equal work for women in the mills. Issues concerning women were recognition of equal pay; establishing union hiring halls to insure that women were hired on and general union issues. Political action is very important to women, Mrs. Ledger feels, as a means of legislating improved conditions.

ANNE MARSHALL

Anne Marshall was born in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1907. At the age of 14, she left there to come to B.C. and find work after her father died. She worked as a waitress and became sympathetic to trade unionism in 1924 during the Longshore strike through her contact with strike supporters at work. She then became a babysitter for the owner of Sweet 16 dressshops. He taught her to sew, and she began to work in ladies' ready-to-wear. She married in 1928 and stayed home until W.W.II when she reentered the workforce. The organization of the industry had begun by then. Working at Jantzen's, she was exposed to the Bideau piecework system for the first time and became angered by the conditions which it imposed. She was laid off, but in

the meantime was approached by the unions to organize the shop. The VTLC was spearheading the campaign at that time. The workers were organized into the United Garment Workers. Later she helped to lead the Local over to the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union which she felt had better shops. She became a full-time organizer for the ILGWU in 1946-7 and stayed in that position for 16 years. Central issues in her union were the protection and integration of immigrant workers, equal pensions for women, piecework, racism, wages and hours of work, policing the contracts (insuring that people got lunch-hours and breaks).

MAY MARTIN

May Martin (Ansell) came from Capetown. She left school at the end of Grade 9 and worked as a grocery clerk, hotel worker, and waitress. She moved from Canada to the U.S., then to Montreal, Halifax, Toronto and Windsor, where she stayed until 1941. She drove west with her husband, searching for work and settled in B.C. Her first interest in the HREU came as a result of working in a restaurant where the women union organizers were being harrassed by the boss. She went down to the union office, joined the HREU and worked in union houses. She moved to the Yukon in 1942 and organized for the HREU in Whitehorse. Upon her return to Vancouver in 1944, she was elected Business Agent. Although the HREU was a member of the craft-oriented TLC, Mrs. Martin was a strong proponent of industrial organization. During 1945-46, the HREU signed a master agreement with the majority of restaurant employers and began to organize the hotels. The union helped to establish a new and better Minimum Wage Law for women, restrictions on women working late hours which forced the employer to furnish transportation home, a shorter work-week (44 and then 40 hours) and better shifts. Mrs. Martin attended the 1946 convention of the union at which the syndicates threatened the internal opposition and retained control of the International. Mrs. Martin and other Canadian delegates were physically threatened, and the opposition leader was shot. Soon after this, the International organized to remove her and Emily Watts from the Executive despite membership protest. In 1946, before losing her position she spoke on the radio defending a woman's right to a job and a union, as a union member and official.

SARA MCKINNON

Mrs. McKinnon moved to B.C. in 1937, where she lived for a year on Stewart Island. She married in 1938 and worked in the Only Restaurant. She worked occasionally as a domestic, for \$3.50/day, while raising her

small children. She began to work at Vancouver General Hospital in the laundry in the late 1940's and then moved over to St. Paul's. The shift work was very hot and heavy and the majority of workers were female. She had considered herself 'United Farmers of Ontario' as a child in Ontario, despite her Conservative family and was sympathetic to the CCF. At St. Paul's, she became involved in changing the company union into a really representative union; one which would fight for more than 3% increase per year. Workers compared their conditions and wages to those of workers at Vancouver General Hospital and joined the union. Organization was facilitated by one of the nuns, Sister Gertrude, who was known for her progressive ideas. She blocked the attempts of the personnel manager to intimidate union sympathizers. Basic bread and butter issues were key; hours, wages, holidays and shifts. Union organizers confronted a strong ideology of commitment to the hospital service fostered by the hospital. Mrs. McKinnon was active on the union's education committee and elected to the executive as trustee and warden. The shiftwork made it difficult to involve many workers in union activity.

EDRA MCLEOD

Edra McLeod worked in Boeing during the War to help with the War effort. While the plant was being organized, she questioned whether or not to join the union. A management lock-out in retaliation for a sit-down by the workers resulted in a victory: one 5 minute break each day. Mrs. McLeod's husband was overseas for the duration of the War. She left the aircraft industry to find work with B.C. Hydro in 1944. Only women whose husbands were overseas and who were under 25 were to be hired, as conductorettes. After the War it took 5 years for women to be allowed to drive. Out of 30 women drivers, 8 stayed on, 2 for many years. From the beginning, women received the same wages as men drivers. Only one woman was heavily involved in the union, but all of the women supported it. Mrs. McLeod consistently pushed for other women to be hired as drivers, participated in the fight for better wages and conditions and was active on the sick committee. She describes the trauma which many young women experienced during the War as a result of separation from their newly wed husbands.

PEARL MOREAU

Mrs. Moreau (Wong) began to work in Vancouver in 1944 as a waitress in training. The conditions were deplorable; \$5/wk-\$10/month, a ten hour day, half-hour lunch and no breaks. She had a child and returned to the Fraser Café in 1955 leaving her child with her mother while she worked.

The Fraser was a union shop, and after seeing the union attain a raise of only 3 cents/hour she determined to become active. She identified many important issues for women; equal fringe benefits, sick benefits and opposition to sexual harrassment. Workers supported each other to resist sexual harrassment by the boss, a reoccurring problem for waitresses. The union worked towards the principle of equal pay. She participated in negotiations, served on the VDLC and ran for hostess. She found herself at times at odds with her union and voted independently. She eventually ran against Ed Carlson for President as an opposition candidate claiming a need for stronger democracy in the union.

JIM MORRISON

Mr. Morrison worked for the HREU organizing in New Westminster and other places. In this tape, he provides a history of Local 28 of the HREU and women's participation in it. Local 28 kept the Bartenders Union alive during the Prohibition period, providing a skeleton for later reorganization. In the 1930's and 1940's, about 42 cafés were organized, with 600 people joining up. The problem the union faced was not organizing, but policing its contracts. Despite unionization there was still a high turnover. The union established a hiring hall but it mostly dealt with bartenders not culinary workers. The organizers for the union worked all shifts as restaurant workers worked all hours. The membership in the 1940's was primarily female, until the union made a big drive into the hotels. The 1950's saw a few job actions when women were fired from restaurants. As the hotels were organized the HREU drew back from maintaining the contracts with restaurants as they were small bargaining units and had problems meeting the master contract standards. During the 1950's the Building Service Union and the HREU Local 28 launched a joint campaign to organize, leafletting outside hotels and putting up sign-up tables in alleyways. The B.C. Hotel Association organized against the drive but were unable to defeat it. As well, Aristocratic Hamburgers were organized and the principle of allied picketing established by the union.

JEANNE OUELLETTE

Jeanne Ouellette came from a strong trade union family rooted in the coal miners' struggles of the Island. She actively supported the trade unions in 1935 during the Longshore strike. Her husband was a longshoreman in Chemainus. With the other strikers, they moved to Ladysmith where it was possible to secure low-cost accomadation. The women supported the men on the picketline and built whist drives to raise money for the 6 month strike. The police brought in strikebreakers to break up the picketline. After the strike, her husband

became a logger and she became active in the Local 1-92 IWA Auxiliary. Her auxiliary was CCF in its political leanings and concerned itself with wages, building a community, support for the 1946 strike and the march to Victoria. When the IWA leadership led the split in 1948, the Ladysmith Auxiliary members attended the meeting in Duncan and were firm in their decision to stay with the IWA and maintain control of their own finances. After the break, the IWA reorganized the auxiliaries making them more centralized and dismantling the sub-local structure. The Ladysmith W.A. lost some of its continuity and interest in it waned.

MURIEL OVERGAARD

Mrs. Overgaard went to work after moving to Victoria in order to support her child. She worked at the Bay and then at Eaton's where she managed Eaton's mail order department. She retired from permanent work to raise her family. She began to work at the school board part-time, as the hours facilitated working mothers. In 1965, the school board workers organized into CUPE. She ran for Local Executive and won, serving for eight years as Local President. She then became President of CUPE Island Local and B.C. Treasurer and is presently President of the B.C. Division. She has also been active in the N.D.P. In the early 1970's she helped lead CUPE through the lock-out imposed by the Social Credit government. CUPE was the first union in B.C. to establish women's committees, to insure the integration of women and their needs into the union.

ALICE PERSON

Mrs. Person has been active in the IWA. She moved to Webster's Corners from the Prairies during the Depression; got a job in the wood industry during the War and was active in organizing her plant. She became a member of the plant executive. The tape discusses relief, agricultural labour during the Depression, the Japanese internment, working conditions for wood workers, organizing the IWA and her plant, equal pay for equal work, attitudes to women workers, and struggles against layoffs after the War. She and her sister were in the first group of women to be hired on at Hammond Cedar in 1942. Mrs. Person, although told by co-workers that "girls don't need as much" decided that equal pay was a woman's right. This issue became a primary motivation for her and other women to join the union. She feels that many workers were inspired by the IWA leadership. Mrs. Person served as a steward and a warden on the executive.

JONNIE RANKIN

Mrs. Rankin wrote a column for the newspaper of the Shipyard and General Workers Union during the War, describing the experience of women working in the shipyards. She has also been involved in the HREU, OTEU and the IWA. She was an activist in the Labour Progressive Party during the War. The tape describes the reasons that women took industrial jobs, hiring procedures, attitudes of men to women entering the shipyards, the transformation of the craft unions into industrial union, childcare, political differences in the unions, Soviet women on ships which came into the yards for repair, piecework, shopstewarding, lay-offs and women, work as a journalist for the People, the LPP, left-wing theatre, the IWA strike of 1946, organizing in the restaurants, women's auxiliaries and equal pay struggles. Also, why women were unwilling to leave their jobs after the war ended and how working had brought them self-respect and economic autonomy. Mrs. Rankin worked in the IWA hiring hall and was involved in some of the early attempts to form the OPIEU out of union employees.

MARION SARICH

Ms. Sarich was born in Princeton, B.C., moved to Saskatchewan, later returning to B.C. She started work as a domestic at the age of 13 for \$5/month and then moved on to several different positions. She began organizing domestics in the 1930's and worked with the Housewife's League to get a charter from the AFL. The TLC could not decide which union should receive jurisdiction and the campaign died. Ms. Sarich then began working as a busgirl at the Trocedero Café, helping to organize it. The café was struck and she and her sister, Anita Sarich, were blacklisted, but the strike helped to initiate a campaign to organize the restaurants. During the strike they received extensive support from the public. She also participated in drives to organize Army and Navy stores, and Woolworths, helping whenever organizers were needed and taking no pay. The HREU fought for special clauses for women; equal pay, protection at night for waitresses getting off shift and requiring transportation. Ms. Sarich participated in pickets of restaurants which were guilty of unfair labour practices. She also supported the unemployed men in the post office. Local 28 tried consistently to join with the Bartenders Local (626) but the latter refused amalgamation. In the 1940's she assisted in the organization of the Canadian Seamen's Union, which later became the Seamen's International Union. Ms. Sarich remembers Norman Bethune's visit to Vancouver, solidarity with Spanish orphans through the Girls' Brigade to Aid Spanish Orphans. In the 1950's she became a postal worker and has been active in the union(s).

JEAN SCOTT

Mrs. Scott first worked as a housemaid in Manitoba. As she worked for several employers, she began to make a connection between the bad treatment of domestic workers and the oppression of women. In 1946 she began working for the Retail Wholesale and Department Store and Packing-house Union as an office worker. In this position she also put out organizing leaflets. She remembers the union contract establishing different pay rates for men and women doing the same work. She helped organize support for the union in the 1947 strike of meat workers and jam factory workers. She later worked for the IWA and assisted the White Bloc in the struggle for leadership of the union. She participated in a campaign to organize office workers which was able only to sign union offices and BC Co-op. She felt that the unions organized their staff only under pressure and through the examples set by the Steelworkers and the VDLC. For a while, she served as President of Local 15, OTEU and acted as contract negotiator. She supported the BCFL position calling for equal pay for women. She believes that it was difficult for women to become trade union leaders and win adequate recognition for their work. However, OTEU supported childcare and maternity leave. Their contracts acted as models for other unions in the BCFL on these questions.

BERTHA SOUDERHOLM

Mrs. Souderholm was active with Finnish community organizations in the Maple Ridge area during the War. The tape describes that community during the Depression, work and organizing at Berryland, women in the War industry, conditions in the fish canneries. Webster's Corners where she lived had a long history of progressive organizing. Women in the Finnish community traditionally had their own organizations. Men in Webster's Corners worked in industry while women built and maintained the community. The Women's Defense League organized a defense of political prisoners during the 1930's. Later organizations gathered clothing for Finnish War relief. The unions in the 1940's established Old Age Pensions, Unemployment Insurance, Workmen's Compensation, Family Allowance and Medicare. The labour at Berryland was very difficult as there was little automation. Women were called in to work and received only an hour's pay if little fruit was available. Women worked at Berryland on a seasonal basis, without the benefit of seniority, to supplement their household income and pay taxes. Women tried to organize and several women were fired. A wild cat occurred later on and the union was established. This created a seniority system and year-round work.

BARBARA STEWART

Barbara Stewart first radicalized during the Depression. She was present in Regina in 1935 at a citizens' meeting called to protest the lack of jobs and support the On To Ottawa Trek. She was swept into the streets with many of the crowd by the attacks of the police and mounted RCMP. She came to Vancouver in 1936 without a job and was placed as a domestic by the YWCA. She moved on to waitress at Kennedy's where she was laid-off for her union sympathies. She then worked at the Melrose and then Love's Café. Waitresses worked 4-way split shifts at that time. She participated in such job actions as, waitresses wore their aprons for 6 weeks without washing them to establish employer responsibility for laundry. Restaurant work was very hard. It required physical labour and long hours of work. Women faced sexual harrassment on the job while some restaurants even tried to exploit waitresses as prostitutes. Most women who worked did so out of economic necessity, not choice. Mr. Bill Stewart was the Business Agent of Local 28 during the 1930's and early 1940's. Mrs. Stewart later took over as Business Agent, travelling all over the city for \$20/month. A major struggle of the union was to change laws so that employers would have to provide transportation for waitresses after dark. Mrs. Stewart, as Business Agent, was also a delegate to the VDLC. She went into houses to organize them and worked on the White Lunch and Trocedero strikes.

LIL STONEMAN

Lil Stoneman came to B.C. in 1913. Her father was a sailmaker who hoped to start a canvas cover business in Saskatoon. She had an Oxford certificate and was able to teach with this. She first taught in Harris in a one-room school and then in Lenning, living with local families. In 1920, she married a master painter. In 1924 the B.C. economy was already in a slump and by the early 1930's they were forced onto relief. They received \$18/month for 2 people. She became active in the unemployed movement as it formed to protest the distribution of food by gunnysack as opposed to script. She went to the relief office to represent recipients and participated in organization on a local level forming neighbourhood committees, block committees, halls and associations. Mrs. Stoneman joined the Women's Labour League which organized for jobs, supported unemployed struggles and fought for birth control. She returned briefly to Saskatchewan and organized there as well. The W.L.L. eventually became the Mothers' Council and organized demonstrations for clothing and food. As the Labour League grew in its membership and groups formed on the Island, it was accepted into the local Council of Women. Mrs. Stoneman was elected secretary of the league and later studied with Becky Buhay, researching the history of working women's struggles. Mrs. Stoneman was present

at the Battle of Ballantyne Pier, where she narrowly escaped from the police as they attacked striking Longshoremen. During the War, the Mothers' Council fought for decent allowances for soldiers' wives.

MARJORIE STORM

Mrs. Storm was and is a member of the IWA and has been involved in organizing for women's rights in both the IWA and the BCFL. The tape compares work in organized and unorganized wood plants, sexual harrassment on the job, women in union positions, seniority, weight limits, the B.C. Human Rights Code, childcare, womens' caucuses, racism in the wood industry. Mrs. Storm left her first job at Fraser Mills because of sexual harrassment. She moved to Pacific Veneer where women were represented in the workforce, as stewards and on plant committees. Mrs. Storm was asked to be a steward and represent the 350 women in the plant in 1953. She was elected to the plant committee as recording secretary, because of her work representing all workers as a steward. There was a longterm fight for equality for women: the plants kept separate seniority lists for women and men, and women were only allowed entrance into a limited number of jobs within the subdepartment where they worked. In 1966 the IWA established equal pay for equal work as policy. As well, a struggle occurred against a Workers Compensation Board 30 lb. weight limit for women. During the 1946 strike, women were very militant, taking on graveyard picket duty, often jumping the gun on strike deadlines and starting wildcats. One equal work struggle occurred when women were refused the right to relieve workers on the spreader (a higher paid job) and the foreman refused the senior woman worker. Women stood around the spreader and closed it down to establish the right to work as relief on breaks. Women played an important role demanding safety and on plant committees.

EILEEN TALLMAN

Mrs. Tallman (Suftrin) began her interest in unions as a CCF youth activist during the Depression. She began to organize with the CCYM's trade union committee in Ontario. She was involved in the 1940-41 organizing in the banks, which reached workers as far as B.C. and culminated in the strike in Montreal. This strike was defeated and the drive collapsed. She continued as an organizer for the Steelworkers, coming to Vancouver in 1943 to train officers of the union and initiate "Steel" the union's western press. She was involved in political struggles with the LPP leadership in the unions, worked for a CCF perspective in the labour movement and was active on the Vancouver and District Labour Council.

She later returned to Ontario where she led a campaign to organize Eaton's 9600 person workforce. The drive was only defeated by 600 votes, and this because of a delay by the Labour Relations Board in certification. She returned to the USWA and worked with their office workers department. She participated in numerous campaigns, including Continental Can. Issues which were of importance to women in the campaigns which she led included equal pay and job classification, unionization, job ghettos, childcare and maternity leave. Mrs. Tallman always encouraged women to be active union members and officers.

EVA VASELENEK

Mrs. Vaselenek was born in Hardwick, Vermont where her father was a granite cutter. She moved to Richmond in 1943, and got a job in a cannery to support her ill daughter. She first washed fish and then packed it into cans. The conditions were very bad; the canneries were cold, with wind coming in the cracks in the floor. The work was both hourly and piecework. Many different nationalities worked in the canneries; Natives, Japanese, Chinese and Whites. The different races and nationalities worked on different aspects of the canning operation at B.C. Packers. She was asked by the workers to help them organize as she was vocal in protesting conditions. She contacted the Fishermen's Union; it took from 1944 to 1946 to completely sign the plant up. The forelady and management harrassed the union militants. She was elected as a paid organizer. She was an effective organizer and signed up both fishermen and cannery workers, bringing the membership out to meetings, speaking to workers on their lunch-hours and signing up all different ethnic groups and religious groups. She worked in plants to start organizing campaigns, moving from the canneries into fresh fish. The union fought for equal pay for women and the different nationalities, for an end to harrassment by the supervisors, for seniority by job category and for uniform wages and conditions across the province.

CHRIS WADDELL

Mrs. Waddell worked in the YWCA during the Depression as a dietician, later working in the British Embassy in Washington. She moved to Vancouver in 1947-8 and worked in the dining room of the Aristocratic Restaurant at Granville and Broadway. She was already sympathetic to trade unionism as her father had been the leader of the OBU Streetrailwaymen in Winnipeg. She was asked to join the union (HREU) and did so. A janitor, the main organizer, was fired and other were transferred out of the restaurant to other locations in the chain. Despite this, an application went to the LRB which ruled

that the certification was alright. As well, the union used the tactic of informational picketting. Mrs. Waddell took up the union campaign and soon signed up the new workers in the restaurant, and finally an agreement was signed. The Aristocratic workers were so enthused by their new contract that they became very active in the union and soon made up half of the executive. Flo Allen, a longtime member of the union then suggested that Mrs. Waddell run for Business Agent. She did so, and took the position, working for the union for 12 years.

RICHARD AND PHYLLIS WHISKER

Both Richard and Phyllis Whisker come from coal mining families. As a boy, Richard worked in the coal mines before the 1912-1914 strike. The strike occurred when the United Mine Workers organized because of unsafe conditions. The 72nd Highlanders were brought in to put down the strike and arrested miners in Extension, Ladysmith and Nanaimo. Mrs. Whisker's father was Secretary of the union and was forced to go the New Zealand to find work as he was blackballed for his union activities when he was released from prison. Mrs. Whisker's mother was a member of the Women's Labour League and fought for it to retain its labour orientation. Women were present on picketlines during the strike in support of their husbands and the strike in general. The women were independent and willing to take risks and the community pooled its resources during the strike, living off of hunting, fishing and gardening. The company evicted the miners' families during the strike. The strike resulted in longterm hostilities in the community between the families of strikers and strikebreakers. Mr. Whiskers later worked in the wood industry as a railman.

BILL WHITE

Bill White was President of the Boilermakers Local in Prince Rupert during the War at the shipyards. Many women from the community entered the shipyards. Mr. White was active in defending women's right to a job at the end of the War. The tape describes conditions in Rupert, the growth of the shipyards, battles between soldiers, workers and native people, racism in Rupert, response to the entry of women into the yards, attitudes towards the Japanese, anti-war sentiments, the no-strike pledge and the Labour Progressive Party. Mr. White was a member of the Trotskyist organization at that time. Women were brought into the Prince Rupert shipyards as helpers or improvers, after taking a several months long course in welding. The helpers strung the burners' hoses and the women were soon proficiently stringing their own hoses and cables. After the shift got off, they would drink at the Savoy Hotel. It became clear that women had been accepted into the yards when the crew accepted women buying rounds. Women also became stewards in the union.

CONNIE WHITE

Mrs. White was born in Winnipeg and came to Vancouver, She worked first as a domestic and then later in a factory making loggers' boots for \$9/week. After the workers were offered a 1 cent/hour raise she quit, moving to a cap factory and then to Boeing when the War broke out. At Boeing many women worked as riveters on sections of the planes. She worked putting cold rivets in with a partner. The Boeing plant operated on a three swing shift basis. After the War, she, like many women, feared being out of work and moved to Woodward's bakery immediately, experiencing a drop in her wages. She married and did not return to work until 1955 when she became interested in the ILGWU out of curiosity about the working conditions of herself and others. She is presently Business Agent for the ILGWU.

ELIZABETH WILSON

Mrs. Wilson describes the conditions and the struggles of the unemployed during the 1930's. A meeting on the Cambie Street Grounds was broken up by police on horseback with riot sticks and the organizers deported. She worked for the CCF to build the Dorothy Steeves campaign. Inhabitants of Vancouver East were particularly militant, fighting evictions and assisting the less conscious West Enders. Mrs. Wilson was forced onto relief. She had formerly worked as a waitress. After a demonstration at the Holden Building, Gerry McGeer read the Riot Act at the Cenotaph. Relief recipients all received the same marked clothing. Women received \$13/month on relief. Andy Rodden, the minister of the First Church preached to the unemployed and visited False Creek, the shantytown of the unemployed men, distributing loaves of bread. The Communist Party was central in leading the unemployed. Women during the Depression faced great difficulties in controlling unwanted pregnancy. Many women resorted to abortion using knitting needles or slippery elm. Only one doctor, Dr. Telford, dispensed birth control. The welfare system provided constant harassment of recipients by social workers. Deserted women were forced off of relief and onto alimony but most of their husbands never paid up.

EMILY NUTTALL

Emily Nuttall (Watts) was born in Winnipeg in 1913. Her father was a trade unionist and her mother was a women's rights activist. Mrs. Watts worked in the trade union movement in Winnipeg and then Toronto before moving to Vancouver in 1944. She describes work in the restaurant industry during the 1930's and her own union organizing through the Bartenders Union. When war came, she organized in war industry canteens winning cab-fare for late shifts in restaurants. Other actions included the Georgia Hotel drive, a one-day blitz that won a contract, winning a B.C.

master agreement, being thrown out of the Belmont Hotel while organizing and confronting sexual harassment. She believes women make the best union members. "...give me a picket line, a good dedicated woman and they will outpicket any man." Mrs. Watts lost her position as organizer after the War when her local was put under trusteeship for refusing to clear out "Reds".