# WOMEN'S PAID LABOUR IN ST. JOHN'S BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS



NANCY M. FORESTELL

ISBN 0-315-39462-5

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

This is to authorize the Dean of Graduate Studies to deposit two copies of my thesis/report entitled

Women's Paid Labour in St. John's Between the Two World Wars

in the University Library, on the following conditions. I understand that I may choose only ONE of the Options here listed, and may not afterwards apply for any additional restriction. I further understand that the University will not grant any restriction on the publication of thesis/report abstracts.

*(After reading the explanatory notes at the foot of this form, delete TWO of (a), (b) and (c), whichever are inapplicable.)*

The conditions of deposit are:

(a) that two copies are to be made available to users at the discretion of their custodians,

OR

~~(b)~~ that access to, and quotation from, this thesis/report is to be granted only with my written permission for a period of one year from the date on which the thesis/report, after the approval of the award of a degree, is entrusted to the care of the University: namely, _____ 19 ____, after which time the two copies are to be made available to users at the discretion of their custodians,

OR

~~(c)~~ that access to, and quotation from, this thesis/report is to be granted only with my written permission for a period of _____ years from the date on which the thesis/report, after approval for the award of a degree, is entrusted to the care of the University; namely, _____, 19 ____; after which time two copies are to be made available to users at the discretion of their custodians.

Date 11 august 1987 Signed A. Forestell

Christopher Stamp Witnessed by Robert Hong.

Dean of Graduate Studies

*NOTES*

1. *Restriction (b) will be granted on application, without reason given.*

   *However, applications for restriction (c) must be accompanied with a detailed explanation, indicating why the restriction is thought to be necessary, and justifying the length of time requested. Restrictions required on the grounds that the thesis is being prepared for publication, or that patents are awaited, will not be permitted to exceed three years.*

   *Restriction (c) can be permitted only by a Committee entrusted by the University with the task of examining such applications, and will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.*

2. *Thesis writers are reminded that, if they have been engaged in contractual research, they may have already agreed to restrict access to their thesis until the terms of the contract have been fulfilled.*

# WOMEN'S PAID LABOUR IN ST. JOHN'S BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

BY



A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate

Studies in partial fullfillment of the

requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

Memorial University of Newfoundland

August, 1987

St. John's Newfoundland

## Abstract

Between the two world wars, women maintained a prominent position in the St. John's work force. Despite poor economic conditions, women's participation rate increased during the period. Job options for women were limited, however, because they were concentrated in a relatively small number of "female occupations." Women were relegated primarily to positions as saleswomen, typists, garment workers, and domestic servants. This last occupation alone accounted for over a third of the female labour force. Domestic service attracted large numbers of outport women who arrived in St. John's annually seeking wage employment. The actual pattern of women's paid work did not change substantially over these decades. The female labour force in St. John's was overwhelmingly young and single the entire time. Wage employment for women in this city, as for those elsewhere, bridged the gap between school and marriage. Class background was also a determining factor, along with age and marital status, in women's entry into the labour force. Working-class women were far more likely to work than middle-class women, primarily because of the necessity for them to contribute to the household economy. The much smaller number of married and widowed women who engaged in wage labour rarely did so full time. They often chose occupations which allowed them to carry out their paid labour as well as domestic duties. During the inter-war years, working women in St. John's experienced two waves of union organization. At the end of World War I, and again at the end of the 1930's, a large number of female wage-earners sought to improve working conditions and to achieve higher wages through their involvement in unions. Despite formidable barriers, working women made a significant contribution to the city's labour movement.

## Acknowledgements

Many individuals and institutions have contributed to the completion of this thesis. My graduate studies were made possible by a Memorial University Graduate Fellowship. For the help I received with my research, I would like to thank the librarians and archivists who served me, especially Anne Hart and Nancy Grenville at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies. I am indebted to the entire consulting staff of Computing Services at Memorial for their patient efforts to make me computer literate. I am grateful to Professor Lewis (Skip) Fischer who so generously offered his time and expertise with the quantitative analysis of the census data, to Margaret Gulliver for typing portions of the thesis, and to Bob Hong for help with the tables and figures. Thanks to Duff Sutherland for proofreading the final draft. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Rosemary Ommer and Jessie Chisholm for reading chapters of the thesis. I also want to thank Jessie for sharing her research, as well as her enthusiasm for Newfoundland history, with me. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Greg Kealey for his encouragement during my time at Memorial, and for reading the entire manuscript. Special thanks goes to my supervisor, Dr. Linda Kealey, for the inspiration to study this topic, as well as the constant support and advice. Finally, to Peter McInnis, who helped me in innumerable ways, but most importantly, gave me confidence.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

Women have, of course, always worked.
Women have not, however, always worked for wages.
Edith Abbott, Women in Industry (1910).[1]

Over the past fifteen years historical studies of women's work have been increasing in number and scope. This interest stems from two major sources: a desire to know more about what women did for pay and the realization that in order to understand women in the past, it is essential to examine their labour in the home and the workplace. The type of labour women carried out, how their work differed from that of men, and the conditions under which they worked have been studied by historians in Great Britain, the United States, and more recently in Canada. Studies of women's work have a long tradition in the international literature. Edith Abbott's Women in Industry: A Study in American History (1910), and Ivy Pinchbeck's Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850 (1930) are representative of early attempts to describe the nature of women's labour before, during, and after the rise of industrial capitalism.[2] These books provide a wealth of empirical detail, but they are limited in that they do not consider women in non-industrial jobs, nor their domestic labour within the home. The more recent literature has tried to redress these oversights.

---

[1] E. Abbott, Women in Industry: A Study in American History (1910; rpt. New York: Arno and New York Times, 1969).

[2] E. Abbott, Women in Industry; I. Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850 (1930; rpt. London: K. Cass, 1969).

One of the most important works to appear on women's work in the last decade is Women, Work, and Family by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott which examines British and French women's domestic labour as well as their waged work in urban and rural areas over the past three centuries.[3] Tilly and Scott argue that the nature of women's work did not alter substantially with the rise of industrial capitalism. They also maintain that there was a close relationship between familial needs and the decision of women to go out to work.[4] Although historians now give more attention to women's unpaid labour, their paid work continues to be a major focus of research. Alice Kessler-Harris' Out to Work, for example, provides a comprehensive study of wage-earning women in the United States from the colonial period to the present.[5] One notable work covering the experiences of working women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is Women in England by Jane Lewis. Her book is the first attempt to examine the history of women by differentiating their experiences in terms of marital status and class.[6] Tamara Hareven's Family Time and Industrial Time carefully constructs the close connection between women's role in the family and their participation in the work force.[7] A significant number of historians have also chosen to do studies of

---

[3] L. Tilly and J. Scott, Women, Work, and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978).

[4] Ibid., p. 3.

[5] A. Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[6] J. Lewis, Women in England: 1870-1950 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univerisity Press, 1984).

[7] T. Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between Family and Work in an New England Industrial Community (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); for other works on women's paid work in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century see, D. Gittins, Fair Sex: Social Change and Family Structure, Women and Work and the Decline of Family Size, 1900-1939 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); L. Weiner, Working Girls to Working Mother: The Female Labour Force in the United States, 1820-1980 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 1985); W. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Role, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); L. Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); W. Wandersee, Women's Work and Family Values, 1920-1940 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

women in particular "female" occupations.[8] Much of this literature reflects the attempt to discover what was central to women's lives.

Until recently little writing had been done on women's work in Canada. Canadian women's historians have tended to focus their energies on women's social reform organizations and the suffrage movement. Bettina Bradbury's doctoral thesis and a number of her articles, especially, "Women in Wage Labour in a Period of Transition: Montreal, 1861-1881," represent a significant contribution to the study of working women in nineteenth-century Canada.[9] The twentieth century is no better covered with the exception of Wayne Robert's Honest Womanhood, and Veronica Strong-Boag's "The Girl of the New Day."[10] Domestic servants have been considered by Genevieve Leslie, Helen Lenskyj, and Marilyn Barber; Gail Brandt has examined textile workers; sociologist Graham Lowe has written on female office workers; despite the importance of women in the garment trades Mercedes Steedman's article is

---

[8]For a discussion of domestics see, F. Dudden, Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); D. Katzman, Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); D. G. Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); E. Higgs, "Domestic Service and Household Production," in Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England, 1800-1918, edited by A.V. John (London: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 125-152; for women in professional occupations see, B. Harris, Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); for female sales clerks see, S. Benson, "The Clerking Sisterhood: Rationalization and the Work Culture of Saleswomen in American Department Stores, 1890-1960," Radical America, Vol.12, No.2 (March-April 1978), pp. 41-58; for female office workers see, E. Rotella, From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870 to 1930, Ann Arbor: WMI Press, 1981); M. Zimmeck, "Jobs For the Girls: The Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850-1914," in Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918, edited by A.V. John (London: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 153-178.

[9]B. Bradbury, "The Working-Class Family Economy: Montreal, 1861-1881," (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Concordia University, 1984); B. Bradbury, "Women and Wage Labour in a Period of Transition: Montreal, 1861-1881," Histoire sociale/Social History, No.33 (May 1984), pp. 115-131. See also the pioneer study, Janice Acton et al., eds. Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930 (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974).

[10]W. Roberts, Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity, and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914 (Toronto: New Hogtown, 1976); V. Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," Labour/ Le Travailleur, No.4 (1979), pp. 131-164; see also V. Strong-Boag, "Working Women and the State: The Case of Canada, 1889-1945," Atlantis, Vol.6, No.2 (Summer 1981), pp. 1-16.

one of the few dealing with women in the Canadian clothing industry.[11] In regard to the "female" professions, Alison Prentice has done extensive work on teachers, Marta Danylewycz on nuns, and James Struthers has focused on social workers.[12]

Women's work in the context of Newfoundland history has received scant attention. The research that has been carried out on women by folklorists, anthropologists, and sociologists provides a glimpse of the potential in this area. Much of the work has concentrated on women in the outports. Hilda Chaulk Murray's More Than 50%, Marilyn Porter's "'She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew': Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," and Ellen Antler's "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishing Families," all demonstrate the importance of women's productive labour in the fishery.[13] As Murray suggests, when the inshore fishery became a "family affair" in the early nineteenth century, a wife who knew how to "work at the fish" became a real necessity to a fisherman.[14] From that time until

---

[11] G. Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," in Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930, edited by J. Acton et al. (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), pp. 71-126; H. Lenskyj, "A 'Servant Problem' or a 'Servant-Mistress Problem'?: Domestic Service in Canada, 1890-1930," Atlantis, Vol.7, No.1 (Fall 1981), pp. 3-11; M. Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870- 1930," Ontario History, Vol.72, No.3 (Spring 1980), pp. 148-173; G. Brandt, Industry's Hand Maidens: Women in the Quebec Cotton Industry", Canadian Women's Studies/Les Cahiers de la femme, Vol.3, No.1 (1981), pp. 79-82; G. Brandt, "Weaving it Together: Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," Labour/ Le Travailleur, No.7 (Spring 1981), pp. 113-126; G. Lowe, "Class, Job and Gender in the Canadian Office," Labour/Le Travail, No.10 (Autumn 1982), pp. 11-38; G. Lowe, "Women, Work and the Office, the Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1901-1931," Canadian Journal of Sociology, Vol.5, No.4 (1980), pp. 361-381; M. Steedman, "Skill and Gender in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940," in On the Job, edited by C. Heron and R. Storey (Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1986), pp. 152-176; see also, L.C. Johnson and R.G. Johnson, The Seam Allowance: Industrial Home Sewing in Canada (Toronto: Women's Press, 1982).

[12] A. Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching," in The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, edited by S. Trofimenkoff and A. Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 49-65; M. Danylewycz, Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Sisterhood (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987); J. Struthers, "'Lord give us men': Women and Social Work in English Canada, 1918 to 1953," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1983, pp. 96-112.

[13] H. Murray, More Than 50% (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1979); M. Porter, "'She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew': Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," Labour/Le Travail, No.15 (Spring 1985), pp. 105-23.; E. Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishing Families," Atlantis, Vol.2, No.2 (Spring 1977), pp. 106-113; see also, E. Antler, "Fisherman, Fisherwoman, Rural Proletariat: Capitalist Commodity Production in the Newfoundland Fishery," (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Connecticut, 1983).

[14] H. Murray, More Than 50%, p. 8.

the demise of the production of sun-dried fish in the 1950's women did not catch the fish, but were involved in every other aspect of the operation on shore, preparing the fish for market and for home use. Marilyn Porter maintains that there was a strict sexual division of labour in outport society, and while the shore operation never became "women's work" in the same way as baking or gardening, it did become an area in which women developed skills and expertise. Along with Ellen Antler she stresses that women made a vital economic contribution to the fishery.[15] While the pieces by Murray, Porter, and Antler attempt to give some historical background, much of their evidence is drawn from oral interviews which cover only the last fifty years. As yet, women in the fishery have not received a thorough historical treatment.

Active involvement in the fishery, however, was only one aspect of women's work in Newfoundland. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, women worked as factory workers in towns such as Harbour Grace and in the growing city of St. John's. As the latter emerged as the major urban centre on the island at the end of the century, an increasing number of women found wage employment as domestic servants, sales clerks, factory operatives, and typists. Until now, the history or women's paid labour in Newfoundland has not been studied in any detail.[16] This thesis is an initial step towards a better understanding of women's historical role in Newfoundland society through an examination of St. John's working women in the 1920's and 1930's.[17] While some attempt is made to refer to the employment of men in the city, and to place women firmly within the context of the entire labour force, the thesis concentrates primarily on female wage-earners. A full treatment of the

---

[15]M. Porter, "'She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew,'" p. 123; E. Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishing Families," p. 108.

[16]The only published academic work on any historical aspect of Newfoundland women's paid employment is J. Nevitt, White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934 (St. John's: Jesperson, 1978).

[17]Throughout the thesis a working woman is any female who engaged in some type of labour for pay.

complexities of men's and women's paid work would require a study far beyond the scope of this present one. The major focus is on women's wage labour while recognizing their unpaid labour as well. St. John's is the focus because it offers a large population of working women in one compact geographical area. The time frame is dictated in large part by the fact that the 1921 and 1935 manuscript censuses are the foundation for the research.[18] By confining the study to the 1920's and 1930's it is possible to analyze women's paid work during a time of almost constant economic depression in Newfoundland.

Since so little has been written about working women in St. John's, it is necessary in this thesis to describe the basic contours of the female labour force.[19] A particular emphasis is placed not only on the individual demographic and economic factors which influenced the pattern of women's paid employment, but also the overall economic and demographic structures of the city, because they established a structural context within which women made choices. Related to this are a number of key questions that this thesis is intended to answer and which historians working in other geographical areas have suggested. Who worked? How many worked? To what extent did a woman's age, marital status, number and age of children, and class background determine the type of work available to her, or indeed whether she worked at all? Why did women work? What effect did the particular demographic composition of the locality have on the employment of women? What effect did the structure of the local economy have on the employment of women? What type of work did women do? How did women view their jobs? To what extent did working women overcome the formidable barriers to union organization? Most importantly, what type of changes occurred in the employment of women over the period?

---

[18] No manuscript census records of St. John's exist for censuses prior to 1921. The 1945 census was accessible, but no attempt has been made to include it since the timespan of 1921 to 1945 was considered too long to be covered adequately.

[19] The aggregate data in the 1921 as well as the 1935 census do not provide any indication of the total number of working women in the city. Therefore, it has been necessary to go systematically through the enumerators' rolls for each census, recording all female wage-earners and their occupations.

The historian who attempts to write the history of women's paid work in St. John's must confront the lack of primary sources such as private manuscripts, government documents, and newspaper articles. Historians in Great Britain, the United States, and especially Canada have encountered this same type of problem; in particular, it is difficult to find sources which provide information from the working woman's point of view. Working women, especially those from the working-class, rarely kept diaries or wrote letters. Lack of free time, and often lack of a formal education prevented them from leaving a record of their work experiences.[20] The sources are even scarcer in the case of Newfoundland. In these other countries, government investigators gathered information on working women which subsequently appeared in Department of Labour reports and files, factory investigation reports, minimum wage board investigations and decisions, as well as Royal Commission reports. No similar Newfoundland documents exist. The Newfoundland government did not create a Department of Labour until 1933, and then, only after decades of persistent lobbying by trade union representatives.[21] Within six months of its creation the department was dismantled, an outcome of the suspension of Newfoundland's self-government and its replacement by a commission of government.[22] In the absence of a Department of Labour, the relatively small number of files on labour matters were scattered in various government files. Without such a department there were also no publications equivalent to the Canadian Labour

---

[20]For a discussion of this scarcity of primary sources see, B. Bradbury, "Working-Class Family Economy, Montreal, 1861-1881," (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Concordia University, 1984), p. 5; see also, S. Kleinberg, "The Systematic Study of Urban Women," in Class, Sex and the Woman Worker, edited by M. Cantor and B. Laurie (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 31; E. Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women, 1980-1940 (London: Blackwell, 1984), p. 1.

[21]PANL, Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1933, (Typescript). Newfoundland was not part of Canada until 1949.

[22]No records of the department are known to exist, if indeed any were generated at all. It is not clear whether the department even started functioning during its brief tenure. A Department of Labour was not re-established until Confederation.

Gazette which included a wealth of data on labour disputes, trade union membership, wage rates, and unemployment. The only government enquiry on working conditions and wage rates in St. John's appeared in the late 1930's. A large-scale investigation focusing exclusively on wage-earners in the capital city had been planned in 1936, but abandoned by the government for unknown reasons.[23] Thomas Liddell, a conciliation officer in the Ministry of Labour in Great Britain, arrived in the fall of 1938 with a much broader mandate, "to make a survey of labour conditions in Newfoundland".[24] Liddell's report touched all too briefly on the experiences of women in wage labour in St. John's. Only women in manufacturing were mentioned in any detail, and Liddell went to such great lengths to disguise the identity of the factories that the data included is of little use.[25]

In Great Britain and the United States, middle-class observers in the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century produced detailed studies of the labouring poor as well as working women. Only a few middle-class commentators in Newfoundland made more than a passing reference to the urban women who laboured for pay. Furthermore, while visitors to the island wrote at length about their impressions of social conditions and culture in the outports, they said very little about life in St. John's. In particular, few mentioned anything about the city's working class.[26] Labour newspapers have proved to be valuable sources of commentary on

---

[23]PANL, Executive Council, Minute Book, Minutes of Commission, GN9/1, #309, May 11, 1936; #318, #319, May 18, 1936. The Commission went so far as to name William Higgins, a prominent Newfoundland judge, to be in charge of the investigation.

[24]Newfoundland, Industrial Survey of Newfounland (St. John's: Robinson, 1940), foreword.

[25]While wages and hours of work at a number of factories were included, the names of the firms, the number of operatives employed, the type of jobs performed at different wage scales and kind of manufacturing carried out was not revealed.

[26]Jessie Chisholm makes this point in "Working Class women as Wage-Earners: St. John's, 1980-1914," (Unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoudland, December 1986), p. 22. She also indicates at some length that sources on wage-earning women prior to World War I were just as scarce as seems to be the case afterwards.

working women for historians as well. They were far more likely than the popular press to include articles on women in the workplace. Labour newspapers in St. John's appeared in far fewer numbers and much less frequently than elsewhere. Issues of only two small newspapers which published during the latter part of the 1930's have survived. The historian of St. John's working women is further restricted by the fact that no records of any of the unions with female members are now known to exist.

Primary sources relating to the St. John's economy which would be of benefit to this type of study are almost as scant and fragmentary as the ones relating to working women.[27] The Newfoundland government made no attempt to compile statistics on the cost of living either in St. John's or anywhere else in the country on a regular basis. Only one study on the cost of living in St. John's was carried out during the entire inter-war period.[28] The government did authorize an industrial census to be conducted in 1921, but only the aggregate data is available since the enumerators' rolls no longer exist. Local manufacturers gave testimony about their businesses to the Royal Commission on the Tariff in 1922; neither the Royal Commission report nor detailed accounts of the testimony submitted can be located.[29] While the Newfoundland Board of Trade published the Trade Review on a weekly basis, including in-depth articles on local businesses and economic conditions, no more than a couple of issues are extant for the 1920's and 1930's.

In this thesis the lack of traditional primary sources is overcome to a large extent by relying upon statistical evidence drawn from the manuscript censuses of 1921 and 1935, as well as oral interviews. The census records offer a unique

---

[27]There are no secondary sources on the St. John's economy for the period 1919-1939. John Joy's thesis on the secondary manufacturing sector only covers the period form 1870 to 1914. See, J. Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977).

[28]Evening Telegram, 7 December 1932.

[29]This Royal Commission was referred to in an article which appeared in the Liberal Press, 24 November 1929.

opportunity for research; in comparison, the Canadian manuscript censuses have open access only to 1891. The data provided in the text of the thesis are based on a systematic sample of every third household containing a working woman. The total number of women in wage employment (2,822 in 1921 and 3,869 in 1935) was deemed too large to attempt an analysis of the complete population. [See Appendix C for further details of methodology.] Variables relating to the individual working woman and the household in which she resided have been recorded and analyzed. Individual variables include: age, marital status, relationship to the head of the household, number and age of children, religion, nationality, occupation, and yearly earnings (available for 1935 only). Household variables include: gender and marital status of the head of the household, household structure, household size, number of children in the household, stage of the family life cycle, number as well as type of working women in the household, number as well as type of working men in the household, yearly earnings of the head of the household, and yearly earnings of the entire household (available for 1935 only).[30] [See Code Book in Appendix C.]

Research based on census materials is restrictive to the degree that one is bound by the questions asked as well as the information recorded by the enumerators. In the case of the Newfoundland censuses, respondents were required to indicate only whether they could read and/or write rather than to give a precise statement of their level of education. Those who received an income did not have to declare their earnings for the 1921 census, while the 1935 census asked only for annual incomes.[31] The occupations of wage-earners were always included but never their places of work. In regard to married women, there was a tendency to regard their roles exclusively as

---

[30]Note that household, when referred to in this thesis, means the census designation "family household." Several households were sometimes contained in one residence. No attempt has been made to determine any connection between them.

[31]Respondents could, and did refuse, to reveal their incomes.

homemakers, ignoring the fact that some engaged in paid employment inside or outside the home. This oversight leads to a significant undercounting of married female wage-earners.[32] Census records can provide only a snapshot of conditions at a specific time during a given year. Both the 1921 and 1935 censuses were conducted during years when the Newfoundland economy was at a low point. Despite these limitations, historians can use the census effectively to enhance their knowledge about the pattern of women's paid labour, and the economic role of women within society as well as the family economy.

Oral interviews with women who worked in St. John's during the 1920's and 1930's constitute another important source for this thesis.[33] Their reminiscences do much to humanize the statistical information gathered from the census records. The interviews afford the women the chance to speak for themselves, to provide an intimate understanding of how they felt about their jobs, their co-workers, and their leisure time, in addition to illuminating patterns of female work and family relations. While the experiences of these women are uniquely their own, the interviews help to convey some of the values, attitudes, and aspirations of working women at this time. Each interview followed a set of standard questions, but these were supplemented with others when necessary to elicit additional information on particular occupations.

---

[32]For a discussion of how women's paid and unpaid labour have been conveyed in census instructions see, C. Hakim, "Census Reports as Documentary Evidence: The Census Commentaries, 1801-1851," Sociological Review, No.28, New Series (August 1980), pp. 551-580. Hakim argues that a basic assumption has been built into enumerators' instructions which is that people were supposed to have one main or exclusive occupation at any time or even throughout their lives. She goes on to add that women were far less likely than men to conform to the pattern.

[33]Historians of women have been relying upon oral interviews increasingly as a basis for their research during the last decade. Some of the most interesting works on female wage-earners have used oral interviews extensively. See, T. Hareven and R. Langenbach, Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City (New York: Pantheon, 1978); T. Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Betwen Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); E. Roberts, A Woman's Place; P. Bird, "Hamilton Working Women in the Period of the Great Depression," Atlantis, Vol.8, No.2 (Spring 1983), pp. 125-136.

[34] Since oral interviews require such a great deal of time to set up, conduct, and transcribe it was not possible to conduct more than a dozen.

The main section of the thesis begins with Chapter 2 which outlines the economic, demographic, and social context of women's paid work in St. John's. Consideration is given to the structures which had a direct impact on the lives of women. This chapter also traces the participation of women in the labour force during the early decades of this century with some mention of the employment opportunities open to them. Chapter 3 examines the pattern of women's wage employment. In particular, I pay close attention to the individual variables which affected the decision of women to seek wage labour as well as their choice of occupations. A clear distinction is made between the employment of single women from those who were married or widowed. The hours of work, wages, and social activities of working women are also included. Chapter 4 provides a detailed look at domestic service. I felt a separate discussion of this occupation was warranted since women in service accounted for a large segment of the city's female labour force. This chapter analyzes the different perceptions of rural and urban women of domestic service. I also comment on the shortage of domestics in the 1920's and their oversupply in the 1930's. I consider the conditions of work domestics endured and the type of households in which they laboured. Chapter 5 scrutinizes the activities of working women in the labour movement. I refer to the participation of women in setting up and running trade unions as well as engaging in strikes. The two waves of intense union organization during the inter-war period are given special notice. The final chapter summarizes the main findings of this study on working women in the inter-war period.

---

[34] Guides to oral interviewing techniques were consulted at some length before the first interview was even done. For guides on oral interviewing techniques see, E. Ives, The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1970); see also, P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). [See Questions in Appendix C.]

# Chapter 2

# "Times Were Hard": The Economic, Demographic, and Social Context of Women's Paid Labour

This chapter attempts to provide the specific economic, demographic, and social context for the discussion of women's wage labour that will make more comprehensible the ways in which women as individuals, and as members of a class made choices, as well as the structural limits of those choices. Economic factors undoubtedly affected the decision of women to seek wage employment in addition to the job options open to them. The evidence suggests that during the inter-war years the particular economic structure of St. John's provided women with a prominent position in the labour force. Yet, these decades also marked a period of almost unceasing economic depression throughout Newfoundland. In St. John's, many manufacturing and retail businesses went bankrupt or were forced to remain open with greatly reduced staffs. For both men and women in the city, job opportunities were restricted and unemployment rates remained high. Many with jobs received low wages and/or worked only a portion of the year.

Demographic factors also influenced the actions of women. In the 1920's and 1930's there was a pronounced imbalance in the sex ratio of the city's population. In particular, women greatly outnumbered men between the ages of 15 and 24.[1] This type of imbalance meant that women had fewer opportunities of finding a marriage

---

[1] Other demographic factors such as age at first marriage for men and women, as well as fertility and mortality patterns, are not dealt with in this chapter because this type of information is not readily available.

partner; thus, the actual number of women seeking wage employment was rising, and those already in the work force remained longer than usual. In this way, the demographic composition of the city helped to maintain the position of women in the labour force.

Some mention must also be made of the prevailing gender ideology of the period, because it tended to inhibit the entry of women into the work force, and to restrict the number of occupations available to those who actually sought employment. This ideology defined men as the primary wage-earners in families, and women as the homemakers. Even young, unmarried women were often described in terms of their future roles as wives and mothers. This ideology obscured the fact that "women were also individual workers, sometimes breadwinners, needing wages, job security, and unionization."[2] The type of waged work that society viewed acceptable for women was much the same kind of labour that they traditionally performed: cleaning, washing, sewing, caring for the sick, and childrearing. Wage employment outside the home was deemed unacceptable for married women since time would be taken away from domestic and childcare responsibilities.

Brief attention is given initially in this chapter to the evolving national economy and local economy from the turn of the century to the end of World War I, with some consideration of the growth of the female labour force. This section acts as a background for the situation which unfolded in the 1920's and 1930's. The changing economic, demographic, and social conditions are then examined. Each section in this chapter begins with a discussion of the national economy, followed by the local economy, and then issues relating to employment and unemployment in the city.

---

[2] J. Sangster, "The Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers," Labour/Le Travailleur, No.3 (1978), p. 129.

## 2.1. Background, 1900-1919

Historian David Alexander has argued that the first decade of this century was a prosperous one for Newfoundland.[3] Export prices for codfish during these years increased substantially from the previous decade.[4] As the single most important source of employment and market income for the island, the codfishery dominated the national economy. Its success or failure had a major influence on the entire country. The iron ore mines on Bell Island, which commenced operations in 1895, yielded 1,000,000 tons of haematite per year for smelters in Canada, Germany, and the United States.[5] In 1905, a large pulp and paper mill was constructed in Grand Falls.[6] The country's secondary manufacturing sector experienced slow but steady growth.[7] In this decade, St. John's became more prominent not only as a commercial and financial centre, but also as an industrial centre.

The city's population grew 15.2 per cent between 1901 and 1911, from 29,594 to 34,111.[8] More importantly, the local labour force increased a remarkable 72.1 per cent from 7,505 to 12,923. [See Table 2-1.] Like other commercially based seaport cities, the St. John's economy throughout this period centered upon the waterfront. In the

---

[3]D. Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934," Acadiensis, Vol.5, No.2 (Spring 1976), p. 63.

[4]Ibid.

[5]P. O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association in the Administration of the War Effort, 1914-1918," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland,1978), p. 5.

[6]Ibid., p. 9.

[7]J. Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's 1870-1914," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), p. 8.

[8]Newfoundland, Colonial Secretary's Office, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1901, Volume 1 (St. John's: The Office, 1904); Newfoundland, Colonial Secretary's Office, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1911, Volume 1 (St. John's: The Office, 1914). For an account of the city's political development during this period see, M. Baker, "The Government of St. John's, Newfoundland, 1800-1921," (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1980).

early years of this century several thousand longshoremen[9] worked along the docks, loading and unloading cargoes from ships or culling fish, for mercantile firms.[10] In 1914, the Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU), which included most of the city's waterfront workers, boasted a membership of 2,600.[11] Another 300 or more men were employed by the same mercantile firms as coopers, to make containers that were used to transport various kinds of fish and cod-liver oil.[12] Waterfront workers were employed seasonally and the wages they received when there was work were not substantial. As Jessie Chisholm has asserted about activity on the waterfront, "Its rhythms were determined by the ebb and flow of maritime traffic and fluctuating patterns of the fish trade."[13] Work on the docks was solely the domain of men and young boys.

While the waterfront dominated the city's economy before the war, the secondary manufacturing sector became increasingly important. In 1901, 18 per cent of the St. John's labour force was engaged in this sector. By 1911, it had risen to 26 per cent. [See Table 2-1.] Even more revealing is the fact that the number of workers in manufacturing more than doubled in this decade. The development of the secondary manufacturing sector, owing to increased tariff protection and special legislation, created some diversification of the local economy, and a greater availability of

---

[9]It is impossible to provide a precise number for those employed as longshoremen from the labour force statistics included in the published censuses for 1901 and 1911. A separate category was not provided for longshoremen. [See Table 2-1.] The men working on the waterfront were put in the category "Otherwise Employed."

[10]I. McDonald, "W.F. Coaker and the Fisherman's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925," (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1971), pp. 8-12.

[11]J. Chisholm, "Hang Her Down: Strikes in St. John's, 1890-1914," (Unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, April 1987), p. 16.

[12]J. Joy, "The Cooperage Trade in St. John's Newfoundland, 1870-1914," (Paper delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, February 28, 1985), p. 1.

[13]J. Chisholm, "Hang Her Down," p. 16.

employment opportunities.[14] The factories which opened up or expanded in the city at this time were characteristically import substitution operations aimed at capturing the national market. John Joy has noted that, "By 1914 a number of large factories dominated the local consumer market and small craft shops were driven out of business or were reduced to retailing."[15] Eighty per cent of the city's industrial work force were employed at these large firms.[16] As a result of an increase in the production of consumer goods which accompanied this transformation, many of the new factory jobs were available to women. While male workers were employed almost exclusively in the city's tanneries, iron foundry, and breweries, in addition to the carriage, nail, and furniture factories, a growing number of women found work in the clothing, boot and shoe, cordage, tobacco, and confectionery factories.[17] Plant managers were eager to hire female workers because they were willing to work for small wages. Women made up almost the entire work force in the clothing industry, which by 1914, was the largest employer in the secondary manufacturing sector next to heavy industry.[18] According to evidence given by the managing director of the Newfoundland Clothing Company at hearings of a 1914 Royal Commission, 80 per cent of the 300 operatives

---

[14] J. Joy, "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914," p. 8.

[15] Ibid., p. 1.

[16] Ibid., p. 5. A large firm is defined by Joy as one with five or more employees.

[17] Ibid. At different points throughout his thesis Joy indicates that women were employed in these industries. See also, Great Britain, Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions, Minutes of Evidence Taken in Newfoundland in 1914 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1915).

[18] Ibid., p. 68. Joy's calculations indicated that there were 622 people in the clothing industry in 1913. This figure includes not only those employed in the large semi-ready clothing factories, but also those who worked as tailors and tailoresses in small shops.

employed in his factory were women.[19] The report of the Royal Commission also indicated that one-third of the work force in the boot and shoe industry were women, while they made up at least half of the workers in the tobacco industry.[20] While jobs were plentiful in manufacturing, industrial workers faced seasonal employment, meager wages, and poor working conditions.

As St. John's developed, clerical and retail jobs also became available in ever greater numbers. Along with retail workers, clericals comprised 15 per cent of the city's labour force in 1901. By 1911, they achieved a level of 21 per cent. [See Table 2-1.] This was another instance where workers in a particular occupation category more than doubled during these ten years. In the retail sector this increase was brought about primarily by the expansion of most of the city's large department stores such as Ayre and Sons, Bishop's, Bowring Brothers, George Knowling, Royal Stores, and James Baird which were all situated on Water Street. In addition, numerous other small retail stores opened up. Clericals were needed to fill newly created jobs in the civil service, the banks, and private businesses. St. John's was not unlike urban centres in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain where clerical and retail jobs were gradually becoming pre-eminently occupations for women.[21] They were not replacing men in existing jobs, rather they were being recruited into the new bottom layer of recently created positions.

While manufacturing, clerical, and retail sales jobs were attracting more and

---

[19] Minutes of Evidence Taken in 1914, p. 107. This factory had been closed down from 1911 to 1913 because there were "labour difficulties". In the words of the director, "Three years ago we had some labour difficulties, with the result that we sent our manager over to Leeds and set up a factory to make clothing and we brought in a large quantity for two years. We overcame the labour difficulty and ceased to bring manufactured clothing into the country. We stopped that in 1913."

[20] Ibid., p. 116-117.

[21] See, G. Lowe, "Class, Job, and Gender in the Canadian Office," Labour/Le Travail, No.10 (Autumn 1982), pp. 11-38; E. Rotella, From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870-1930 (Ann Arbor: WMI Press, 1981); M. Zimmereck, "Jobs for Girls: The Expansion of Clerical Workers, 1850-1914," in Unequal Opportunites: Women's Employment in England, 1800-1918, edited by A.V. John (London: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 153-178.

more women, a substantial number continued to find work as servants.[22] Domestic service offered abundant employment opportunities for young women,[23] and, in fact, it constituted the largest female occupation in the city. For those women with the extra training there was also a limited number of positions open to female nurses and teachers. The only hospital in St. John's, the General, employed 22 graduate and in-training nurses in 1908.[24] There were 114 women working as teachers in 1911 who comprised 66.7 per cent of all the teachers in the city.[25]

Although the evidence is fragmentary because of the paucity of primary and secondary sources, it would appear that women's participation in the St. John's labour force was increasing prior to the war alongside transformations in the local economy. This trend continued after the beginning of hostilities in 1914 and was directly affected by wartime conditions. The outbreak of World War I brought about changes in the Newfoundland economy and in the economic structure of St. John's. The country's economy had been in a slump during 1913 and 1914. This situation was due in part to a series of British embargoes on exports to Mediterranean countries that had crippled the Newfoundland saltfish industry. The economy recovered, however, once the embargoes were lifted in 1915, and markets for the country's primary resources expanded dramatically as a result of the war. For a number of reasons, a greater demand for women workers occurred in St. John's at approximately the same time

---

[22]Exact figures cannot be given for female workers in any occupation prior to 1921. The aggregate data included in the 1901 and 1911 censuses on the city's labour force do not make any distinction between male and female workers. Manuscript census records no longer exist.

[23]Evening Telegram, 13 May 1912.

[24]Newfoundland, The Civil Service Viewed From a Denominational Standpoint, 1908. (St. John's: n.p., 1908).

[25]Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1911, Volume 3, pp. 6-46. Aggregate date was included in this census regarding the number of male and female teachers employed in the city. This type of information was not included in the census of 1901.

economic conditions improved.[26] To begin with, women were needed to fill positions vacated by men from the city who were entering military service. By February 1916, some 1,300 men from St. John's had enlisted.[27] At the end of the war the enlistment level had reached almost 2,600, which represented almost 30 per cent of the city's male population seventeen years of age and over. St. John's had the highest enlistment rate of any district in Newfoundland.[28] The occupational choices for women were not unlimited despite this increase in demand. The gender ideology in place at the time prevented women from taking work in clearly defined male occupations. They tended to secure jobs previously held by men in stores, offices, and light manufacturing industries. Yet, there is still little question that the war brought about more employment opportunities for women. An article in the Daily News commented:

> By means of this war thousands of the best manhood of the nation have been killed and wounded and woman by the same means has been thrust into the service wherein she has discovered her greatness so that now she is prepared to occupy a new role in the industrial work of the world.[29]

Women also found themselves more in demand as workers due to the large number of businesses that started up or expanded in St. John's during the war. This was particularly the case in the secondary manufacturing sector. In the fall of 1915, a

---

[26]There is a general consensus among Canadian and American historians that World War I did not drastically change the role of women in the work force in those countries; rather, it accelerated the trend of an increasing number of women in the labour force. For employment of women in World War I see, C. Ramkhalawnsingh, "Women in the Great War," in Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930, edited by. J. Acton et al., (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), pp. 261-308; also M. Greenwald, Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

[27]Statistics compiled by C. Sharpe and J. Chisholm for Historical Atlas, Vol.III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

[28]Ibid.

[29]Daily News, 15 April 1918.

munitions factory began producing war material.[30] Although this factory consistently failed to meet both production quotas and quality control standards, it did manage to provide over 100 female operatives with steady employment for the next two and a half years.[31] A large cold storage facility for processing frozen fish also opened up at this time, employing 100 workers, both men and women.[32] In addition, two clothing factories (one owned by the Semi-Ready Clothing Company, and the other by the White Clothing Company) started up operations, while several others were renovated to provide greater space for more operatives.[33] The manager of the Newfoundland Clothing Company indicated in 1916 that his firm's business had increased 75 per cent over the previous year. At least some of this growth was attributed to the company's contract with the Newfoundland government to make uniforms for the the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.[34] The manager of the British Clothing Company reported an increase in this firm's business of 50 per cent.[35] A woolen mill which had been built before the war but had run into financial difficulties was being operated at full

---

[30] J. Smallwood, "Industrial, Commercial and Financial Development," in The Book of Newfoundland, Volume I, edited by J. R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), p. 344. Aware of the flourishing Canadian munitions industry, F.W. Angel, who already had a major interest in the Newfoundland Nail Manufacturing Company, decided in the spring of 1915 that a munitions plant should be opened up in St. John's. Along with several other interested Water Street parties, Angel formed the Newfoundland Shell Company and set to work building a factory.

[31] Ibid.; see also Daily Star, 1 April 1918. According to an article in this newspaper the women at the munitions factory featured prominently as supporters of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA) in their strike at Reid Newfoundland Company in March and April 1918. Women from the Newfoundland Shell Company guaranteed $200.00 to the NIWA in strike support. The NIWA was founded on 25 April 1917 by a group of metal workers employed in the railway shops of Reid Newfoundland Company. This group of some twelve Reid employees spawned an industrial union which by 1918 claimed a membership of 3,500, of whom 2,700 resided in St. John's.

[32] "Newfoundland Atlantic Fisheries Ltd.," Commercial Annual, 1921, pp. 17-21.

[33] "The Semi-Ready Clothing Factory," Commercial Annual, 1917, p. 32. This article stated that Samual Frelich who used to be manager of the British Clothing factory had struck out on his own the previous April. Evening Telegram, 15 April 1918. Mr. William White who used to be manager of the Newfoundland Clothing Factory also announced the creation of his own clothing firm.

[34] "Newfoundland Clothing Factory," Commercial Annual, 1916, p. 41.

[35] "British Clothing Factory," Commercial Annual, 1916, p. 35.

capacity by 1916 with a labour force of eighty operatives, most of whom were women.[36] There were numerous references to the significant number of female workers in St. John's during the war. One visitor to the city in 1918 noted, "In our early walks in the morning have we not been struck with the multitude of young girls -- some of them hardly old enough to be away from school-- all hurrying away to the factories and other places of employment."[37]

## 2.2. The Post-War Depression, 1920-1921

Like many other countries Newfoundland's economy fell into a slump at the end of World War I. But, as an article from the London Times stated, "In few countries has the change from prosperity to adversity following the aftermath of the war been so marked as in Newfoundland."[38] Alexander has asserted that the country's economy emerged from the war without a sharply diversified structure, or increased capacity, with a casualty-ridden labour force, and an increased external debt.[39] Moreover, the Newfoundland economy did not experience the same kind of growth as the Canadian one during the war. "The economy was too narrowly based to benefit from war demand in 1914-1918, and at best only a small commodity trade surplus was achieved."[40] Furthermore, unlike Canada, Newfoundland had to finance much of her war effort by borrowing in London and New York. In its aftermath, the cost of the war drained the

---

[36] Minutes of Evidence Taken in Newfoundland in 1914, p. 107. Evidence provided by Robert Bishop at these hearings outlined that the knitting mill had been having difficulties keeping open. In an article in the Colonial Commerce, 31 August 1916, it was stated that the knitting mill employed eighty people and payed out in wages upwards of $40,000 a year.

[37] Daily News, 15 July 1918.

[38] Article from London Times, 18 July 1921 which appeared in the Evening Telegram, 18 August 1921.

[39] D. Alexander, "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934," p. 76. While the local economy had boomed during the war, it did not create any long-term benefits for the national economy.

[40] Ibid.

treasury of $1.75 million annually for the service charges on debts and related expenditures.[41] The government also had the added financial drain of propping up the Reid Newfoundland Company. In the summer of 1920 this company notified the government that they were unable to continue the operation of the railway. In order to keep the railway going the government agreed to lend the company $1.5 million for capital expenditures, and to meet net losses over $100,000 for one year, which in the end amounted to $1,758,025.[42] For the year 1921-1922 the government was obliged to meet the railway's operating deficit of $953,367.[43] The country's economy was also affected by the sharp decrease in the world fish markets in the post-war years. Traditional importers of Newfoundland fish such as Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Greece, and Italy also experienced serious economic disturbances after the war. In a despatch to Lord Milner in fall 1920 Governor Harris commented, "There is a poor fishery this year and the price of fish is tending downwards."[44] Export revenues from the cod fishery plummetted from $23 million in 1920 to $13 million in 1921.[45] These conditions severely affected fishermen in the outports. Even in prosperous times they experienced difficulties in earning enough during the fishing season to provide for their families throughout the entire year. With the catch so small and the prices so low in 1920 and 1921, fishermen discovered it was almost impossible to make enough to sustain their families. The government announced in July 1921 that a $3 million deficit on the country's operating budget for 1920-1921 had occurred. "The treasury has

---

[41] R.M. Elliot, "Newfoundland Politics in the 1920s: The Genesis and Significance of the Hollis Walker Enquiry," in Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, edited by J.K. Hiller and P. Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 185.

[42] J.K. Hiller, The Newfoundland Railway, 1881-1949 (St.John's: Cuff, 1982), p. 18.

[43] S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 155.

[44] Great Britain, Colonial Office, Original Correspondence, Secretary of State: Despatches From Governors' Offices and Individual Minutes and Draft Replies, C.O.194, Vol.299, Harris to Milner, 30 September 1920.

[45] S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, p. 146.

been exhausted and the colony will operate in part during the coming year on a loan of six million floated this spring in the United States."[46]

The economic situation at the national level had a crushing impact on St. John's. A newspaper editorial which appeared on 18 April 1921 suggested, "Since November 1919, the evidences of daily prosperity and continuances of labour have both disappeared, the one being dependent upon the other."[47] From a review of government, business, and newspaper sources, it is evident that serious economic problems were starting to be experienced by city businessmen beginning in the summer and fall of 1920. Governor Harris stated in a letter that fall,

> At the present time there is no question that business on Water Street is extremely restricted. There is a general sense of doubt and insecurity which according to good information is more marked than it has been for five and twenty years or perhaps even within business recollection.[48]

Local exporters had problems finding buyers for their fish. Manufacturers discovered that demand for their products decreased dramatically because fishermen's earnings had dropped, and operations on Bell Island and in Grand Falls had slowed down, throwing many out of work.

The St. John's economy had always been seasonal as mentioned earlier, with activities along the waterfront assuming a slower pace during the winter, and unemployment reaching higher levels; factories, however, usually stayed open at this time of year with an annual shut down of operations for a brief period sometime during the summer months. The winter of 1920-21 proved to be quite different. Numerous factories closed down and those which managed to continue operating often were

---

[46] Evening Telegram, 8 July 1921.

[47] Evening Telegram, 18 April 1921.

[48] Great Britain, Colonial Office, C.O. 194, V.299, Harris to Milner, 30 September 1920.

running "short time".[49] On 9 November 1920 one journalist noted, "It is rumoured today that one of our largest and most prosperous boot and shoe factories will close down during the week, owing to the depression in trade. Yesterday the cutters were laid off, and it is likely the whole staff will be shortly walking around."[50] Less than a week later another newspaper article indicated that, "Owing to accumulating stocks and poor sales the biscuit bakers are running short time, and it is feared that if trade conditions do not brighten that many of the employees will have to be laid off."[51] The number of factories closing did not let up as the year 1920 came to a close. Newspaper reports were often reticent to provide the company's name, but in December the press did reveal that, "An east end factory which employs a considerable number of hands is understood to be shutting down on Saturday next, and a well known west end concern is daily reducing its staff."[52] The increase in the number of unemployed workers which resulted from these closures only depressed the market for manufactured goods even further. Factories were not the only businesses having difficulties and laying off staff. In December 1920 one newspaper indicated that a number of employees at various Water Street firms had been given notice that they would have to leave at the end of the year, and "One store in particular had to give notice to its entire staff as it is going out of business at the end of the month."[53] It was later asserted that retail firms

---

[49]The phrase "short time" appeared often in newspaper reports at the time. It meant that the factory was not running at full capacity and operatives were working only a portion of a regular work week.

[50]Evening Telegram, 9 November 1920.

[51]Evening Telegram, 13 November 1920.

[52]Evening Telegram, 17 December 1920. In the same issue the following advertisement had been placed: "Keep the Factory Open, Buy Parker and Monroe Shoes."

[53]Evening Telegram, 17 December 1920.

that did not go out of business, laid off staff and/or cut their employees' salaries.[54]

Economic conditions did not improve in 1921, and if anything became progressively worse. In March, a Credit Association was formed in the city made up of wholesalers and dealers. The impetus for its formation was attributed to the numerous failures which were being reported "almost daily." The idea of the association was "to give the trusteeship of all wind-ups into the hands of a body of merchants rather than they should go to court."[55] The Governor revealed in a letter several months later that only a few merchant houses were thought to be in a really sound position. "The majority are resting upon the banks and one another, and it is of course everybody's concern to bolster up any house which can fairly show the probability of coming through the crisis in the long run."[56]

Meanwhile, factories continued to close around the city. The Newfoundland Knitting Company which had employed over 100 workers, most of whom were women, ceased operations, as did the Imperial Tobacco Company for a time, also a large employer of women.[57] In April the Evening Telegram stated that only two factories were operating full time -- A. Harvey and Company, and John Browning (both biscuit and confectionery manufacturers).[58] The Ropewalk run by the Colonial Cordage Company closed in June. One newspaper noted:

> The ropewalk is an old, established concern situated in the district of St. John's West, the district of the Prime Minister. It employed a goodly number

---

[54]Evening Telegram, 12 October 1925. In a letter to the paper, "A Clerk" asserted that employees of many Water Street firms had experienced wage cuts and/or lay offs during 1920 and 1921.

[55]Evening Telegram, 20 March 1920.

[56]Great Britain, Colonial Office, C.O. 194, V.301, Harris to Churchill, 30 June 1921.

[57]PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, Correspondence, P8/B/11, Box 12, File 10, Letter from Board of Trade Secretary to Davison Publishing Company, 12 May 1921.

[58]Evening Telegram, 20 April 1921.

> of operatives up to a day or so ago. But changed conditions have brought a cessation of manufacture and the company has been obliged to shut up shop.[59]

No indication was given when operations would resume. At least half of the approximately 200 workers affected by this closure were women. At various times throughout the year it was mentioned that activities along the waterfront were much less than they usually had been. The following observation was made in November: "In comparison with other years at this season there is practically nothing doing on the waterfront. There are not more than forty or fifty schooners in port. Fish handlers and casual labourers have been walking around for weeks."[60] Because reports on business are so sporadic in the newspapers, and other sources lack such information, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of business failures in the city during 1921, or the exact length of time particular factories stopped production. The evidence suggests that many factories in 1921 closed down at least temporarily, and some permanently, throwing women as well as men out of work. A large number of other types of businesses failed, and trade coming in and going out of the port was severely restricted.

This economic situation obviously had a direct and crushing impact on employment in St. John's. A memo from the Newfoundland Board of Trade on 14 January 1921 regarding the "labouring classes" in the city stated that the cost of living in the past year had dropped 14 per cent, but "It is of course the case that in view of the extreme scarcity and irregularity of employment, reduction of hours for permanent staffs etc., the aggregate wages for men in fairly steady employment have problably fallen off at least as much, while those of men in irregular employment have fallen off

---

[59] Evening Telegram, 10 June 1921.

[60] Evening Telegram, 19 November 1921.

much more."[61] Around the same time the comment was also made that, "Never in modern years has there been such unemployment and hard times as the past fall and present winter."[62] Charitable organizations estimated in February 1921 that claims upon them had increased by as much as 75 per cent from the previous winter.[63] Skilled tradesmen and mechanics found work hard to come by while longshoremen and unskilled labourers were even worse off.[64] The succession of factory closures meant even greater numbers joined the ranks of the unemployed.

The unemployment situation in St. John's was further exacerbated because men from the city who ordinarily secured seasonal employment in Grand Falls, Millertown and Badger in lumbering, and on Bell Island in mining, found there was no demand for their labour. The mines and steel works around Sydney, Nova Scotia had been another location where large numbers of men from all over Newfoundland found jobs. In 1921, however, only a few were granted admission to Canada because "they would be regarded as swelling the ranks of the unemployed in the Dominion."[65] In addition, people were returning home from the United States and Canada because of the shortage of employment in those countries.[66]

When unemployment levels did not recede with the end of winter, and showed every sign of increasing in the spring of 1921, the employed and unemployed in the city

---

[61]PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, P8/B/11, Box 11, File 2, Memo re the cost of living of labouring classes compared with wages, 14 January 1921.

[62]Evening Telegram, 24 February 1921.

[63]PANL, Governor's Office, Register of Miscellaneous Despatches and Local Correspondence, GN1/3/A, 1921, #33, Memo re Conference at Government House, 19 May 1921.

[64]Evening Telegram, 24 February 1921.

[65]P. Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939,"Acadiensis, Vol.2 No.2 (Spring 1982), p. 69.

[66]Ibid.

responded. On 18 April a "Monster Meeting" of workmen was held to discuss the problem. The President of the NIWA Ladies' Branch, Julia Salter Earle, was the only woman present at the meeting.[67] She attempted to convey the difficulties of unemployed women, but the major concern of those present at this meeting was to find work for men. One speaker at the meeting noted that 200 coopers could not find work, and at least 2,000 men altogether were "walking the streets without employment."[68] The Unemployment Committee formed out of this meeting applied pressure on the St. John's municipal council and the Newfoundland House of Assembly to alleviate some of the suffering. Subsequently, a $150,000 loan was promised to the city by the national government for able-bodied relief projects. An employment bureau was set up at the end of April to allocate work to the men who registered.[69] The Newfoundland government was reluctant to give the loan to the municipality until several large demonstrations of the unemployed were held, and the Unemployed Committee appeared before the House of Assembly.[70] Even then, the situation in St. John's remained tense. Of those men who registered at the employment bureau (in June there were some 820) only a small fraction received work. These were men who had no jobs at all; there were many more who worked short time in the factories or irregularly on the waterfront. In a letter dated 26 August 1921, the Secretary of the LSPU, James Caul stated that in the union,

---

[67] Who's Who In and From Newfoundland, 1927 (St. John's: R. Hibbs, 1930), p. 165. Julia Salter Earle was born on September 1878. She married Arthur Earle, a jeweller in 1903. Besides raising six children, Julia Salter Earle worked as an engrossing clerk for the Newfoundland Legislative Assembly, a job she held for 35 years. Salter Earle was also Secretary of the Women's Association of Cochrane Street Methodist Church for many years before she took up the Presidency of the N.I.W.A. Ladies' Branch which was formed in August 1918. She was later an executive member of the Women's Franchise League and ran as a Labour Candidate in the 1925 and 1929 St. John's municipal elections. Julia Salter Earle died in 1945.

[68] Evening Telegram, 18 April 1921. There was a great deal of unrest in the city over the unemployment problem during the spring of 1921. For an account of the government's reaction to this situation see, E.R. Forbes, ed., "Newfoundland Politics in 1921: A Canadian View," Acadiensis, Vol.9, No.1 (Autumn 1979), pp. 95-103.

[69] Evening Telegram, 26 April 1921.

[70] Evening Telgram, 14 May 1921. Julia Salter Earle accompanied the Unemployment Committee to the House of Assemply to present a petition. The committee appealed to the government to take action on the unemployment problem.

> There are approximately 400 steam-boat labourers. Of that number 280 obtain employment in loading and discharging steamers, and even those do not earn sufficient from the work performed to furnish common necessaries of life. There are about 1,800 "fish wharf men" and of that number about 300 are permanently employed whilst the remaining 1,500 manage two to three days a week.[71]

The government was averse to giving money to aid the unemployed, but was willing to discuss the problem. Governor Harris organized several meetings on unemployment that year. Church leaders and representatives of charitable organizations were invited to the first one in May. There was little discussion at this particular meeting about a possible course of action to rectify the problem; rather, most of those present were content just to voice their concerns about conditions in St. John's and elsewhere in the country.[72] One participant concluded that the present state of distress "came back to the sudden failure of employment."[73] Subsequent meetings were held with members of the Newfoundland Board of Trade and members of the House of Assembly "to meet the crisis."[74] At a conference on 27 December 1921 these groups were brought together along with representatives of the war veterans and the unions. The meeting's main purpose was "to meet in a systematic way the probable want of employment in St. John's and the surrounding area during the winter and to combine with it the organization under one head the whole of the charitable relief of the city."[75] At the meeting the decision was made to form an Unemployment Committee with representatives from these different groups. These

---

[71]PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, P8/B/11, Box 13, File 13, Letter from James Caul to the Employers' Protective Association, 26 August 1921.

[72]PANL, Governor's Office, Register of Miscellaneous Despatches and Local Correspondence, GN1/3/A, 1921, #33, Memo re Conference at Government House, 19 December 1921.

[73]Ibid.

[74]PANL, Governor's Office, Register of Miscellaneous Despatches and Local Correspondence, GN1/3/A, 1921, #21, Minutes re Conference on Unemployment, 27 December 1921.

[75]Ibid.

conferences indicate that there was widespread concern about unemployment throughout the city, although the priority seems to have been to provide work for men. One finds no specific reference in the minutes of these meetings to unemployed women, or the need to give them some type of work.

Little has been said thus far about the depression's impact on the employment of women, because the sources are almost silent on this topic. Government officials, church leaders, businessmen and labour leaders devoted a great deal of time and energy to the discussion on unemployment, but concern for women was usually stated only in regard to their positions as the wives or daughters of unemployed working men. There was rarely any mention of the difficulties of women losing their jobs. Women were just as affected by the economic conditions, but almost no one made comment about them. They were also losing jobs to returned soldiers, but again almost nothing was said. This oversight can be explained in large part by the prevailing ideology at the time of the "male breadwinner," or "family wage" which held that an adult male ought to be the primary and ideally, the only wage earner in the family.[76] This ideology served to discourage the employment of married women, and undermined the economic contribution of all women's wage work. Society assumed that women's wages only supplemented the earnings of the male head of the household. In this way, few voiced distress in St. John's about women losing jobs because presumably they would have a father or husband to support them. In a sizeable proportion of cases such assumptions simply were not true. Despite the importance of women's economic contribution to the family economy, attention concentrated on securing work for men since they were the "breadwinners."

---

[76]There has been a great deal of debate in the literature over the implications of the concept of the family wage as related to position of women. For a discussion of this issue see, M. Barrett and M. McIntosh, "The Family Wage: Some Problems for Socialists and Feminists," Capital and Class, II (Summer 1980), pp. 51-72; see also, H. Land, "The Family Wage," Feminist Review, No.6 (1980), pp. 55-77. While theorists like Barrett, McIntosh, and Land view the idea of the family wage as having a negative impact on the position of women, Jane Humphries has argued that it was used as a strategy by the working class against further proletarianization. See, J. Humphries, "The Working-Class Family, Women's Liberation, and Class Struggle: The Case of Nineteenth Century British History," The Review of Radical Political Economics, Vol.9, No.3 (Fall 1977), pp. 25-43.

One of the only individuals to remind the public that significant numbers of women were out of jobs was Julia Salter Earle. In a letter to the House of Assembly she appealed, "Do not forget the hundreds of girls also out of work on account of the factories closing."[77] Earle explained in another letter that those out of work were not just daughters of an employed, or for that matter an unemployed man. They were also, "Girls supporting their little brothers and sisters. Girls boarding without father or mother or friends. Girls supporting widowed mothers."[78] Those working as factory operatives were the largest group of female workers to suffer the consequences of the economic depression. They could not avoid the impact of so many large factories closing. In the clothing industry alone there was an overall reduction in workers of 70 per cent.[79] Women working in other occupations were affected as well. Female office workers lost their jobs when businesses failed. With the slump in retail trade, saleswomen were laid off or kept on only part-time.

In 1921, the total work force in St. John's was 13,213. [See Table 2-1.] A slight increase of only 2.2 per cent in the city's work force had taken place since the last census of 1911. (This gap of ten years between the censuses tended to hide the fact that there had been a large increase of wage earners during the war and a sharp decrease soon after it was over.) The census figures indicated a decrease in the actual number and proportion of workers in the secondary manufacturing sector, as well as in the number of merchants. Conversely, a slightly larger proportion of workers were employed as office and shop workers, as well as civil servants. Women accounted for

---

[77] Evening Telegram, 14 June 1921.

[78] Evening Telegram, 31 January 1921.

[79] Liberal Press, 24 November 1929. This issue contained an excerpt of the Report and Findings of the Tariff Commission of 1922. No copy of this report can be found anywhere else. This particular information was provided by William White as a representative of the clothing industry.

21.4 per cent of the city's work force.[80] Their participation rate was significant although slightly less than that of most Canadian cities. The participation rate for women was 26.7 per cent in Toronto, 25.2 per cent in Montreal, 25.5 per cent in Halifax, and 23.8 per cent in Saint John.[81] It seems probable that women in St. John's lagged a little behind their counterparts elsewhere because of the structure of the local economy, with its heavy reliance upon the waterfront where male workers were exclusively employed; moreover, the secondary manufacturing sector, which employed a large proportion of women, was in a crisis.[82] The employment situation in St. John's had acted to depress the total number of wage-earning women from levels achieved in World War I, but their participation rate did not drop substantially. Women maintained their relative position in the city's work force at this time because the dismal economic conditions created a strong incentive for them to keep their jobs, and they were willing to work for wages below what most men would accept. As can be shown from the 1921 published census, there was also a disproportionate number of females living in St. John's. [See Table 2-2 and Figure 2-1.] This was not the case for the entire country where there were only 96.2 females for every 100 males.[83] For all age groups together in St. John's there were 2,239 more females than males, and in the 15-24 age group there were 4,707 females and 3,159 males for a difference of 1,545. This substantial imbalance in the sex ratio parallelled the situation in Canadian cities during the 1920's. Veronica Strong-Boag has attributed the imbalance in these cities

---

[80]The 1921 Newfoundland published census also does not make any distinction between male and female workers in the tables describing the St. John's work force. As a result, it was necessary to go systematically through the entire nominal census records for St. John's noting all women with a stated occupation.

[81]Canada, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Volume IV, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929), Table 5.

[82]The 2,822 female wage-earners who appeared in the census accounted for 21.4 per cent of all the women in St. John's 15 and over.

[83]Newfoundland, Department of Health and Welfare, Tenth Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935, Volume 1 (St. John's: The Office, 1937), p. 21.

to growing urbanization, as well as the loss of so many young men in World War I.[84] These factors did not apply as much to St. John's. A total of 353 men from the city were killed in combat which accounted for approxixmately 5 per cent of the male population 17 years of age and over.[85] A more direct reason for this situation can be found with the hundreds of young, single women coming into St. John's from the outports to attend boarding schools or to enter service.[86] Because of the resulting imbalance in the sex ratio, women had fewer opportunities than usual to find a marriage partner; therefore, the actual number of women looking for work increased. Those already in the labour force tended to remain longer than usual, and when a woman decided to leave the work force, her place could be filled by a large pool of unemployed women.

The type of work available to women was restricted in 1921. Looking at the female labour force alone, the largest proportion of women were employed in domestic service (33.8 per cent). [See Table 2-3.] This figure is high in comparison to other North American cities. In Halifax, for example, domestics comprised only 21.9 per cent of the female work force, and in Toronto 12.7 per cent.[87] Over a third of the female wage earners in St. John's were domestics because of the lack of other employment opportunities. Saleswomen made up the next largest occupation for women (14.7 per cent) followed by stenographers (10.1 per cent). Women in these

---

[84] V. Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," Labour/Le Travailleur, No.4 (1979), p. 137.

[85] Statistics compiled by C. Sharpe and J. Chisholm for Historical Atlas, Vol.III.

[86] For a discussion of young women in St. John's for the purposes of attending school see, G. Nash, "Census Study: Ward 5, District of St. John's East, 1911-1935," (Unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 16 February 1984); for a discusson of women entering service see Chapter 4; see also, P. Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration From Atlantic Canada 1871-1921: A New Look," Acadiensis, Vol.15, No.1 (Autumn 1985), p. 20. She indicates that in the period from 1871 to 1921 there was a noticeable migration from rural areas to St. John's which was heavily female led, and highly concentrated among the single age groups.

[87] Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Volume IV, Table 5.

three occupations alone constituted almost 60 per cent of the female labour force. Individual manufacturing occupations did not account for many female wage-earners, the most sizeable being sewing machine operators at 4.1 per cent. By grouping occupations together, however, the data reveals that women employed in manufacturing work accounted for 17.0 per cent of the female labour force. Working women in the manufacturing sector continued to be heavily concentrated in the clothing industry, but also in the boot and shoe, confectionery, tobacco, and cordage industries. Professional women were not numerous but they did make up 10 per cent of the total work force. Almost all of these women were employed in "female professions" such as teaching, nursing, and librarianship. There was only one female doctor in the entire city. The figures also indicate that the majority of women were employed in blue-collar as opposed to white-collar jobs. [See Table 2-4.]

**2.3. Attempts At Recovery, 1922-1929**

Economic conditions in Newfoundland did not change measureably in 1922, and showed few signs of improvement until 1925. In September 1922, the Secretary of the Newfoundland Board of Trade observed, "The trade outlook for the coming fall is anything but promising as a result of the partial failure of the fishery and the fact that some of our best markets are now closed because of disadvantageous exchange rates."[88] In October of that year, representatives of fishermen from Trinity Bay and Bonavista Bay travelled all the way to St. John's in an attempt to convince exporters to raise the prices for fish because they were not earning enough for their families to live on.[89] The British Empire Steel Corporation which owned the iron ore mines on Bell Island announced their closure in November 1923 for an indefinite period which meant the discharge of 1,100 miners (more than 2,000 had been employed there during

---

[88] Evening Telegram, 13 September 1922.

[89] Evening Telegram, 14 October 1922.

World War I), leaving only a few on hand to keep the mine shafts free of water.[90] The building of a large pulp and paper mill in the Humber Valley (at Corner Brook) which commenced in the spring of 1923 and was completed in the fall of 1924 was deemed the only hopeful indication of economic recovery up to that point. As many as 900 men were employed in the construction of this mill but, as it was argued at the time, this project did not even begin to meet the demand for employment by thousands of Newfoundland men who wanted and needed a job.[91] By 1925 there were finally some signs that the economic situation was changing for the better. In a speech before the Newfoundland House of Assembly in February 1925, Governor Allardyce stated:

> The codfishery of last year was prosecuted successfully and the products disposed of at the best known prices in the history of the colony (exclusive of the abnormal years.) Those who engaged in this staple industry of the country reaped a reward which renewed their faith and interest. Construction of the great works upon the Humber has proceeded with remarkable speed and success. Many men are now engaged in cutting wood for pulp and paper and it is confidently expected that early in the approaching spring manufacturing will begin.[92]

The Governor also conveyed in his speech a great deal of optimism in the future prospects of the country. He was representative of many other politicians and businessmen who were convinced that Newfoundland was about to enter a more prosperous period in its development. The Amulree Commission[93] noted that with the opening of a second paper mill in the Humber Valley at Corner Brook in 1925 there was the feeling that a new era was dawning:

---

[90] Evening Telegram, 30 November 1923; 22 January 1924. The mines opened again on that date but less than 800 men were brought back.

[91] Evening Telegram, 28 May 1923.

[92] Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1925 (St. John's: The King's Printer, 1926), p. 3.

[93] In February 1933, the British government appointed a commission of three men to examine the future prospects of Newfoundland and report, in particular, on its financial situation. The Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Amulree conducted hearings in St. John's, and various other parts of the country, as well as Ottawa and Montreal. See, Newfoundland, Royal Commission, 1933; Report (London: HMSO, 1933).

> "There was still room it was thought for a third mill [at Gander]; the initiation of construction work with a view to the opening of the lead and zinc mine at Buchans [in 1926] in the interior encouraged hopes of mineral development on a large scale; and it was thought that the time had at last arrived when Newfoundland's economic stability was to be broad based on a number of activities instead of primarily on the fishery."[94]

These sentiments were further encouraged when Newfoundland was given sovereignty over Labrador in 1927 which was reputed to contain vast resources of timber, minerals, and water power.[95] In a review of the year's events in the Evening Telegram, 31 December 1928, the following comment was made:

> Certainly circumstances generally so far as the industries and the trade and commerce of the country are concerned point to a very promising future. The growth of the new industries, the evidence of further and more modern development of those long standing together with the widely awakened interest in the country's mineral resources seem to indicate that the time is not far off when there will no longer be a need to complain of a lack of opportunity to find work.[96]

While there was tremendous potential for advancement some time in the future, the country's economy did not make any significant gains in the latter part of the 1920's and the Newfoundland government continued to have serious financial problems.[97] Regardless of the fact that fish prices were increasing, they did not reach a level high enough to provide fishermen with a decent standard of living. In addition, the Newfoundland fishing industry as a whole was stagnating.[98] Before any tangible gains could be achieved from the development of some of the country's primary

---

[94] Royal Commission, 1933, p. 49.

[95] Ibid., p. 47.

[96] Evening Telegram, 31 December 1928.

[97] Royal Commission, 1933, p. 49. According to the report the Newfoundland government had a sizeable deficit in each of its budgets from 1920 to 1932. The public debt in 1920-21 was $43,032,785, and by 1931-32 had reached a level of $97,738,772.

[98] Ibid.; see also, D. Alexander, The Decay of Trade: The Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial Univerisity of Newfoundland, 1977), pp. 20-26.

resources, the onset of world-wide economic depression proved disastrous for the entire country.

Since the national economy had not fully recoverd from the trauma of the post-World War I depression, it is little wonder that the local economy of St. John's did not improve in the 1920's. A newspaper article which appeared in September 1922 reported that, "Along the waterfront there is at present little employment with the exception of two or three firms which are handling fish coming from the outports."[99] This was supposed to be a busy time on the docks. In October, another article stated that city factories were operating anywhere from 30 to 60 per cent below capacity.[100] The city's only knitting mill, three clothing factories, and one boot and shoe factory were closed permanently. A new tobacco factory opened that fall only to shut down operations less than a year later.[101] Some local factories were adversely affected not only because poor national economic conditions lowered demand for their products, but also because of the dumping of foreign-made goods. The annual report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade for 1923 emphasized this problem. "Several industries have been affected by the 'dumping' of low grade goods on our market and the volume of their business has been considerably reduced as a result of unfair competition."[102] The boot and shoe industry as well as the clothing industry were the ones most seriously harmed by this practice. Recognizing the tariff was not enough protection for the goods they produced, workers at one of St. John's boot and shoe factories (Parker and Monroe) asked the Newfoundland government to pass anti-dumping legislation. They explained that this type of legislation would help to guard against "unfair competition of the importation

---

[99] Evening Telegram, 23 September 1922.

[100] Evening Telegram, 16 October 1922.

[101] Evening Telegram, 18 October 1922.

[102] Fifteenth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1923, p. 26.

of shoddy and alien footwear which is flooding our country today and which menaces our existence."[103] While the government refused to take such action, it was willing to join business and labour leaders in encouraging the purchase of locally produced goods. An energetic campaign was carried out during the 1920's encouraging Newfoundland citizens to purchase goods that had been produced in St. John's. As one businessman pointed out, "Every dollar spent on locally made goods means that a proportion of same circulates throughout the society through the payroll of various industries and is kept at home thereby building up the health of the county."[104]

The local economy was marginally better by 1925. In regard to the secondary manufacturing sector, one local businessman stated that, "Local factories have kept well employed during the year."[105] Fishermen had a little more money to spend on locally made consumer products because they received higher prices for their fish, as did a growing number of labourers and skilled workers in St. John's since they had been given work on one of the many large building projects initiated by the government and private businessmen that year. In the spring of 1925 construction started on a new dry dock, a butterine factory, several schools and the Hotel Newfoundland (the largest structure of its kind ever built in the city.)[106] Work was also begun on fixing the railway tracks between St. John's and Brigus in addition to repairing roads in and around the city.[107] A newspaper editorial stated that these projects "are all undertakings of an extensive nature and will provide employment for

---

[103] Evening Telegram, 31 October 1923;see also 7 September 1925.

[104] Evening Telegram, 16 October 1922. A whole series of articles appeared in this newspaper in 1923 under the title "Encourage Home Industry;" see, 9 Februrary 1923; 10 February 1923; 13 February 1923; 15 February 1923.

[105] Seventeenth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1925, p. 3.

[106] Evening Telegram, 2 May 1925.

[107] Evening Telegram, 26 May 1925.

a considerable period. They will help many to their feet again and will also provide permanent employment for many after the operations are completed."[108] The permanent jobs did not materialize in the numbers anticipated. When the Hotel Newfoundland first opened in July 1926 it was heralded as "The Hallmark of a Modern City;"[109] yet, it soon ran into financial difficulties because of a lack of business, and staff had to be laid off. The dry dock did not even come close to reaching the level of operation that had been planned for and therefore employed far fewer workers than expected. While these various projects provided temporary jobs for many and infused more money into the local economy, they did not bring about any long term changes or benefits to the city.

The local economy stagnated during the rest of the decade. Wholesale and retail trade in the city in 1926 "was somewhat disappointing,"[110] and in 1927 "was somewhat quiet."[111] In the secondary manufacturing sector that year, a business representative observed that, "Local factories for the period under review have been working at full capacity, but in some instances perhaps on a slightly reduced scale."[112] In 1928, some industries were negatively affected by the government's decision to reduce the tariff on some foreign made goods. Most notably, the duty was reduced on imported readymade clothing from 65 to 45 per cent, on lines and twines from 25 per cent to 15 per cent, butter and butterine from 5 to 3 cents per pound, and tobacco from 48 to 40 cents per

---

[108] Evening Telegram, 2 May 1925.

[109] Evening Telegram, 6 July 1926.

[110] Eighteenth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1926, p. 3.

[111] Nineteenth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1927, p. 3.

[112] Ibid.

pound.[113] The newly elected Liberal government led by Sir Richard Squires instituted these measures in an effort to garner public support since the changes in the tariff would decrease the price on a variety of consumer products, and in the case of line and twine, reduce the costs necessary to outfit fishermen. According to one newspaper article, local manufacturers believed they would have to curtail their operations considerably, if it was possible to operate at all, and the result would be the dismissal of a large number of their hands.[114] The government's actions did not have quite the damaging impact that the manufacturers had asserted they would. While some operatives were laid off in the clothing and cordage industries, no large factories were forced to close their doors. As one manufacturer suggested at the time, however, the alterations to the tariff impeded "improvements to plants and the introduction of new industries."[115] These measures also inhibited any growth that might have taken place in this sector. The sale of locally produced goods increased only 2 per cent between 1928 and 1929.[116] A new company, the Newfoundland Wool and Silk Mills Limited, wanted to start up operations in the abandoned knitting mill on Alexander Street in 1929, but only if the government would provide a number of financial concessions.[117] The government was willing to consider encouragement of this local industry because hundreds of factory jobs would be created at a time when unemployment in the city was on the rise. The bill which would have provided the financial concessions never passed, however, and as a result, the mill did not re-open.

---

[113] Evening Telegram, 29 November 1928.

[114] Ibid. While the tariff acted to protect locally manufactured goods, and thereby the jobs of city factory operatives, it also raised the prices of many consumer goods and along with that, the cost of living.

[115] Twentieth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1928, p. 26.

[116] Twenty-First Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1929, p. 31.

[117] Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1929 (St. John's: The King's Printer, 1930), pp. 437-451, 461-471. There was a lenghty debate in the House of Assembly regarding the suggested financial inducements to be given to the Newfoundland Wool and Silk Mills Limited. Opposition members argued that the government was giving the company far too many concessions, while members of the ruling party asserted that they had to do as much as possible to attract new industries which would create more employment.

While precise figures are not available there is still abundant evidence which suggests that unemployment remained a serious economic and social problem in the capital city throughout the 1920's. Because the local economy was depressed during most of these years, permanent employment for men and women was difficult to find and to hold on to. Unemployment rates reached their highest levels during the winter months most years due to the seasonal nature of the economy as noted previously. In a plea for help to the national government, one group of unemployed workers in 1923 made special mention of the hardship brought on at this time of year. "With the advent of the winter season and consequent scarcity of work along the waterfront and in other directions, and with the unemployment situation generally growing acute, we the undersigned delegation, on behalf of the workless men of the city would respectfully ask that the Government meet to discuss a proposition we have submitted."[118] Higher food and heating costs accompanied the onset of winter just at a time when employment, particularly for unskilled labourers was most scarce.[119] Many wage-earners could not make enough money when there was work during the summer months to provide for themselves and their families through the rest of the year. "They just earn enough to keep them alive during the time they are working and as soon as the work is over they have not got a cent left."[120]

The constant influx of men and women from the outports seeking jobs made the unemployment situation in St. John's worse. They tended to arrive in especially large

---

[118]PANL, Colonial Secretary, Special Subject Files, GN2/5, #424, Letter from Unemployed Committee to the Honourable Members of the Executive Government, 11 December 1923. While the covering letter was included in the file, the accompanying proposition were not.

[119]Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1924 (St. John's: The King's Printer, 1925), p. 217. One member of the House of Assembly, George Grimes, emphasized the continuing problem of unemployment in Newfoundland, and especially in St. John's. He stated that work was most scarce in the winter "when employment for the casual laborers almost ceases." George Grimes (1877-1927) was among the founders of the Newfoundland Socialist Society in 1906. Grimes remained a socialist throughout his life. He was one of the original members of William Coaker's Union Party elected in 1913. Defeated in 1919, he was again re-elected in 1923, this time aligning with the Liberal Progressive Party. For more biographical details see, Who's Who in Newfoundland, 1927, p. 199.

[120]Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1925, (St. John's: The King's Printer, 1926), p. 153.

numbers at the end of the fishing season each fall. Speaking before the House of Assembly in October 1928, the Minister of Finance and Customs, Sir John Crosbie, stated: "I do say seriously that from my experience in St. John's what has caused the labour trouble is due to many people coming in from the outports looking for work. The city is not able to employ the number of laborers that are here."[121] A newspaper editorial several months later echoed these sentiments. "For years many from the outports have migrated to the city in the hope that they might find some form of employment of a more remunerative nature or less exacting than that offered by the fisheries."[122]

The unemployment rate might have been even higher had it not been that at least some of the unemployed workers from the city chose to leave the country in search of jobs either in the United States or Canada. In June 1922, one newspaper reported that a steamship office in St. John's had been besieged by men wanting to book passage to the United States. "The greater part of these men have been amongst our most energetic tradesmen being fully qualified masons and builders, but with the future holding no bright hopes for them they are reluctantly obliged to go elsewhere."[123] More than a year later it was mentioned that migration out of Newfoundland had not abated. "It is indeed a melancholy sight for us to witness so many of our most prominent and industrious countrymen leaving our shores by every available opporunity."[124] Women as well as men were leaving the country but their

---

[121] Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1928, (St. John's: The King's Printer, 1929), p. 217.

[122] Evening Telegram, 24 January 1929.

[123] Evening Telegram, 3 June 1922.

[124] Evening Telegram, 17 September 1923.

departure did not elicit any specific comment.[125] Governor Allardyce noted in a despatch to the Colonial Office in fall 1927 that for the first eight months of that year the departures out of St. John's exceeded arrivals by 4,463. He also stated, "Many have gone to join their relatives on the mainland, others have been attracted abroad owing to their inabiliby to obtain employment locally, an indifferent fishing season and the high wages offered elsewhere especially in the United States."[126]

Destitute families whose members could not find employment did receive a small payment in kind from the Newfoundland government, which was referred to as the "dole" or relief.[127] Some 1,400 families in St. John's were being "relieved at the public's expense" in 1922.[128] By 1925, the number of families on relief had dropped, but only to 1,274,[129] and in 1928 it was approximately 1,000.[130] The complaint was often heard that the amount reluctantly handed out by the government was so meager that these families in St. John's could scarcely feed themselves, and there was certainly nothing left over for such items as clothing and school fees.[131] Noting that there were still many workmen unable to find employment in July 1923, one journalist indicated that hundreds of families in the city's west end were "in want of the necessaries of life"

---

[125] For discussion of female-led emigration see, P. Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration From Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921," pp. 17-20.

[126] PANL, Governor's Office, Register of Miscellaneous Despatches and Local Correspondence, GN1/3/A, 1927, #187, Letter from Governor Allardyce, 3 October 1927.

[127] The dole was given to families who could demonstrate that they needed assistance from the government because of unemployment, sickness, or death of the primary male wage-earner.

[128] Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1922 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1923), p. 34. Yearly statistics do no seem to have been gathered on the number of families on relief in St. John's during the 1920's. One must therefore rely upon scattered references.

[129] Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1925 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1926), p. 82.

[130] Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1928 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1929), p. 127.

[131] Evening Telegram, 7 February 1925.

because the breadwinners in these families could not secure work, and the dole kept them barely above the starvation level.[132] The rates for relief payments in 1925 were $5.00 per week for single individuals, and $6.00 to $10.00 per week for families depending on their size.[133]

The Newfoundland government did attempt to provide work for some unemployed men in St. John's on various relief projects; however, there was never enough of this type of work for all the unemployed. The work was usually available only in the winter, and the wages they earned left the men and their families not much better off financially than if they had been receiving the dole. Had it not been for the almost constant pressure placed on the national government by St. John's unemployed groups to create relief work it is doubtful even these measures would have been carried out. In April 1922, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Charities, W.C. Pearce, stated in a letter that a total of 755 men were presently employed on a number of different projects which included road making, stone work, as well as repairing and cleaning streets.[134] Less than a month later the government attempted to reduce drastically the scale of these projects, and lay off most of the men. These actions met with stiff resistance. According to one account of events in May 1922, "Over 700 of St. John's unemployed met in the Star of the Sea Hall yesterday in order to discuss the unemployment situation. Those who had been given relief work during the winter, being now, they claim, in a very bad state."[135] After representatives of these unemployed workers met with the Prime Minister, the government offered to provide

---

[132] Evening Telegram, 6 July 1923.

[133] Evening Telegram, 7 February 1925. Cost of living estimates are not available for that year, but those gathered in 1921 suggested that a family could adequately live on $14.50 a week. See, PANL, Board of Trade, P8/B/11, Box 11, File 2, Memo re cost of living of the labouring classes as compared with wages, 14 January 1921.

[134] PANL, Governor's Office, Register of Miscellaneous Despatches and Correspondence, GN1/3/A, 1922, #34, Letter from Deputy Minister, W.C. Pearce, to Private Secretary, 19 April 1922.

[135] Daily News, 5 May 1922.

employment for 250 men.[136] In January 1924, relief work was initiated for 100 men who would be required to split rocks. A promise of employment for several hundred more was also made at the time.[137] When the jobs did not immediately materialize a large demonstration of 500 unemployed workers was organized to demand work at the rock sheds.[138] While not all the men were accommodated, at least 400 were given jobs there that winter.[139] When men were provided employment on relief projects they laboured at least ten hours a day for a standard wage of $2.00. The maximum work week was five days so the most any one man could earn was $10.00 a week.[140] Most years, relief work ended in late April or early May. The Newfoundland government treated relief projects throughout the 1920s as temporary stop-gap measures to alleviate the worst suffering during the winter months and to dissipate some of the protests by the unemployed.

Because there was "no lack of employment in the city" during the summer and fall of 1925, government officials decided that the Employment Bureau, which had registered those looking for jobs, could be closed down, and relief work did not have to be offered that winter.[141] Unemployment had not disappeared in St. John's, but the situation had improved to the point where the government could justify such actions. When the local economy again went into a slump in the fall of 1926, the unemployment rate again rose dramatically. In May 1927 a delegation of unemployed workers met

---

[136] Daily News, 9 May 1922.

[137] Evening Telegram, 8 January 1924.

[138] Evening Telegram, 10 January 1924.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Evening Telegram, 4 March 1924.

[141] Evening Telegram, 31 October 1925.

with government leaders and requested jobs for 1,500 men.[142] To appease this delegation, relief work was initiated for 200 men repairing roads.[143] The lack of employment opportunities remained a serious problem in the years that followed. In a letter dated 20 February 1928, a city resident named Michael Condon stated, "You must take it from me that there is a class of unemployed and many of them are in dire straits."[144] The next February it was mentioned that a total of 500 men had been given work on a variety of relief projects, but another 1,000 at least, were seeking employment.[145] Miss Jean Crawford who ran the Charity Organization Bureau in St. John's revealed in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Dr. Barnes, that a total of 1,600 men applied for work at her agency between December 1928 and May 1929.[146] Married men constituted 80 per cent of the applicants.[147]

**2.4. The Great Depression, 1930-1939**

> The onset of the world depression found the Island with no reserves, its primary industry neglected and its credit exhausted. At the first wind of adversity, its elaborate pretensions collapsed like a house of cards. The glowing visions of a new Utopia were dispelled with cruel suddenness by the cold realities of national insolvency and to-day a disillusioned and bewildered people are deprived in many parts of the country of all hope of earning a livelihood, and are haunted by the grim spectres of pauperism and

---

[142] Evening Telegram, 11 May 1927.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Evening Telegram, 20 February 1928.

[145] Evening Telegram, 14 February 1929.

[146] PANL, Colonial Secretary, Special Subject Files, GN2/5, #424, Letter from Miss Jean Crawford to Dr. Barnes, Colonial Secretary, 16 December 1926. The Charitable Organization Bureau was formed 16 December 1924 under the sponsorship of the Newfoundland government. Its main object was to co-ordinate charitable work in the city of St. John's.

[147] Ibid. Since attention focused exclusively on unemployed men it is impossible to determine how many women wanted to work but could not find a job.

starvation.[148]

As this excerpt from the report of the Amulree Commission indicates, Newfoundland entered the Great Depression in an already precarious financial position, with an unstable national economy. The international depression which began in 1930 made the situation far worse. In the annual report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade for 1930 its President explained that, "Restricted world purchasing power, low prices, and adverse exchange conditons, all uncontrollable factors so far as Newfoundland is concerned have made serious inroads into our national turnover and profits in every direction."[149] Fish prices dropped that year to their lowest level since 1913.[150] The fishing industry was severely crippled during the next four years, not only by low prices, but also by small catches.[151] Therefore, "The fishery failed to yield a livelihood to the average fisherman, and large numbers of fishermen have been forced on the dole in the off season."[152] Government officials estimated later that the average annual income of fishermen during the first half of the 1930's equalled $135.00.[153] In the lumber industry production was reduced substantially because of an "absence of any demand either local or foreign for construction purposes."[154] This industry was also affected by the scaling down of operations at the pulp and paper mills in Grand Falls and Corner Brook due to a drop in demand, as well as prices, for

---

[148] Royal Commission, 1933, p. 43-44.

[149] Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1930, p. 1.

[150] S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, p. 189.

[151] Newfoundland Royal Commission, 1933, p. 50.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Observer's Weekly, 14 September 1937.

[154] Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1934, p. 5.

newsprint. In 1932, the mills were running at approximately 30 per cent below capacity.[155] This level of operation at the two mills was maintained throughout 1933, and in 1934 the mills returned to full capacity.[156] Mining operations on Bell Island were sharply reduced. In 1933, production reached only 17 per cent of capacity, and in 1934 only 30 per cent.[157]

The plummeting prices of the country's primary resources, and the scaling down of operations in the lumber, pulp and paper, and mining industries during the early 1930's meant a reduction of incomes in the country. According to S.J.R. Noel, "as incomes fell government revenue also fell, for incomes were largely spent on imported goods, on which ad valorem tariffs formed the main source of revenue."[158] Noel also points out that at the same time, government expenditure was growing under the pressure to provide "able-bodied relief" to the unemployed and the destitute.[159] The Newfoundland government soon found itself in a financial crisis. Facing the largest deficit ever in the country's history (around $4 million), needing $3 million to redeem loans that were due to mature, and requiring another $1 million for the city of St. John's, the government invited tenders for a further loan of $8 million in 1931. While there had been no difficulty in getting a $5 million loan the year before, the government discovered that the stream of lenders had suddenly dried up and no tenders were received. Newfoundland was in serious danger of defaulting on its loans when a syndicate of the four Canadian banks operating on the island -- the Bank of Commerce, the Bank of Montreal, the Royal Bank of Canada, and the Bank of Nova

---

[155] Ibid.

[156] H.K. Gurney, Conditions in Newfoundland, March 1933 (London: HMSO, 1935), p. 2.

[157] Ibid.

[158] S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, p. 189.

[159] Ibid.

Scotia -- agreed to advance the government a temporary loan of $2.2 million in September 1931.[160] Unsuccessful attempts were also made to raise an internal loan of $2 million. The country's financial situation remained in a state of crisis throughout 1932 as expenditures continued to increase and revenues to decrease. When loan payments fell due at the end of 1932, the government decided it would have to default. The British and Canandian governments offset this impending disaster by lending two-thirds of the money required ($1,250,000) with Newfoundland having to raise the rest. A stipulation attached to the loan was that a Royal Commission be appointed to investigate the financial position of Newfoundland and consider its future economic and political prospects. On 17 February 1933, a Royal Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Lord Amulree. When this commission reported it recommended that:

> Until such time as Newfoundland may become self-supporting again, there should be substituted for this system a form of Government under which full legislative and executive power would be vested in the Governor acting on the advice of a specially created Commission of Government over which His Excellency would preside.[161]

In other words, the Legislature and Executive Council would be temporarily abolished, and a commission would run the country. On 16 February 1934, the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Frederick Alderdice, signed the necessary documents which suspended the Constitution, and placed the country, through the Commission, directly under British rule.

The change in the form of government overseeing affairs in Newfoundland did not bring about any immediate changes in the country's economic situation. There was little that could be done to improve general conditions in the country with

---

[160] Royal Commission, 1933, p. 51.

[161] Ibid.

conditions worldwide remaining so dismal in 1934 as well as 1935.[162] In January 1936, the Newfoundland Journal of Commerce observed that 1935 had actually been a year of staggering handicaps to Newfoundlanders, "with war and rumours of war, adverse tariffs, quotas, and exchange restrictions to hamper and curtail the exhange of goods and services, and to add to this formidable array, we have the closing of the Italian market and falling prices for our fish in other countries."[163] With the exception of the marginal gains experienced in 1937, the national economy remained depressed until well after the start of World War II.[164]

It did not take long for the local St. John's economy to suffer from the consequences of the onset of extremely poor economic conditions at the national level. With the decrease of fish exports and other forms of trade in 1930, activities along the waterfront slowed perceptibly. Reminiscent of comments made in 1921, a newpaper article in October 1931 noted that movement on the wharves was severely restricted in comparison to previous years, and far fewer ships were coming and going out of the harbour.[165] In August 1931 representatives of the city's mercantile firms met with members of the LSPU to announce a reduction in wages of 15 per cent because business had fallen off so sharply. The employers suggested that conditions were quite similar to those experienced in 1921.[166] The LSPU reported in April 1934 that its membership had dropped to 2,300. "Of these only a few hundred are permanently

---

[162]For discussion of economic conditions in Newfoundland during 1934 see, Newfoundland, Report by the Commission of Government on the Economic Situation, December 1934 (London: HMSO, 1935).

[163]Journal of Commerce, January 1936, p. 3

[164]See, Newfoundland, Annual Report of the Commission of Government for the Year 1936 (London: HMSO, 1938); Newfoundland, Annual Report of the Commission of Government For the Year 1937 (London: HMSO, 1939); Newfoundland, Annual Report of the Commission of Government for the Year 1938 (London: HMSO, 1940); Newfoundland, Annual Report of the Commission of Government for the Year 1939 (London: HMSO, 1941).

[165]Evening Telegram, 6 October 1930.

[166]Evening Telegram, 28 August 1931.

employed apart from stevedoring or fish wharf work. Under present conditions a man who is willing to work whenever the chance affords cannot make more than an average of $5 to $6 weekly in the course of a year."[167] Most of the 300 coopers who also worked on the waterfront could hope to be employed only three to five months a year.[168]

In the secondary manufacturing sector, many factories began operating "short-time" or ceased production altogether. A 1930 letter from "A Workingman" to a local paper, stated that, "Here we are in St. John's to-day with hundreds of men and girls working half-time before winter comes at all."[169] Another article in December 1930 revealed that workers in the shoe industry had worked only six months that year. "The city factories have only about six months production to their credit."[170] Lay offs and wage cuts in this sector were common. The annual report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade for 1932 indicated that local manufacturing "suffered a further reduction in volume of business as compared with 1931, the result of which was a further decrease in the number of persons employed."[171] The volume of business represented by the sale of products from city workshops and factories was $4 million as compared with $8.5 million in 1929, and a payroll of $1 million as compared with $2.5

---

[167]PANL, Commission of Government, Secretary of the Commission, GN38 S1-2-4, #34, Memo re Labour Sub-Committe, 30 April 1934. Cost of living estimates were not compiled in 1934. See, PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, P8/B/11, Box 23, File 12, Letter from Thomas White, Secretary of the LSPU, to Avalon Goodridge, Secretary of the Employers' Protective Association, 1 October 1931. In this letter Thomas indicated that although many articles of food were less in price than they had been, members did not earn enough to "derive advantages of their cheapness." He provided a list of "the necessities of life" for one week which totalled $17.88.

[168]PANL, Commission of Government, Natural Resources, General Adminitration, GN38, S2-2-6, #4, Statement of the Coopers' Union, 30 April 1934.

[169]Evening Telegram, 27 November 1930.

[170]Evening Telegram, 18 December 1930.

[171]Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1932, p. 32.

million.[172] In some firms the number of employees was about 25 per cent below that of a normal year.[173]

Recognizing that the secondary manufacturing industry was almost in a state of collapse, city factory owners banded together in the spring of 1933, to form an organization called the Association of Newfoundland Industries (ANI), which would actively encourage Newfoundlanders to buy locally made products. The advertisements which the ANI placed frequently in St. John's newspapers during 1933 and 1934 made no mention of how factory owners would profit from an increase in demand for their products; rather, an emphasis was placed on the wages the workers could earn if they were brought back to work. One advertisement placed by the ANI in May 1933 entitled "A Message From the Unemployed to those Employed" noted:

> When your family goes shopping to spend the wages which you are privileged to earn under present conditions think of us and ask your dealer for goods made in Newfoundland. By doing so you will help create a demand for local products which will help us to get back to work again.[174]

Another notice which appeared in May 1934 announced, "Our factories which provide work for many people, depend for their existence on local customers."[175] Despite such appeals, the secondary manufacturing sector did not experience any substantial increase in the demand for its products. The annual report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade for 1935 noted that local factories reported satisifactory business, "the general average being 10% ahead of 1934."[176] A newspaper article in May 1937 suggested that

---

[172] Ibid., p. 33.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Evening Telegram, 6 May 1933.

[175] Evening Telegram, 29 May 1934.

[176] "Newfoundland Board of Trade Twenty-Seventh Annual Report, 1935," Newfoundland Journal of Commerce, January 1936, p. 18.

employment of factory workers had increased just 3 per cent since 1935.[177]

Other sectors of the local economy were equally affected by the Depression. Retail stores were forced to reduce their staffs and cut wages in an effort to avoid bankruptcy. At Bowring Brothers department store, almost 20 per cent of the staff were let go in September 1932, and those who were kept on had to endure a reduction in their salaries of 15 per cent.[178] Another department store, George Knowling and Company, went into liquidation in January 1933, leaving twenty-one sales clerks without a job.[179] The annual report of the Newfoundland Board of Trade for 1935 suggested retail trade in the city was "somewhat slow."[180]

With activities along the waterfront slowing down, factories running short time or closing altogether, and retail trade significantly reduced, it is little wonder that the unemployment rate showed clear signs of increasing in the early 1930's. Because the government found itself in such a financial bind at the time, there was little money for those in need of relief and even less that could be directed towards employment projects. In July 1931, an employment agency sponsored by the national government, opened with the purpose of signing up all those who were interested in finding a job. Over 1,000 unemployed registered the first day.[181] Since the government could not provide the financial resources to employ the men, private citizens were asked to hire them. A notice in the Daily News stated:

> "Wanted -- Work for 1,000 Men. Painting, Decorating, Carpenter Work, Liming, Gardening, Ordinary Labor, Excavating, Construction. No Job Too

---

[177] Observer's Weekly, 4 May 1937.

[178] PANL, Bowring Brothers, P7/A/3, Box 8, List of Directors and Permanent Employees.

[179] Evening Telegram, 26 January 1933.

[180] Evening Telegram, 30 October 1935.

[181] Evening Telegram, 16 July 1931.

Large. No Job Too Small."[182]

The level of suffering experienced by many families because of the lack of employment in St. John's cannot be exaggerated. In December 1931 a civic relief committee pleaded with city inhabitants to contribute to a fund for destitute families.

> An appeal from ten thousand shivering children and helpless women. Through the Mayor's Civic Relief Committe two thousand five hundred families of the unemployed who are faced with hardship, privation, discomfort and cold this winter make this appeal to you.[183]

The need for financial assistance was greater than the Newfoundland government could provide. Workers at city factories and stores who earned small incomes themselves contributed to this fund, as did many others, but it proved impossible to relieve the distress.[184] The food ration received by families who qualified for the dole was generally considered to be inadequate. After a number of large public forums were held in the spring of 1932 to protest the administration of relief, the Newfoundland government made some slight improvements to the system. The value of the food ration was "materially increased."[185] The payment in kind ranged from $1.50 per week for a single person to $5.00 per week for a family of thirteeen.[186] The 1,150 families that received the dole in April 1932 were still given no provisions for acquiring clothing.[187] In October 1933 the LSPU sponsored an organization called "The General City Clothing Relief" which would help to alleviate this particular

---

[182] Daily News, 28 July.

[183] Evening Telegram, 30 December 1931.

[184] Evening Telegram, 4 May 1932.

[185] Evening Telegram, 2 February 1932; 18 February 1932.

[186] Evening Telegram, 20 February 1932.

[187] PANL, Colonial Secretary, Special Subject Files, GN2/5, #541, Letter from Relief Controller for St. John's to Arthur News, Deputy Secretary of State, 4 April 1932.

problem. Its specific purpose was to collect clothing and distribute them among the needy and the unemployed.[188]

By 1934, there was widespread public perception that the unemployment rate in St. John's had reached unacceptable levels. The Commissioner of Justice, William Howley, noted in a memo dated 28 July 1934 that, "There is no doubt whatever that the want of employment in St. John's has reached a very acute stage."[189] A survey of conditions was conducted in the city that fall to get more precise figures on those who were unemployed and/or on relief. A summary of the findings of this survey mentioned that there were a total of 1,977 men and women in the city who wanted, but could not find, either casual or permanent employment.[190] The summary also suggested that 5,700 individuals, or over 1,100 families, were going to need relief that coming winter.[191] As it turned out only 856 families were found on the relief lists in March 1935, which was less than the 973 families in March 1934. The Commission of Government made the argument that this reduction could be attributed to an improvement in economic conditions in the capital city.[192] The number of those receiving the dole, however, began to edge upwards the next year. One source stated in January 1937 that: "Month by month throughout 1936 the dole figures showed a steady increase in numbers and cost compared with the previous year."[193] The

---

[188] Evening Telegram, 6 October 1933.

[189] PANL, Commission of Government, Department of Justice and Defence, GN38, S4-1-1, Memo J.68-555, From William Howley, Commissioner of Justice, 28 July 1934.

[190] PANL, Department of Justice, Departmental Files, GN13/1, Box 62(2), #55, Survey of Relief Conditions, City of St. John's, 22 October 1934.

[191] Ibid..

[192] Newfoundland, Report by the Commission of Government on the Unemployment Situation; May 1935 (London: HMSO, 1935).

[193] Observer's Weekly, 19 January 1937.

unemployment problem in the city would not go away until the local economy started to benefit from the influx of Canadian and American troops during World War II.

Because the primary sources tell so little, it is difficult to comment upon the men and women who managed to hold on to their jobs during the Depression. Comparisons between the size and the shape of the St. John's labour force in 1921 and 1935 are also fraught with difficulties, since the aggregate data from the 1935 census is not available. Data is only provided for the electoral districts of St. John's East and St. John's West, which include several thousand individuals outside the city limits. For this reason, one also cannot make any precise statements about the participation rate for women in the workforce. Accepting that the data might be skewed slightly by the added number of people outside the city, it can be estimated that women accounted for approximately 26 per cent of the city's work force.[194] This figure indicates an increase from the previous census when women totalled just 21.4 per cent of the work force. Women were able to maintain their position in the labour force and actually make gains, in part, because of their willingness to work for low wages.[195] This meant that some employers, at least, were eager to hire them over male workers. Furthermore,

---

[194]Comparisons with participation rates for women in Canadian cities are also difficult since the census for that country was conducted in 1931. The data provided for Canada suggests that a slight increase did occur in the proportion of women in the work forces of many Canadian cities between 1921 and 1931. In 1931, the participation rate for women was 25.4 per cent in Montreal, 28.3 per cent in Toronto, 25.3 per cent in Saint John, and 26.9 per cent in Halifax. See, Canada, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, Volume VII (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942), Table 41 and 57.

[195]An increase in work force participation by women occurred in most other North American and British urban centres during the 1930's. There has been some debate in the literature however, on the impact of the Depression on working women. Alice Kessler-Harris and Susan Ware argue that in spite of public resistence to the employment of women, particularly those who were married, the Depression solidified their position in the work force. See, A. Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 250-270; S. Ware, Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s (Boston: Twayne, 1982.) Other historians such as Lois Scharf and Jane Humphries stress that no substantial gains were made by working women. Instead, they view the Depression as a time of hostility and discriminatory practices, as well as diminished employment options. See, L. Scharf, To Work or to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); J. Humphries, " Women, Scapegoats and Safety Valves in the Great Depression," Review of Radical Economics, Vol.8, No.1 (Spring 1976), pp. 98-121. For other works on women's employment during the Depression see, R. Milkman, "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis: Some Lessons from the Great Depression," in A Heritage of Her Own, edited by N. Cott and E. Pleck (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp. 507-541; W. Wandersee, Women's Work and Family Values, 1920-1940 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981); W. Wandersee, "American Women and the Twentieth Century Work Force: The Depression Experience," in Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History, edited by M. Kelley (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979), pp. 296-312.

the type of wage work most women were hired to do such as domestic service, secretarial work, and nursing, was stereotyped as women's work. Another possible factor in keeping women's participation at such a level was the inordinately large numbers of young women in St. John's. The imbalance in the sex ratio which existed in 1921 was just as prevalent in 1935. Women continued to outnumber men especially in the age group 15 to 24. [See Table 2-2 and Figure 2-2.] The female labour force underwent a 36.5 per cent increase over the decade and a half from 2,822 to 3,866. [See Table 2-3.] The number of domestic servants rose from 958 to 1389, while the number of typists grew from 287 to 386. The only significant decrease occurred with women who were employed as tailoresses, dressmakers, and milliners. Overall, the proportion of women employed in some type of private service work increased slightly (from 39 per cent in 1921 to 41.6 per cent in 1935), while those in office work stayed at much the same level (15.3 per cent in 1921 and 1935.) [See Table 2-4.] Manufacturing work employed a smaller proportion in 1935 than it had in 1921. The majority of women continued to be blue-collar workers as opposed to white-collar workers.

During the early decades of this century women entered the St. John's labour force in ever greater numbers. The onset of an economic depression after World War I slowed this growth to a some extent. Economic conditions during 1920 and 1921 threatened the jobs of female as well as male workers. Yet, women's presence in the labour force remained, and their participation actually increased over the next decade and a half. As the economic situation deteriorated further during the 1930's, employment became increasingly scarce in St. John's, but women continued to be an important component of the city's work force. Because so many male breadwinners, especially those from the working class, received such small wages, or could not find any steady work, it was imperative for their daughters and wives to engage in some form of paid labour. Women sometimes found it easier to get jobs than men. The status of women as cheap, unskilled workers created a greater demand for their labour

in some industries than for male workers. Job options for women throughout the inter-war period were limited in the sense that they were concentrated in a relatively small number of "female" occupations.

**Table 2-1:** St. John's Labour Force, 1901, 1911 and 1921

| Occupations | 1901 # | 1901 % | 1911 # | 1911 % | 1921 # | 1921 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clergy | 36 | 0.5 | 36 | 0.3 | 43 | 0.3 |
| Teachers | 125 | 1.6 | 226 | 1.8 | 251 | 1.9 |
| Lawyers | 52 | 0.6 | 46 | 0.4 | 43 | 0.3 |
| Doctors | 26 | 0.3 | 37 | 0.3 | 27 | 0.2 |
| Merchants and Traders | 138 | 1.8 | 350 | 3.0 | 306 | 2.3 |
| Office and Shopworkers | 1103 | 15.0 | 2684 | 21.0 | 2920 | 22.0 |
| Government Service | 318 | 4.2 | 459 | 3.6 | 512 | 3.9 |
| Farmers | 198 | 2.6 | 164 | 1.3 | 104 | 0.8 |
| Fishermen and Others who Cultivate Land | 11 | 0.1 | 167 | 1.3 | 171 | 1.3 |
| Mechanics | 1059 | 14.1 | 2359 | 18.0 | 2248 | 17.0 |
| Males Catching and Curing Fish | 85 | 1.1 | 341 | 2.6 | 269 | 2.0 |
| Females Curing Fish | 19 | 0.2 | 39 | 0.3 | 103 | 0.8 |
| Lumbering | 4 | 0.05 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0.02 |
| Mining | 9 | 0.1 | 13 | 0.7 | 0 | 0 |
| Factory and Workshop | 299 | 4.0 | 993 | 7.7 | 990 | 7.5 |
| Otherwise[a] Employed | 4023 | 54.0 | 5009 | 39.0 | 5313 | 40.2 |
| | 7,505 | 100 | 12,923 | 100 | 13,213 | 100 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1901, 1911, 1921.

[a]This category included workers in a variety of personal service occupations and in the transportation, communication and construction industries.

**Table 2-2:** St. John's Population By Gender, 1921 and 1935

| Age | 1921 Male | 1921 Female | 1935 Male | 1935 Female |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 80+ | 80 | 108 | 114 | 156 |
| 75 - 79 | 109 | 135 | 196 | 198 |
| 70 - 74 | 220 | 245 | 281 | 360 |
| 65 - 69 | 337 | 415 | 424 | 434 |
| 60 - 64 | 432 | 441 | 570 | 624 |
| 55 - 59 | 584 | 666 | 669 | 709 |
| 50 - 54 | 650 | 703 | 864 | 936 |
| 45 - 49 | 937 | 951 | 537 | 947 |
| 40 - 44 | 834 | 872 | 1,007 | 1,140 |
| 35 - 39 | 1,180 | 1,261 | 1,050 | 1,272 |
| 30 - 34 | 985 | 1,048 | 1,077 | 1,324 |
| 25 - 29 | 1,405 | 1,732 | 1,408 | 1,819 |
| 20 - 24 | 1,474 | 2,286 | 1,863 | 2,727 |
| 15 - 19 | 1,685 | 2,421 | 2,011 | 2,331 |
| 10 - 14 | 1,898 | 1,980 | 2,081 | 2,192 |
| 5 - 9 | 2,170 | 2,098 | 2,105 | 2,035 |
| 0 - 4 | 2,834 | 2,762 | 1,990 | 1,927 |
| | 17,792 | 20,031 | 18,565[a] | 21,321[b] |
| Total | 37,823 | | 39,886 | |

[a]There were 18 people who did not state their age.
[b]There were 30 people who did not state their age.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935.

**Figure 2-1:** Age Pyramid of St. John's Population, 1921

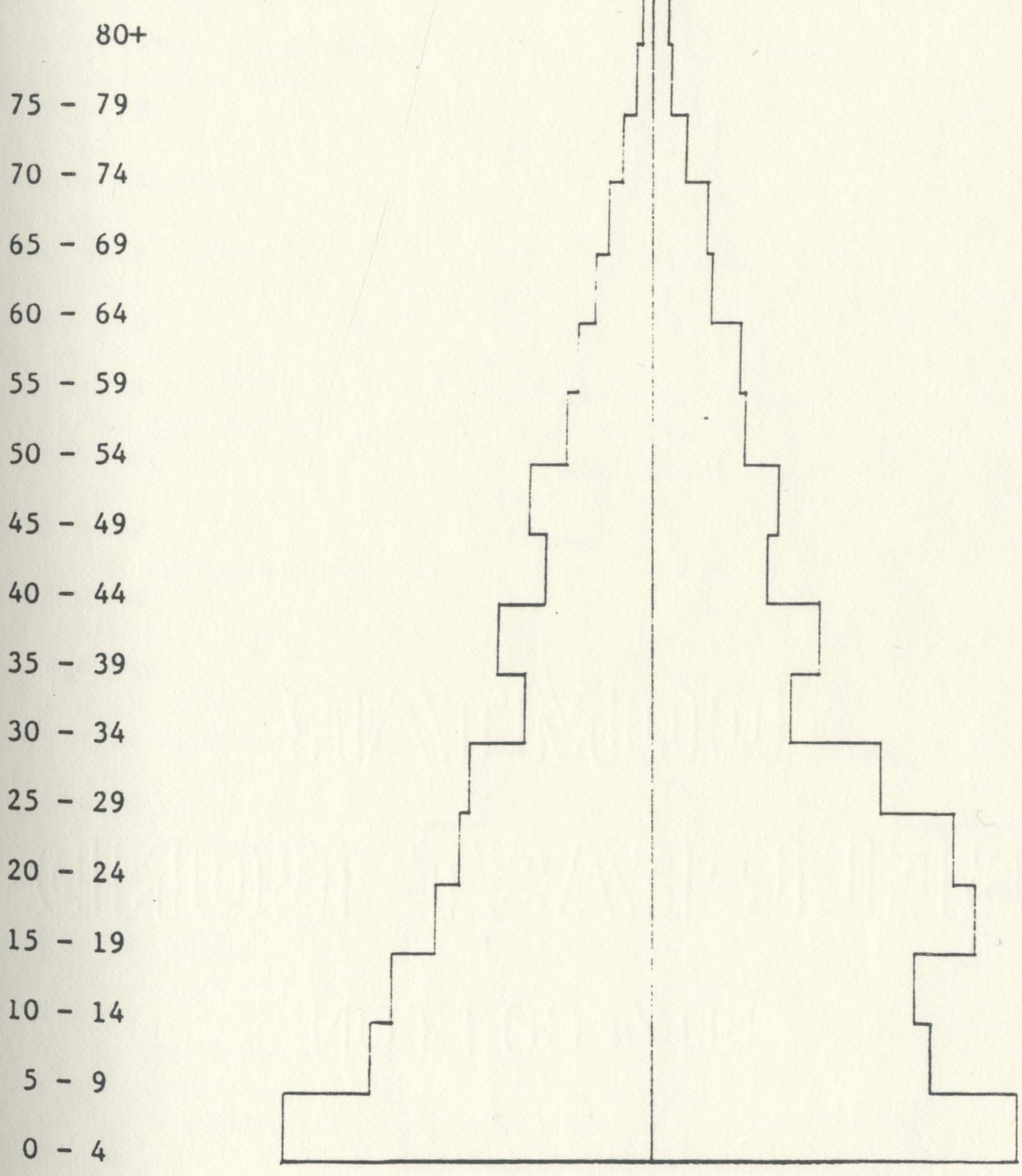

**Figure 2-2:** Age Pyramid of St. John's Population, 1935

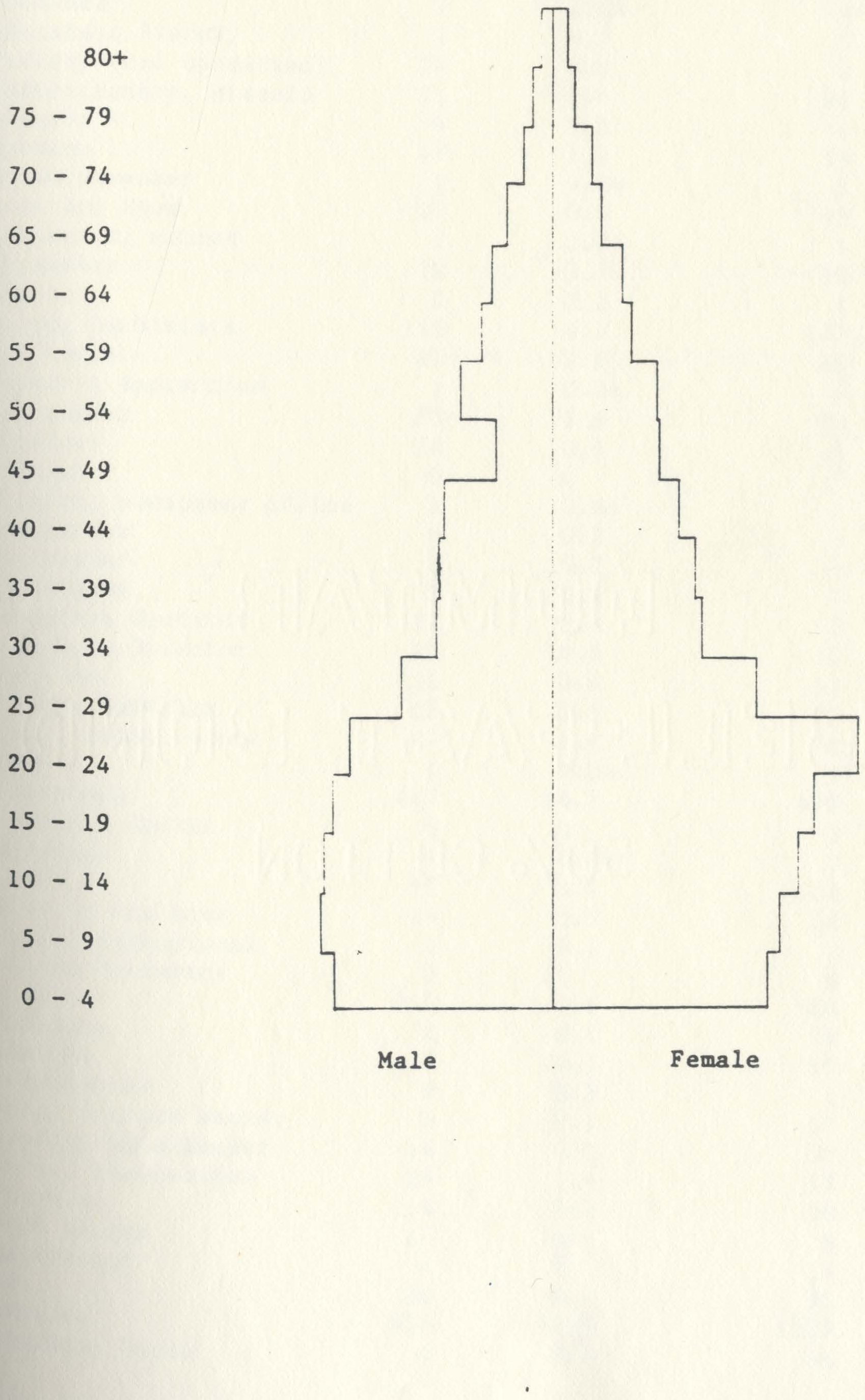

**Table 2-3:** St. John's Female Labour Force, 1921 and 1935

| Occupation | 1921 # | 1921 % | 1935 # | 1935 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 008 Gardener | 1 | 0.04 | 0 | 0 |
| 010 Assistant Fishery | 3 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 |
| 015 Factory (not specified) | 24 | 0.8 | 8 | .2 |
| 055 Confectionery, biscuit | 51 | 1.8 | 84 | 2.2 |
| 063 Bottler | 6 | 0.2 | 6 | 0.2 |
| 073 Tobacco | 19 | 1.2 | 59 | 1.5 |
| 099 Butterinemaker | 1 | 0.04 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 115 Boot and Shoe | 27 | 0.9 | 45 | 1.2 |
| 137 Inspector, mender | 1 | 0.04 | 1 | .02 |
| 149 Ropemaker | 19 | 0.7 | 20 | .5 |
| 152 Cutter | 2 | 0.1 | 1 | .02 |
| 153 Sewing Machinists | 115 | 4.1 | 177 | 4.6 |
| 155 Tailoress | 81 | 3.5 | 48 | 1.2 |
| 156 Tailor's Apprentice | 1 | 0.04 | 0 | 0 |
| 157 Dressmaker | 73 | 2.6 | 54 | 1.4 |
| 163 Milliner | 26 | 0.9 | 2 | 0 |
| 165 Knitter | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0.2 |
| 202 Printer, newspaper office | 1 | 0.04 | 0 | 0 |
| 214 Bookbinder | 6 | 0.2 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 309 Matchmaker | 5 | 0.2 | 6 | 0.1 |
| 396 Stewardess | 2 | 0.1 | 3 | 0.05 |
| 435 Telegraph Operator | 12 | 0.4 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 436 Telephone Operator | 23 | 0.8 | 57 | 1.5 |
| 438 Cash Girl | 18 | 0.6 | 13 | 0.3 |
| 453 Packer, labeller | 15 | 0.5 | 40 | 1.0 |
| 460 Owner, retail store | 47 | 1.6 | 84 | 2.2 |
| 475 Buyer | 1 | 0.04 | 3 | 0.07 |
| 477 Saleswoman | 417 | 14.7 | 479 | 12.3 |
| 492 Insurance Agents | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0.07 |
| 522 Physician | 1 | 0.04 | 0 | 0 |
| 526 Nurse | 97 | 3.4 | 155 | 4.0 |
| 528 Nurse in training | 14 | 0.5 | 72 | 1.9 |
| 532 Health Professional | 3 | 0.1 | 3 | 0.07 |
| 533 College Professor | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 534 Teacher | 163 | 5.8 | 186 | 4.8 |
| 554 Librarian | 2 | 0.1 | 4 | 0.1 |
| 555 Musician | 2 | 0.1 | 10 | 0.3 |
| 556 Photographer | 9 | 0.3 | 1 | 0.02 |
| 562 Social Welfare Worker | 3 | 0.1 | 17 | 0.44 |
| 592 Boarding housekeeper | 14 | 0.5 | 50 | 1.3 |
| 593 Matron, housekeeper | 39 | 1.4 | 57 | 1.5 |
| 594 Waitress | 9 | 0.3 | 38 | 1.0 |
| 600 Hotel Keeper | 17 | 0.1 | 5 | 0.1 |
| 604 Hairdresser | 4 | 0.1 | 33 | 0.9 |
| 606 Cook | 20 | 0.7 | 30 | 0.8 |
| 607 Domestic | 958 | 33.8 | 1329 | 34.4 |
| 608 Practical Nurse | 5 | 0.2 | 26 | 0.7 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 613 Charwoman | 37 | 1.3 | 66 | 1.7 |
| 619 Attendant, Doctor's Office | 3 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 |
| 629 Laundress | 23 | 0.8 | 25 | 0.6 |
| 632 Typist | 287 | 10.1 | 386 | 9.9 |
| 633 Bookkeeper | 95 | 3.4 | 106 | 2.7 |
| 639 Office Clerk | 16 | 0.6 | 38 | 1.0 |
| 691 Forelady | 4 | 0.1 | 9 | 0.2 |
| | 2822 | 100.0 | 3866 | 100.0 |

Increase in female labour force from 1921 to 1935 = 36.9 percent

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

Table 2-4: Occupation Groups - Female Labour Force, 1921 and 1935

| Occupation Groups | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 78 | 2.8 | 139 | 3.6 |
| Professional | 285 | 10.1 | 453 | 11.7 |
| Office Work | 433 | 15.3 | 592 | 15.3 |
| Retail Work | 445 | 15.8 | 498 | 12.9 |
| Service | 1100 | 39.0 | 1607 | 41.6 |
| Semi-skilled | 181 | 6.4 | 104 | 2.7 |
| Unskilled | 300 | 10.6 | 473 | 12.2 |
| | 2822 | 100.0 | 3866 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations in each group see Appendix A.

White Collar-Proprietor, Professional, Office Work and Retail Work = 44.0 per cent in 1921, 43.5 per cent in 1935.

Blue Collar-Service, Semi-Skilled and Unskilled = 56 per cent in 1921, 56.5 per cent in 1935.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

# Chapter 3

# "They Are Always The First Ones To Bring Home Their Earnings": The Pattern of Women's Paid Work

"I left work when I married William. By that time I was 20, tired of working at the factory, and glad to be making a home for us."[1] With these words Mary Norris described the transition in her life from "working girl" to married woman. One stage in her life ended and another began. Born Mary Taylor on 31 October 1900, this daughter of a Southside St. John's fisherman and his wife began work at the age of fifteen. Mary went to work at the Newfoundland Knitting Company factory on Alexander Street, sewing knitted garments for $4.00 a week. She gave most of her earnings to her widowed father to help feed and clothe the Taylor family. Within two years, she left the knitting mill for the White Clothing Company factory on Duckworth Street where she worked in the pants department, sewing zippers into trousers for a wage of $6.50 a week. After her marriage in 1920 to William Norris (a presser at the White Clothing Company), Mary never set foot in a factory again. She did, however, earn money throughout the early years of her married life by sewing and cleaning, as well as wallpapering rooms for relatives, friends, and neighbours to supplement her husband's meager income. She accomplished these tasks while bearing and raising eight children. Mary's eldest daughter, Dorothy, started work at the Browning-Harvey confectionery factory in 1934 at the age of twelve. While Mary

---

[1] Interview with Mary Norris, May 1986.

did not want her daughter labouring long hours in a factory at such a young age, she realized that Dorothy's earnings were essential to the family. On more than one occasion her daughter's wage of $3.50 a week had to sustain the Norris household, since William could find only casual employment, and domestic responsibilities prevented Mary from carrying out some type of paid labour.[2]

Mary Norris' life experience was similar to that of many other women in St. John's during the 1920's and 1930's. Full-time, paid employment outside the home was just a temporary interlude for most between leaving school and getting married. It was part of one stage in their life cycles. While some wage-earning women came from middle-class backgrounds and pursued employment in such occupations as teaching, nursing or office work, the majority came from working-class backgrounds. For these women, the small wages they earned as domestics, factory operatives, tailoresses or sales clerks, were often an important contribution to the financial support of their families. Once a wage-earning woman decided to get married it was fully expected that she would leave her place of employment. Women seldom considered that they would ever have to return to wage labour after marriage for their husbands assumed the role of breadwinner and they took on the role of homemaker. But for some women, their husbands' earnings were insufficient to support their families, and as a result, they had to find some means to earn additional money in order to maintain their households. This paid work was usually performed at home and combined with domestic duties as well as childcare. Under certain circumstances such as unemployment, illness, separation from, or death of the primary male wage-earner, a small number of women did return to the work force as full-time wage earners. If a family had children over a particular age, they were sent out to work, rather than the mother, since she still had the responsibility of managing the household. Whether as

---

[2]Interview with Dorothy Froggott, May 1986. Dorothy was born 16 December 1922. Her father was laid off from the White Clothing factory in 1921, and thereafter worked as a casual labourer on the waterfront.

a daughter or a wife, the decision of a woman to seek wage labour was most often linked inextricably with the well-being of her family.

This chapter examines the pattern of women's paid labour in St. John's during the 1920's and 1930's. Particular emphasis is placed on changes in women's life cycles as they affected their participation in the city's work force. The argument is made that a woman's age, marital status, and class background were the most important factors in determining whether she worked outside the home or engaged in some form of paid labour within the household. A number of other related factors, however, are also looked at such as religion, age and number of children, and stage of the family life cycle, in terms of their impact on women's labour force participation and the type of work they performed. The data provided in the chapter and the tables that follow does not represent the entire population; rather, they are taken from a sample of every third household containing a working woman.[3]

As already outlined in Chapter 2, the 1920's and 1930's were years of tremendous upheaval and economic depression in the Dominion of Newfoundland. In St. John's, the unemployment rate was high, and many of those with jobs received low wages and/or worked only a portion of the year. In a letter from "The Women of the West End" some indication was given of the difficulties people experienced during these years:

> We have had to bear this suffering in silence and weep and weep in the long hours of the day and night, for long weary months of the year because of the fact that our breadwinners have so often been deprived of employment necessary for the upkeep of their homes."[4]

Another letter, dated 1 April 1935, from "A Workingman" stated:

> Many are wondering when the employers will give their employees a

---

[3]For details of the methodology see Appendix C.

[4]Evening Telegram, 3 March 1923.

> living wage. Take a working man who is giving the best years to his employer and the best of his energy and not receiving enough money to keep body and soul together. He must have a heart as big as a football to come home day after day looking at his family half clothed, half hungry, no school, and children growing up uneducated.[5]

Under such circumstances it was not likely that many women worked for "pin money". While certain individuals in St. John's felt that "women worked not from necessity or need but to gratify desires,"[6] in reality, many did so because their wages were vitally important to the economic survival of their families. Nor did female workers endure long hours, poor working conditions and low wages primarily as a means of self-fulfillment. In a letter to the Employers' Protective Association, dated 16 August 1921, James Caul (President of the LSPU) explained the important contribution made by wage-earning women:

> The question of cost cannot be taken into consideration in dealing with the question of wages. Between 95 and 98 percent of the members of the union do not earn enough under the present scale to keep body and soul together. Were it not for the fact that the wives, daughters and sons supplement the earnings of the household a very large majority of the members would be compelled to seek able-bodied relief.[7]

In a speech before the Newfoundland House of Assembly on 11 April 1925, the Colonial Secretary also noted the importance of women's paid labour in aiding family finances. "In all kinds of offices today, government and commercial, girls hold responsible positions; they predominate in the factories, and in all walks of life they are doing splendidly. It would be a sorry day for many families in this city but for the girls and

---

[5] Evening Telegram, 1 April 1935.

[6] Evening Telegram, 16 March 1928. In a debate held by the Methodist Church Literary Institute this argument was used to justify wage discrepancies between male and female workers.

[7] PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, P8/B/11, Box 11, File 13, Letter from James Caul to the Employers' Protective Association, 16 August 1921.

young women."[8]

### 3.1. Single Working Women

Unlike men, women's labour force participation in the inter-war period was directly related to their age, and more importantly, to their marital status. In general, female workers could be characterized as being young and single. The majority of working women in St. John's at this time were between the ages of 15 and 24. [See Table 3-1.] Over two-thirds of the female wage-earners fell within this age group in 1921, and over 56 per cent in 1935. As these figures indicate, however, a noticeable reduction did occur in the proportion of working women under 25, particularly those between ages 15 and 19; the latter age group accounted for 32.1 per cent of working women sampled in 1921, but only 16.9 per cent in 1935. This shift towards slightly older workers resulted from single women remaining in the labour force longer because of the bleak economic conditions and the rising participation of married women who tended to be older than their single counterparts. Another reason for this shift can be attributed to changes in the city's female population as a whole. Between 1921 and 1935, a reduction occurred in the number of females in the age group 15 to 19, while a sizeable increase happened in the age group 20 to 24.[9] This trend should not be over-emphasized as a substantial percentage of women in wage employment continued to be between 15 and 24. It should also be mentioned that women in St. John's tended to be younger than those elsewhere.[10] The youthfulness of the St. John's female

---

[8] Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1925 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1926), p. 300. This speech was made in support of the passage of an act granting women suffrage. The contribution of working women to the well-being of individual families was used as justification for giving women the vote.

[9] In 1921, young women 15 to 19 numbered 2,421 and in 1935, 2,331. Women ages 20 to 24 numbered 2,286 in 1921 and 2,727 in 1935.

[10] See, Canada, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Volume IV, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929); Canada, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, Volume VII (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942). For example, in 1921, only 52 per cent of the working women in Halifax were under 25, and in 1931, just 46.7 percent.

labour force was due to the disproportionate number of young women living in the city,[11] as well as the absence of child labour and compulsory education laws in Newfoundland.[12] Women's marital status had an even greater influence on whether they worked or not. Most women worked for a relatively brief period until they married. Single women constituted 93 per cent of the female labour force in 1921, and 91.2 per cent in 1935. [See Table 3-2.] Perhaps the best evidence of the connection between age and marital status as factors affecting women's entry into the work force can be found by crosstabulating them. In 1921, 85.3 per cent of wage-earning women were unmarried and between the ages of 15 and 34; in 1935, the comparable figure was 80.3 per cent [See Table 3-3.]

The majority of single women who went out to work lived with their parents (53.8 per cent in 1921 and 52.3 per cent in 1935).[13] [See Table 3-4.] The evidence

---

[11] See Chapter 2 for discussion of the disproportionate number of women in the city.

[12] Prior to World War II, there was only one piece of legislation in Newfoundland which dealt with minimum age requirements for employment, and none at all covering age of school leaving. The "Mines (Regulation) Act" of 1908 stipulated that no boys under thirteen and no girls or women of any age were allowed to work underground in mines. See, Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1980 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1908), p. 28. In 1942, the "School Attendance Act" was instituted which stipulated that all children under the age of fourteen had to be enrolled in school. See, Acts of the Honourable Commission of Government of Newfoundland, 1942 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1942), pp. 135-144. The passage of the "Welfare of Children Act" in 1944 prohibited women under the age of seventeen from employment in restaurants and taverns, and waged work for all women between 9 at night and 8 in the morning. See, Acts of the Honourable Commission of Government of Newfoundland, 1944 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1944), pp. 303-315. Without a compulsory education law in force, and without the money available to pay school fees, large numbers of working-class children in the 1920's and 1930's left school at a young age.

[13] Single women living at home accounted for 51.3 per cent of the entire female labour force in 1921 and 47.7 per cent in 1935. [See Table 3-5.]

suggests that only a small number came from middle-class backgrounds.[14] There were just a few who were the children of merchants, lawyers, doctors, or even salesmen. Proprietors, professionals, commercial and state employees were the heads of only 21.2 per cent of the households with at least one working daughter in 1921. Over the next decade and a half their numbers increased, but in 1935 they still comprised just 24.7 per cent. [See Table 3-6.] By far the largest proportion of working women came from working-class backgrounds. They were most frequently the children of carpenters, longshoremen, labourers, and the unemployed. Skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, and service workers were the heads of 55.2 per cent of the households with a wage-earning daughter in 1921, and 40.6 per cent in 1935. This sharp decrease was due primarily to the substantial increase in the percentage of heads of households who did not possess any job at all, from 23.4 per cent to 34.7 per cent in 1935.

The small number of middle-class women who worked did not have the same financial responsibilities that were placed upon those from the working class. Unlike most working-class women their earnings rarely had to be handed over to parents as a necessary contribution to the household. They were freer to spend their earnings on clothing and entertainment. If middle-class women were laid off from their jobs, few had to worry that members of their families might be denied food and clothing. Hazel

---

[14]Determining the socio-economic class of working women in this study is fraught with difficulties. There has been some debate in the feminist literature on the question of ascertaining the class of women. As Pat and Hugh Armstrong point out in "Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex," in Politics of Diversity, edited by R. Hamilton and M. Barrett (London: Verso, 1987), p. 227 no satisfactory theory has yet been developed. "Theories that lump all women together as a class ignore class differences amongst women. Theories that attach women to their husbands or families ignore women's subordination, their domestic labour or their labour force work. Theories which locate women in terms of their own paid employment forget both the segregation of the labour force, and the domestic labour that most women perform. Theories that are blind to sex differences obscure not only divisions fundamental to all classes, but also the structure of capitalism." For further discussion of this debate see, Jean Gardiner, "Women in the Labour Process and Class Structure," in Class and Class Structure, edited by Alan Hunt (London: Lawrence, 1977), pp. 22-48. See also, Christine Delphy, "Women in Stratification Studies," in Doing Feminist Research, edited by Helen Roberts (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 114-128. While realizing the weakness of this method, the class designation of working women in this study is determined by the occupation of the head of the household except in those cases where a woman is living with a relative, as a boarder, or as a domestic. It is impossible to determine with any degree of precision the class of women living in those particular circumstances.

Strong, whose father was a planter[15] on the Southside, viewed her job as a waitress in a small restaurant as a temporary position which she could leave at any time. "Problems at work never bothered me much because I knew I could leave whenever I wanted and go home." Hazel actually quit her job for a period of six months when she grew tired of the work.[16] In sharp contrast, the far greater number of working-class women who worked did so because their wages were essential to the economic well-being of their families. Their wages had to be handed over directly to their parents, and were often used to subsidize the earnings of their fathers. The wages of most working-class males at this time usually did not reach levels high enough to support their families comfortably. Seasonality only made the plight of working-class families even more difficult. Mary McGrath reported in the 1921 census that she worked at the Newfoundland Boot and Shoe Company as a shoe stitcher while her father was employed as a fireman on a ship. With the help of Mary's wages, Peter McGrath provided for a family of ten.[17] For many working-class families in St. John's, having a daughter out working and bringing home an income, proved to be a great benefit. A member of the Newfoundland House of Assembly stated in a 1925 session that, "Families who formerly were in straitened circumstances because they had no breadwinner, but a man, are now in comfort through the industry of young women and girls."[18] Jenny Fogwill was only fourteen years of age when she secured her first job in 1926. Her wages were vital to the family because her father did not earn enough as a

---

[15]Planters were middle men in the fishing industry. They did not catch any fish, but instead bought quantities of fish, prepared it for market, and then sold to fish exporting merchants.

[16]Interview with Hazel Strong, February 1987. Mrs. Strong was born Hazel Guest in St. John's 2 June 1909. Her father was a planter who made a "comfortable living." In 1931, at the age of 22, Hazel went out to work as a waitress in a small restaurant adjacent to the Hotel Newfoundland. In 1939 she married Cyril Strong, who became an important labour leader in Newfoundland.

[17]Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921 (Nominal).

[18]Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1925 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1926), p. 300.

longshoreman to pay the rent and buy enough food for his family. As Jenny explained, "I went to help out our family. I was the oldest girl and my older brother couldn't get work. Times were hard so I went out to work and it seemed as if that was all I did." Her earnings alone had to feed the family when her father went on strike in the fall of 1932.[19] The wages of daughters were generally used to supplement the earnings of their fathers, who were considered to be the primary breadwinners. Nevertheless, there were many other instances in which the support of the family was fully a daughter's responsibility, or shared along with another sibling. In most instances their fathers were unemployed, or their mothers were widows. Unemployed fathers became more prevalent between 1921 and 1935. In 1921, only a small percentage of households (3.7 per cent) with a working daughter present contained a father without wage employment. By 1935, this type of household had increased to 13 per cent. [See Table 3-7.] A contemporary observer noted that in situations where "the young girl finds employment and her father is at home without a job, she is the first to bring home her earnings."[20] A much larger percentage of households in 1921 (23.2 per cent) were without the primary male breadwinner altogether, and in 1935 this figure had reached 30.8 per cent. In these particular cases, widows held the position as head of the household. The overwhelming majority of these widows (84.9 per cent in 1921 and 83.3 per cent in 1935) did not have any visible source of employment.[21] Under such circumstances, their working daughters as well as their working sons must have been

---

[19]Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986. She was born Jenny Horwood, 18 October 1918, in St. John's. Her father worked as a longshoreman. At the age of fourteen in 1926 she started work at a small confectionery store. In 1929, she was hired at Ayre and Sons on the cash desk. She remained at Ayre's until 1936 when she married Irving Fogwill who later became an important labour leader in Newfoundland.

[20]Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1929 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1930), p. 235.

[21]In 1921, 90 out of 106 widows in households with a working daughter did not have a job while in 1935 it was 125 out of 150.

important sources of family income.[22]

Single women living with their parents were employed primarily as factory operatives, tailoresses, retail sales clerks, office workers, and as professionals. [See Table 3-8.] Middle-class women living at home were more likely to be employed as teachers, nurses, stenographers, and saleswomen. Agnes O'Dea who trained to be a librarian in the early 1930's indicated that there were very few occupations deemed suitable for middle-class women. "You see by choosing to be a librarian, I was eliminating only teaching, nursing, and office work [as possible job options.] At that time there weren't too many openings, too many avenues. These were the basic options."[23] Working-class women, on the other hand, were more likely to be employed as tailoresses, waitresses, and factory operatives, as well as saleswomen and stenographers. [See Table 3-9.] A woman's class background could determine to some degree the work she ended up performing in the work force. Training for a profession dictated that a young woman had a certain level of education, time, and money. It was difficult for most working-class women to meet all three of these requirements. In order to enter a program in maternity nursing at the Grace Hospital in 1924, a young woman had to have passed Intermediate Grade, and paid a fee of $50.00.[24] Training took place over a period of twenty months, at the end of which, candidates had to write

---

[22]Widows did receive a small payment of $5.00 a month from the Newfoundland Government if they could prove they were deserving. Obviously, this amount was not sufficient to support even a small family. In regard to old age pensions which totalled $50.00 a year, only men seventy-five years of age or older qualified. The act governing old age pensions did not include any specific provisions for surviving widows until 1926. In 1926, an amendment to the old age pension act stipulated that if a widow had reach the age of sixty-five years of age she was entitled to "have such pension continued until her death or remarriage." This provision was included in the new pension act in 1934. For the different versions of the act see, Consolidated Statutes of Newfoundland, Third Series (St. John's: Robinson, 1919), pp. 534-544. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1926 (St. John's: Thistle, 1926), p. 132. Acts of the Honourable Commission of Government of Newfoundland, 1934 (St. John's: Thistle, 1934), pp. 62-64.

[23]Interview with Agnes O'Dea, August 1986. Miss O'Dea was born 24 August 1911 in St. John's. Her father was a merchant. She attended Mercy Convent in St. John's, and then Loretto Abbey in Toronto. She received a bachelor's degree in library science from the University of Toronto in 1932. After returning to St. John's, Agnes was employed by the Commission of Government to set up Newfoundland's first public library. She worked as a professional librarian until her retirement in 1976. In 1987, she received an honourary doctorate from Memorial University in recognition of her service to the community and the university.

[24]Evening Telegram, 10 June 1924.

an exam.[25] Women wanting to train at the Grace Hospital or at the General Hospital faced stiff competition because the number of positions were limited.[26] The General Hospital admitted only ten to twelve nursing students each year, and the Grace Hospital after it opened in 1924, fifteen to twenty students annually.[27] A substantial number of St. John's women travelled to the United States or Canada to train as nurses. This type of venture most often required the financial assistance of a young woman's parents to pay for her passage to such places as New York or Montreal, as well as tuition. Notices in the local newspapers frequently reported the departure of young women such as Alice Kelly. "Miss Kelly is on her way to New York where she will enter a hospital to study nursing. Her many friends while regretting her departure from the city will wish her success in her studies."[28] An alumna of a private school for girls in St. John's stated in a 1928 newspaper article that, "Many of the pupils leaving Spencer College in recent years have aspired to one of the noblest and highest professions in the world of womanhood -- that of a nurse."[29] She went on to mention some of the places where these women chose to train: Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Boston, Englewood, New Jersey, and Providence, Rhode Island.[30]

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] The General Hospital initiated the first training program for nurses in St. John's in 1904. Not until 1924, with the opening of the Grace Hospital was there a second school of nursing in the city. These two hospitals continued to be the only ones educating nurses up to World War II.

[27] Observer's Weekly, 4 May 1937. This issue includes a summary of activities at the General Hosptial School of Nursing. See also, Joyce Nevitt, White Caps and Blacks Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934 (St. John's: Jesperson, 1978), pp. 148-150.

[28] Daily News, 4 March 1922.

[29] Evening Telegram, 18 December 1928.

[30] Ibid. Some women who could not afford initially the cost of taking nurses training or teachers training worked for a couple of years to save enough money. Brief notices occasionally showed up in local newspapers indicating that employees of particular firm were hosting a going away party for a co-worker. Evening Telegram, 23 August 1928; 31 June 1931.

To work as a stenographer or a bookkeeper a woman needed to have specialized skills which she could only acquire by taking commercial courses. While all of the high schools in the city offered commercial programs that were separate from their regular academic curriculums, they were expensive. At the Academy of Our Lady of Mercy the tuition fee for one term was $10.00 in 1923.[31] (The entire commercial program took three terms.) This amount only included general courses in "stenography, typewriting, and office routine." There was an extra charge for courses which taught students how to use a dictaphone or a calculating machine.[32] That same year full-time enrollment at the newly opened United Business College cost students $12.00 per term.[33] Commercial courses continued to be this expensive throughout the latter part of the 1920's and throughout the 1930's.[34]

Why did the majority of single working women reside with their parents? To begin with, their incomes were generally so low that most could not even consider renting a place of their own or boarding somewhere else. For a substantial number of wage-earning women, their parents needed them living at home contributing to the household economy. While there was the possibility that a woman could reside elsewhere and send money to her parents, the sum given them would have been smaller than if she had lived at home. Most parents did not like a daughter living someplace else, where she would be away from their supervision and protection. Concern for the protection of young women, particularly those who worked, remained central. Many people thought that women who worked had a much greater exposure to

---

[31] PANL, Eric Ellis Papers, PN55, Box 1. A receipt from the Sisters of Mercy for $10.00 dated First Term 1923.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Evening Telegram, 19 September 1923. Evening classes were also offered at the United Business College as well as the Commercial Night School.

[34] Evening Telegram, 21 April 1929; 9 November 1935.

the evil elements in society than women who remained within the confines of their households.[35] Given such prevailing ideas, it is not surprising that parents were reluctant to allow their daughters to move beyond the bounds of their guardianship. Employment did not afford many single women greater independence. In most instances, their parents had a great deal of control over the type of employment they sought, what they were allowed to do with their time away from work, and how much money they had to hand over on pay day. Dorothy Frogott stated, "Most times I knew when I could have spending money because if my father wasn't working a lot I knew I had to give most of my wages to Mom, but when Dad was working I always used to get things for my sister."[36] In one extreme case when a widowed mother could not exercise any control over her daughters (both worked at a city clothing factory) to give her some of their earnings, she took them to court. It ended up that, "The girls were ordered to pay over to their mother $1.50 and $2.50 per week respectively."[37]

Few single working women lived with relatives, as boarders, or on their own (11.8 per cent in 1921 and 13.3 per cent in 1935). [See Table 3-4.] Female wage-earners who resided with relatives were small in number. They accounted for a mere 5 per cent of the unmarried women in the labour force in 1921. Over a decade later their numbers had risen marginally to 6.6 per cent. In most instances these women did not have parents living in the city. Either their mothers and fathers were deceased, or their parents remained behind in outports while they sought employment in St. John's. In the vast majority of such cases these women lived with an older married

---

[35]On a number of occasions letters appeared in the the local newspapers which voiced these particular types of concerns. Evening Telegram, 2 September 1926; 29 February 1928.

[36]Interview with Dorothy Froggott, May 1986.

[37]Evening Telegram, 20 February 1925.

sibling.[38] Female wage-earners living with a relative could contribute some of their earnings toward household expenses, but likely not as much as they would have to pay if they were boarding with a stranger.

A slightly smaller proportion of women boarded than those who resided with relatives. [See Table 3-4.] These women tended to be older than other single working women. In 1921, 47.7 per cent of female wage-earners who boarded were 25 years of age or older; in 1935, 65.7 per cent. [See Table 3-10.] As the figures suggest, an increase had occurred between the two censuses in the ages of this particular group of working women. These female boarders were employed primarily in white collar occupations which tended to offer marginally higher incomes than blue-collar occupations. [See Table 3-11.] A greater number of women might have boarded if inexpensive places had been available to them. There was a shortage of cheap accommodation where women earning low wages could board. When advertisements were placed in the newspapers asking for boarders the weekly charge was usually anywhere between $4.00 and $6.00.[39] As one will see later in this chapter not many women received much over $4.00 a week, and even fewer more than $6.00 a week. In the early 1920's there were only two homes for "working girls" offering inexpensive rates for room and board, one run by the Roman Catholic Church, and another by the Grenfell Association. The St. Clare's Home on LeMarchant Road which had been open since 1912 was administered by the Sisters of Mercy.[40] The home was often filled to capacity with Catholic women as the nuns only required boarders to pay what they could afford. Unfortunately, the home was closed in May 1922 to make way for the

---

[38] In 1921, 88.2 per cent of the women who lived with relatives were either sisters or sisters-in-law of the head of the household, and in 1935 they represented 87.5 per cent.

[39] Evening Telegram, 3 May 1921; 15 August 1923; 1 February 1924; 31 September 1926; 1 June 1932; 22 June 1934.

[40] J. Flynn, "The Catholic Church in Newfoundland", in The Book of Newfoundland Vol. III, edited by J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: The Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), p. 275.

opening of the St. Clare's Hospital.[41] At the Seaman's Institute on Water Street, which had been open since 1914, there was an overwhelming demand for accommodation. The matron of the "Girls Section" noted in her report for 1921 that, "Applications have had to be refused for lack of space and there is a long waiting list of girls who would like to become permanent boarders."[42] In 1921 alone, the Seaman's Institute turned down 206 applications simply because there was not the space.[43] In 1926, the Grenfell Association handed over the Seaman's Institute to the YMCA/YWCA. The new administrator stated at the time that, "The work of the girls' department so admirably performed under the direction of the Ladies Auxiliary will also be continued and if possible extended."[44] Under the guidance of the YWCA, a "House Department" was set up and as many as fifty-five women at a time boarded there.[45] This one residence could not even begin to fill the demand that still existed in the city for cheap places to board. At the annual meeting of the YWCA in 1932 mention was made that the "House Department" could not accomodate all the women wanting and needing a place to board.[46] This issue continued to be raised at subsequent annual meetings during the 1930's.[47]

Women who headed up their own households totalled just 1.9 per cent of all

---

[41] J. Nevitt, White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934, p. 97.

[42] "The Annual Report of the Seaman's Institute," Among the Deep Sea Fishers, Vol.XXIV, No.3 (October 1921), p. 32.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "Seaman's Institute Administration Changes," Among the Deep Sea Fishers, Vol.XXIX, No.1 (April 1926), p. 14.

[45] Evening Telegram, 22 January 1927.

[46] Evening Telegram, 2 February 1932.

[47] Evening Telegram, 11 February 1937; 15 February 1938.

single working women in 1921, and 3 per cent in 1935.[48] [See Table 3-4.] This small number emphasizes the fact that working women during this period found it extremely difficult to live independently. These women were older than their other unmarried wage-earning counterparts, since the majority of them were age 40 or older. [See Table 3-10.] By this stage in their lives it was likely that at least one, or possibly both, of their parents were no longer alive. There was little prospect of marriage for these women, so they had to find some means of supporting themselves. Most of these women were the sole wage-earners in their households (56.3 per cent in 1921 and 59.2 per cent in 1935). In the case of another substantial proportion (40.2 per cent in 1921 and 39.4 per cent in 1935), they shared the responsibility with another unmarried sibling.[49] Single working women who headed up households tended to be owners of small confectionery or grocery stores as well as private dressmakers.[See Table 3-11.] These occupations allowed them to combine their places of residence and places of work, thus cutting down on costs, and making it easier to live on their own.

Religious affiliation did not have a major influence on the occupations that single working women chose, but it did have an impact on the location of their work. St. John's was a city where religion created divisions and tensions amongst its population. City residents accepted the fact that an individual had a much better chance of being hired at a private firm where the owner or manager was of the same religion. In the stores of Water Street, Methodists (after 1925, members of the United Church) were more likely to be hired at Ayre and Sons, Anglicans at Bowring Brothers, and Catholics at Royal Stores. It seems to have been an unwritten and often unspoken agreement by the population as a whole. As Jenny Fogwill stated, "You just

---

[48]Only sixteen single women were heads of their own households. Such a small sample size poses a problem when attempting to generalize for the entire population.

[49]These percentages are derived from data gathered for the quantitative study that relates to the men and women who were wage-earners in the individual households.

knew that Protestants looked after Protestants and Catholics after Catholics."[50] Only rarely did one see advertisements like the following in the newspapers: "Stenographer wanted immediately - must be quick at short hand and typewriting; Protestant preferred."[51] When this type of preference was stated publicly for an employee of a certain religion, it elicited a great deal of criticism. The reaction was quite negative when a sign was placed in the window at Ayre and Sons in the early 1920's asking for female sales clerks with the added notation that "No Catholics Need Apply." The sign was not up very long before it had to be removed because of public pressure.[52] A denominational school system was also firmly entrenched in Newfoundland which meant that a teacher had to be of the particular religious denomination in order to be hired at a certain school. An Anglican woman, for example, could only teach at an Anglican school in the city. Furthermore, tradition dictated that the denominational breakdown of the Newfoundland civil service was supposed to match exactly the denominational breakdown of the entire country. Therefore, approximately one-third of the government employees in St. John's had to be Catholic, one-third Anglican, and one-third Methodist.[53]

Overall, single women tended to secure employment in manufacturing, domestic service, retail sales, office work, and the "female professions".[54] [See Table 3-12.] Employment for single women in general meant low wages, long hours of labour, and

---

[50]Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

[51]Evening Telegram, 19 April 1921.

[52]Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

[53]For a religious breakdown of the Newfoundland civil service see, Newfoundland, The Civil Service in Newfoundland From a Denominational Standpoint, November 1st, 1928 (St. John's: n.p., 1928). According to this government report Catholics constituted 32.9 percent of the civil servants, Anglicans 32.2 per cent, United Church members 28.2 per cent, and other denominations 6.7 per cent.

[54]Domestic service will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

poor working conditions. Blue-collar workers in the city's factories discovered that the work day at most of them began at 7:30 or 8 o'clock in the morning and did not end until 6 o'clock at night, with only a half hour to an hour for lunch.[55] Operatives worked these hours Monday to Friday, and on Saturdays were allowed to leave at l or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It is not known how widespread this practice was, but at the Imperial Tobacco factory on Bond Street, the doors were locked precisely at 8 o'clock. Any workers who had not arrived by that time missed a day's work, and thus a day's wages.[56] An effort had been made at the end of World War I to establish an eight-hour work day in the factories, which had met with some success.[57] For a brief period at least, an eight-hour day existed in the clothing, boot and shoe, tobacco, cordage, and confectionery factories in the city. With the onset of the depressed conditions in the early 1920's, however, many of the factories were forced to close for a time or run only "short time." The owners of the factories that managed to stay open argued that they could no longer afford to offer employees an eight-hour work day.[58] As the decade advanced many factories returned to a nine or even ten-hour day. A St. John's worker provided details on the extremely long hours then endured by female factory operatives in a letter to The Worker in 1935 which revealed that women at the Imperial Tobacco Company worked ten hours a day as did those employed at the White Clothing Company and the Colonial Cordage Company. Operatives at the Parker and Monroe shoe factory and the recently opened Utica clothing factory laboured nine

---

[55]Interview with Mary Norris, May 1986. Interview with Stella Wiseman, June 1986. Mrs. Wiseman was born in St. John's, 21 March 1918. Her father worked as a stationary engineer at Job's cold storage plant. She started working at the Imperial Tobacco Company in 1937 at the age of nineteen. She worked there for three years packing cigarettes.

[56]Interview with Stella Wiseman, May 1986.

[57]For details of this campaign see Chapter 5.

[58]Evening Telegram, 4 May 1921.

hours a day.[59] Factory operatives were also expected to work overtime when a set amount of goods had to be produced by a specific time. It was not out of the ordinary for women to return to work after their evening meals for another two or three hours of labour when it was required. At the clothing factories, workers rushed to fill orders of winter clothes during the spring and early summer months, and spring clothes during the fall and winter months. The confectionery factories were especially busy during the three months before Christmas and the month prior to Easter. Dorothy Froggott who worked at a confectionery factory recalled how fatigued she felt after working overtime at the factory. "I'll tell you something, I was certainly tired when I got home. Mom would have my lunch ready when I arrived home about 10:30 and I used to flop on the bed. My mother had to help me undress."[60] A group of female operatives wrote the Governor in 1936 complaining about night work. This letter from "Hard Working Girls" stated:

> ...we girls have to work very hard starting at eight o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night and when busy until eleven. Every girl is human. We don't get big pay, but we would rather have our health, what we haven't got now. We think that when a girl works nine hours a day she needs fresh air at night. And we would appreciate Wednesday afternoons off.[61]

In some factories there was also a great variation from week to week and from one department to another in the number of hours worked by women. In 1938, an investigation of conditions in city factories found that, at one unidentified plant with female operatives present, the hours of work varied in one department during three consecutive weeks from fifty to seventy-eight hours, in another from forty-three to sixty hours, in a third from forty-five to fifty-eight hours, and in a fourth from fifty-two

---

[59] The Worker (Toronto), 29 June 1935. This newspaper was published by of the Communist Party of Canada.

[60] Interview with Dorothy Froggott, May 1986.

[61] PANL, Commission of Government, Secretary of the Commission, Miscellaneous Papers, GN38, S1-2-6, File 2, Letter from Hard Working Girls to the Governor, 18 April 1936.

to sixty hours.[62] It was an accepted practice in all the city factories not to pay a higher rate for overtime.

Work in the factories tended to be seasonal, so that periods of intensive activity were followed by months when business was slack and some workers were laid off. A complete shut down of operations happened at most of the factories for two weeks to a month every summer, and several weeks around Christmas. Workers were publicly summoned back to work through notices which were placed in the newspapers. For example, in January 1920 this item was placed in a local newspaper: "The employees of the Newfoundland Boot and Shoe Company will resume work on Monday, January 13th."[63] Workers did not receive any wages at all while the factories shut down operations. In addition to these scheduled closures, it was a common occurence in the 1920's and 1930's for city factories to run on short time or close down altogether for extended periods of time.[64] In the instances of factories running on short time, factory workers were given only two to three days of employment each week.

Exact figures on the wages of female factory operatives during the 1920's and 1930's are not available. Any discussion of wages received by working women during this period is limited by the fact that the earnings of workers were not recorded at all for the 1921 census, and the 1935 census provides only annual incomes. In regard to the latter census, it would have been much more useful if weekly wages had been included as well as some indication of whether workers were casually or permanently employed. The issue of factory operatives' wages is further complicated because such a

---

[62] Newfoundland, Industrial Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's: Robinson, 1940), p. 84. It is most unfortunate that for the sake of manufacturers' personal interests that the published information included in this report was quite limited. Neither the names of firms, the number of operatives employed, nor the type of manufacturing carried out was revealed. As a result, it is impossible to identify the factories mentioned in this report.

[63] Evening Telegram, 11 January 1920. In the 22 August 1922 issue of the Daily News employees in the oil clothing department at the Standard Manufacturing Company were informed that, "Work will resume tomorrow (Saturday) at 8 a.m."

[64] A full discussion of factory operations in the inter-war period can be found in Chapter 2.

large proportion of these women were employed as piece workers. Others were paid according to the length of time they worked. Within most city factories, both forms of payment existed. At the Newfoundland Clothing Company, operatives making vests and pants were paid by the total number of garments they sewed, while those in the coat department worked at an hourly rate. Women stemming tobacco at the Imperial Tobacco Company were paid at the end of each week by the number of hours they had laboured, while the weekly earnings of women in the shipping department depended upon how many cigarettes they packaged. From the fragmentary evidence available for the 1920's, it would appear that the earnings of female factory operatives ranged between $2.50 and $7.00 a week.[65] During the 1930's wages of women in the manufacturing sector certainly did not increase, and if anything, decreased. The manager of a city margarine factory announced a cut in staff wages of 8 to 10 percent in April 1932. The women in the plant's packing department experienced a reduction in their weekly earnings from $5.00 to $4.40. In January 1933, their wages had dropped to $4.00 a week.[66] The manager of the Colonial Cordage Company indicated in May 1933 that wages at his factory were going to be reduced by 15 per cent as a cost-cutting measure.[67] As previously mentioned, many factories were running short time which meant that many operatives could earn only a fraction of a regular work week's wages. A newspaper article in June 1935 suggested that the weekly wages for women at the Browning-Harvey confectionery factory were as low as $2.00 and no higher than $4.00.[68] Female workers at the Newfoundland Boot and Shoe Company

---

[65]This range of wages was listed in the job advertisements asking for factory operatives.

[66]PANL, Eric Ellis Papers, PN55, Box 1, Letter from Managing Director of Harvey Brehm to A.G. Williams, 13 April 1932; Wage list January 1933.

[67]Evening Telegram, 21 May 1933.

[68]The Worker, 29 June 1935. This information is substantiated by Dorothy Froggott who worked there at the time and earned $3.50 a week. Interview with Dorothy Froggott, May 1986.

along with those at the Imperial Tobacco Company and the White Clothing Company received wages in the narrow range of $4.00 to $6.00 per week.[69] The average annual income of female workers in the manufacturing sector in 1935 was $245.00, which meant just a little over $20.00 a month.[70]

The tasks that women were expected to perform in order to earn their small wages in the factories were tedious and carried out under unpleasant conditons. At the larger factories in particular, there was a clearly defined division of labour. Operatives were not required to carry out a variety of different tasks; rather, they were supposed to perform one single operation over and over again. One informant revealed that her job at a shoe factory entailed shining shoes after they had been assembled.[71] Another indicated that she sewed zippers into trousers at a clothing factory.[72] A 1919 magazine article provided an excellent description of the division of labour in one city garment factory:

> The first thing made in a pair of pants are the pockets. The fly is next sewed on and the two legs joined together at the back then the waistband is attached, each operation being performed by different girls. A man now gives the pants their first pressing in order to open out the seams.[73]

Stella Wiseman recalled that she looked forward to packing different kinds of cigarettes just to break up the monotony of her job.[74]

---

[69] Ibid.

[70] Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935 (Nominal). 8.9 per cent of female factory operatives earned $100 or less a year, another 35.6 per cent between $101 and $200, and 37.2 per cent between $201 and $300.

[71] MUNFLA, Rodney Vatcher interview with Anny Sears, 80-29. Born in 1903, Anny came to St. John's from an outport (not named in interview) in 1913 to work as domestic. She left this job in 1920 for one in a shoe factory. Anny remained at the factory until she got married in 1921.

[72] Interview with Mary Norris, May 1986.

[73] W. Smith, "Home Industries: Local Manufacture of Readymades," The Newfoundland Magazine, Vol.3, No.2 (November 1919), p. 4.

[74] Interview with Stella Wiseman, May 1986.

Work in factories was also divided by gender. The unskilled positions were relegated to women, and the skilled positions to men. In the clothing factories, for example, men were employed as cutters and pressers, which were designated as skilled jobs. There was almost no prospect of promotion into skilled positions for women. Most were confined to carrying out the same task the entire time they worked at a firm. In certain instances women who had been with a company for an extended period of time were promoted to supervisors, but only over other women.

Women were not only separated from men in the factories by skill, in many instances they also found themselves physically separated. Female operatives tended to be concentrated in specific departments, and sometimes were segregated on certain floors within the factories. Contact with workers of the opposite sex (except those factories with male foremen) was limited. At the Standard Manufacturing Company, only women were employed in the paint labelling, soap, and oil clothing departments. Women were not present in the paint, can, and packing departments.[75] At the Newfoundland Knitting Company all the female operatives worked on the second and third floors of the building, while male operatives worked on the first floor. Mary Norris noted that, "I hardly knew what they did down there. I never went down there. We used to come in and go straight upstairs. We wouldn't bother them."[76] When Stella Wiseman worked at the Imperial Tobacco Company an entrance was provided for "ladies" and another for "men".[77] On the first floor where she worked packing cigarettes she did not see any male workers "from one day to the next," except her

---

[75]W. Smith "Home Industries: How Paint, Soap, Candles, and Oil Clothes Are Made," The Newfoundland Magazine, Vol.3, No.1 (September 1919), pp. 2-10.

[76]Interview with Mary Norris, May 1986.

[77]Interview with Stella Wiseman, May 1986.

supervisor.[78]

Working as sales clerks did not prove to be any less time consuming or any more lucrative for women than toiling in the factories. During the 1920's, saleswomen in the stores on Water Street worked nine to ten hours per day, Monday to Friday, and at least thirteen hours on Saturdays.[79] Their hours were largely dictated by the time that the stores were open. In a letter to the Evening Telegram in 1932 entitled "A Plea for the Store Clerks," one saleswoman stated, "Nine and a half hours on an ordinary day and thirteen on Saturdays are surely sufficient for the public to make its purchases in, and it is certainly of benefit to those in charge of the welfare of our city to see that protection for the worker, and decent working conditions in the shape of a nine and a half hour day prevail."[80] Even after the stores were closed sales clerks sometimes had to remain behind and clean or stock shelves. For several months before Christmas, the stores on Water Street also stayed open every night until 10 p.m.[81] Saleswomen were not given any additional pay for the extra number of hours they worked. Jenny Fogwill emphasized she laboured "day and night for the same money."[82] Women who were employed in the numerous other small stores away from Water Street had to work even longer hours. One of these women who referred to herself as "A Working Girl" questioned, "Why must the middle street girls work three or four times every week until 10:30 and 11 and on Saturdays to 11:30 and midnight while stores

---

[78] Ibid.

[79] Evening Telegram, 10 May 1922; 9 May 1927.

[80] Evening Telegram, 15 October 1923.

[81] Evening Telegram, 7 October 1925.

[82] Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

on Water Street close at six every night and 10 on Saturday nights?"[83] In another letter this same woman indicated that one felt envious watching the girls employed on Water Street as they returned home after work. "It is pretty hard on the working girl of the Upper Streets to see our Water Street sisters hurrying home with beaming faces after a day's work, with the thought of a nice cool evening to spend in the country while we of the Upper Streets must return to work with the same desire in our hearts for a breath of country air."[84] The work was physically tiring because it was necessary for saleswomen to stand at all times. Store owners did not think it was essential to provide their employees with stools and were content to have them stand for six to eight hours without being able to sit down. During the Christmas rush, saleswomen frequently had to work an entire day without a single break.

After some agitation by sales clerks in the late 1920's, members of the Newfoundland House of Assembly introduced a bill in 1930 which was intended to regulate the hours of opening for retail stores, and thereby reduce the hours of work for clerks.[85] This bill was defeated, however, after only its first reading.[86] Unwilling to accept failure on this matter, 1,200 sales clerks signed a petition urging passage of legislation, which was then presented to the House of Assembly when it next opened in Spring 1931.[87] The government responded to the petition by introducing a new act

---

[83] Evening Telegram, 26 April 1929. "Middle Street" girls, or "Upper Street" girls as they were also referred to, were those who worked in the small stores removed from the major retail thoroughfare, Water Street.

[84] Evening Telegram, 8 May 1929.

[85] Liberal Press, 27 December 1929. A letter in this paper to Sir Richard Squires, then Liberal Prime Minister of Newfoundland, stated: "I am instructed to avail of this opportunity to point out that at present there is a concerted movement on the part of the employees of Water Street to have legislation to govern the closing hours and holidays of the city stores."

[86] Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1930 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1931), pp. 69-71.

[87] PANL, Commission of Government, Secretary of Commission, GN38, S1-2-6, #2, Letter from R. Gushue to Sir Richard Squires, 25 March 1931. These 1,200 sales clerks represented most of the men and women who worked at that time in city retail stores.

entitled, "An Act for the Closing of Shops Within the Electoral Districts of St. John's East and West." During a lengthy debate on this bill in the House, it became clear that while some members supported its passage, there were more that opposed it. P.J. Lewis (M.L.A., Harbour Main) argued that the bill was "not concerned with limiting the hours of work for clerks, not of paying them reasonable wages, but to close out the small shopkeepers in this community."[88] Others such as A.J. Walsh (M.L.A., Harbour Main) stated that, "This legislation is wrong fundamentally as it is one in restraint of trade."[89] This bill was also defeated, but this time after its second reading. Sales clerks did not give up lobbying the government. A letter dated 23 January 1936 to the Commissioner for Natural Resources pleaded for some action to be taken. "After waiting two years, we have seen the Commission tackling every kind of an Act, even one for the dogs, we ask you with patience exasperated and exhausted when are you going to legislate an act for the long houred, poor unpaid slaves called clerks in this town."[90] Finally in May 1936, the Commission of Government approved passage of "The Shop Closing Hour Act, St. John's." This act stipulated that every store in the city had to be closed between 7 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. except one designated day each week when a store could remain open until 9:30 p.m., and the three weeks preceding Christmas when stores were able to stay open six days a week until 9:30 p.m.[91] Special provisions were also included in this act for female sales clerks which stated thay they did not have to work more than forty-eight hours in one week or eight hours a day,

---

[88] Proceedings of the House of Assembly, 1931 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1932), p. 531.

[89] Ibid., p. 523.

[90] PANL, Commission of Government, Secretary of Commission, GN38, S1-2-6 #2, Letter from Some Clerks of St. John's to Sir John Hope Simpson, Commissioner for Natural Resources, 23 January 1936.

[91] Acts of the Honourable Commission of Government of Newfoundland, 1936 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1936), p. 22.

except that one day when the stores stayed open at night.[92] In addition, employers were required to provide seats for their female shop assistants.[93] While the Shop Closing Hour Act benefited sales clerks on Water Street, it did not aid those in small shops since they were exempt from this piece of legislation.

Like manufacturing work, employment for women in retail sales was seasonal. Both large and small firms hired additional staff members during the fall months to handle the increase in business experienced before Christmas.[94] At the beginning of the New Year, these extra staff members were laid off. It regularly occurred that some permanent employees also found themselves without a job, at least for January and February, which were considered "slack" months in the retail trade. Jenny Fogwill explained that at Ayre and Sons, "Every New Year's Eve that firm would bring out so many envelopes for those who were going to be laid off at the end. You couldn't rise up. What could you do?"[95] During July and August stores were also not very busy, and employees were encouraged to take two to three week unpaid vacations to prevent lay offs.

Sales clerks received low wages. While this occupation was afforded a higher status than manufacturing work, the pay was not noticeably higher. Most saleswomen earned from $4.00 to $6.00 per week.[96] In an interview, the manager of the Royal Stores stated that the regular wage for sales clerks in all the shops along

---

[92] Ibid., p. 23.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Job advertisements appeared annually in October and November asking for saleswomen to work during the Christmas season. Evening Telegram, 27 October 1923. Job advertisement: "Wanted immediately 6 experienced salesmen and 6 experienced salesladies. For Christmas season," 4 November 1927. Job advertisement: "Wanted by November 10, Salesladies to work at Ayre and Sons."

[95] Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

[96] When job advertisements appeared in the newspapers for saleswomen these wages were offered.

Water Street in 1925 was $5.00 a week.[97] The average annual income for female retail workers in 1935 was $277.00, only marginally higher than female factory operatives.[98] As this figure suggests, many saleswomen during this period earned less than $25.00 a month. Unlike women working in the factories, saleswomen also had to buy good clothes to be considered properly attired by their employers. A white blouse and black skirt was the unofficial uniform of female sales clerks. They had to spend a portion of their already small earnings to look presentable to the public.

Female office workers did not have to work the same lengthy hours nor did they receive the same low wages as saleswomen. They usually did not work past 6 o'clock at night during the week and 1 o'clock on Saturdays. Most stenographers and bookkeepers did not experience any drastic seasonal fluctuations in their employment. Because their work did require certain skills, they were paid anywhere from $8.00 to $20.00 per week depending upon their job experience and their place of employment. When the Newfoundland Board of Trade hired Loretta Furlong as their stenographer in 1920, she was offered what was considered to be a generous amount of $10.00 per week.[99] That same year Agnes Fitzgerald, who had worked as a stenographer at the Bank of Nova Scotia since 1909, received approximatedly $20.00 per week (her total annual income was $1,000).[100] Bride Power who had worked at the bank for a year earned a wage of $17.00 per week.[101] The level of wages for stenographers or typists

---

[97] Evening Telegram, 2 July 1925.

[98] Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935 (Nominal). Only 5.3 per cent of the women in the retail sector earned less than $200 a year, but a sizeable proportion, 24.7 percent, received between $201 and $300, while another 35.9 per cent between $301 and $400.

[99] PANL, Newfoundland Board of Trade, P8/B/11, Box 11, File 13. Letter from Secretary of the Newfoundland Board of Trade to Miss May Furlong, 29 May 1920.

[100] PANL, C.F. Rowe Papers, P6/A/40, File 5. Bank of Nova Scotia, Salary Sheet, 1920-21.

[101] Ibid.

did not fluctuate a great deal over the decade. Agnes Peet, who worked as a typist at the Royal Constabulary headquarters in 1928, received a wage of $11.00 per week. A stenographer in the Finance Department of the Newfoundland Government, Elizabeth Gardner, was provided with a wage of $15.00 per week.[102] Female civil servants, most of whom were typists, had their salaries reduced by as much as 10 per cent in 1931.[103] Female office workers, on average, brought home an annual income in 1935 of $526.00 which worked out to be approximately $44.00 a month.[104] While earnings were generally adequate for female office workers, there was little chance of a raise. Once they were hired as a typist or a bookkeeper, they remained in that position the entire time they worked for a private company or for the government.[105]

Even women who worked in professional occupations worked long hours for low wages. Nurses on day duty at the General Hospital in the mid 1920's reported for duty on the wards at 7 a.m. Their day ended at 9 p.m. with mealtimes and breaks accounting for four hours. On alternate days nurses were free another one or three hours.[106] Nurses on night duty started work at 9 p.m and were not finished their shift until 8:15 a.m. the next day.[107] They were allowed every other Sunday off. There is some evidence to suggest that nurses continued to work these same kind of hours right

---

[102] The Civil Service of Newfoundland From A Denominational Standpoint, November 1st, 1928, p. 23.

[103] Evening Telegram, 25 April 1931.

[104] Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935 (Nominal). A total of 18.7 per cent of female office workers earned less than $200 while 33.9 per cent made between $201 and $500. Another 26.6 per cent earned between $501 and $900.

[105] Harry Braverman has argued quite persuasively that clerical work at this time was becoming increasingly systematized and routinized. Female workers in particular were required to perform dull, repetitive tasks and remained at the lowest level of the occupation scale. See, H. Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Captial: The Degredation of Work in the Twentith Century, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp. 293-358; see also, G. Lowe, "Women, Work and the Office: The Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1890-1930," Journal of Sociology, Vol.5, No.4 (1980), pp. 361-384.

[106] J.Nevitt, White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934, p. 124.

[107] Ibid., p. 98.

through to the end of the 1930's. A 1938 newspaper article complained about the extremely long hours that nurses were expected to work. The article mentioned that at one city hospital, nurses on day duty worked from 6:30 a.m. until 8 p.m. Nurses were also respsonsible for the care of a large number of patients, the making of curtains and other supplies, and for much of the cleaning except for the floors, which were done by ward maids.[108] Elizabeth Brien who worked as nurse at the Lunatic Asylum was in charge of a ward containing thiry-five patients with only one other nurse to help her. She stated, "We had to bathe them, do everything, and when one would get violent we had to put them in what we then called a straight jacket."[109] The wages earned by nurses varied tremendously depending upon qualifications and work experience. In 1921, student nurses at the General were given $15.00 per month while the Nursing Superintendent received $62.00 per month. Staff nurses achieved an income of $38.00 per month.[110] In 1928, the level of wages for nurses at the General remained unchanged from those recorded in 1921.[111] On average, nurses in St. John's received a monthly income of approximately $38.00 in 1935 (or $450.00 a year).[112]

Teaching was not a more lucrative profession for women than nursing during this period. In 1922, the average annual salary of female teachers with first grade certification in Anglican schools was $662.00. In comparison the average salary of

---

[108] Ibid., p. 152. See also, W. Smith, "The General Hospital," The Newfoundland Magazine, Vol.2, No.5 (February 1919), pp. 2-3.

[109] MUNFLA, Paula Densmore interview with Elizabeth Brien, 86-065. Elizabeth was born in 1895. At the age of eighteen in 1913 she began working as a nurse at the Lunatic Asylum. She stayed there until she married in 1924.

[110] Newfoundland, Estimates of Expenditures 1920-21 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1921), p. 34. It should be mentioned that most nurses lived in nurses' residences while working at a hospital and therefore where given room and board free of charge.

[111] The Civil Service of Newfoundland From a Denominational Standpoint, November 1st,1928, p. 24.

[112] Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935 (Nominal).

male teachers at this level was $803.00.[113] Female teachers with third grade certification earned $385.00 a year.[114] Those teachers at Catholic schools with equivalent levels of certification earned much the same as those in Anglican schools.[115] The average annual salary of female teachers with first grade certification was $608.00 and $465.00 for those with third grade certification. Salaries of female teachers did not increase substantially during the 1920's. In 1930, the average annual income for women with first grade certification teaching in Anglican schools was $725.00. The average salary of those with third grade certification, however, had actually decreased to $359.00.[116] In an effort to cut back on government expenditures in the spring of 1931, teachers' salaries were reduced by 10 per cent.[117] In November of that year a further reduction of 15 per cent was levied by the government.[118] Newspaper reports noted that teachers were the "hardest hit of all public employees."[119] An article in the NTA Journal in March 1934 stated, "We know of teachers being paid as low as $12.50 per month and $17 or $18 per month is frequent. Then after deducting the cost of boarding and lodging scarcely anything is left for clothing."[120] The average annual salary in 1935 for female teachers in St. John's

---

[113] Newfoundland, Annual Report of the Department of Education, 1921-1922 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1923), p. 48. According to guidelines provided by the Newfoundland Teachers Association in the NTA Journal, Vol.XIV, No.7 (September 1927), pp. 3-4 five classifications of teachers existed: University Grade, Associated Grade, First Grade, Second Grade, Third Grade. For details of requirements for each classification see this journal issue.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., p. 110.

[116] Annual Report of the Department of Education, 1929-1930 (St. John's: King's Printer, 1931), p. 57.

[117] Evening Telegram, 25 April 1931. As noted earlier the salaries of civil servants were also reduced at this time.

[118] Evening Telegram, 3 November 1931.

[119] Observer's Weekly, 21 April 1934.

[120] NTA Journal, Vol. XXVI, No.3 (March 1934), p. 3.

totalled $475.00.[121]

While most women endured long hours at work under poor conditions, and received meager wages, many remembered the time spent in the workplace as an enjoyable one because of the close relationships they developed with their female co-workers. Especially in the larger factories and retail stores, where substantial numbers of young single women worked in close contact with one another, there was an opportunity for friendships to be made. Within individual departments a camaraderie among the women existed.[122] Jenny Fogwill described the women in the cash department at Ayre and Sons as "a great bunch." She added that, "We'd gossip all the time amongst ourselves."[123] Another informant who worked in a factory stated, "We would talk a lot while we worked. We were lined up along a long bench and we would talk about the night before, the dances and the movies."[124] Hazel Strong described the twelve other women on staff at the restaurant where she was employed in this way: "Lovely group of girls to work with, everyone of them. It was always fun. When some of us had an afternoon off we would go to the movies together."[125] Mary Norris recalled her years of employment as a positive experience on the whole because of the women she worked with. She recalled one particular incident when they were "having a bit of fun."

> We had a grand time there. When midsummer's day came along of course a lot of the girls put an egg in a tumbler, half full of water, just the white of the egg, and we'd put them in the window. Of course, they would rise up

---

[121] Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935 (Nominal).

[122] Tamara Hareven found similiar views of relationships between co-workers at the textile mill in Manchester,New Hampshire. See, T. Hareven, Family Time, Industrial Time: The Relationship Between Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 70-78.

[123] Inteview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

[124] Interview with Stella Wiseman, May 1986.

[125] Interview with Hazel Strong, February 1987.

different shapes and tell your fortune, and at 12 o'clock you'd throw it out on the street and you'd watch, and whoever walked over your egg, a gentleman, you'd get his name. The initials of the man would be the intials of the man you would marry.[126]

### 3.2. Leisure Activities

With the exception of domestics servants, wage employment afforded single women greater leisure time.[127] Despite the fact that most jobs demanded many hours at work unmarried, wage-earning women were for the most part freer of household and family chores than they had been as children, or would be later as wives and mothers. This was especially the case for women who lived with their parents, or as boarders in roominghouses. For the former, the fact that they were wage earners helping out the household economy often meant that they were not expected to do as much domestic labour at home. One informant indicated that once she began working, she was told by her mother that she did not have to do anything at home except to keep her room clean.[128] The only obligation that single working women living as boarders had to fulfill was a regular payment for room and board.

Once the work day was over, or a holiday arrived, young working women pursued a variety of leisure activities which cost little or no money. They went to movies, danced, and, in the winter months, skated. They also joined a variety of voluntary organizations and attended showers. Motion pictures proved to be very popular sources of entertainment. During the 1920's and 1930's a handful of city theatres such as the Majestic, the Nickel, the Crescent, the Popular Star, and the

---

[126] Interview with Mary Norris, May 1986. On that occasion the name of the man who walked over her egg was William Newman, and she ended up marrying William Norris.

[127] The literature on women's paid work has largely ignored the leisure activities of working women. For one of the first detailed studies on leisure see, K. Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

[128] Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

Queen showed movies to the public for an admission price of five cents.[129] Movies were deemed to be more appropriate for young women to see than the travelling burlesque shows which appeared at the Casino Hall and the British Hall.[130] While many single working women experienced greater leisure time, their activities were still largely subject to the approval of not only parents, but also relatives and clergymen.[131]

Dances were held weekly at the Star of the Sea Hall and the Gaity Hall where on special occasions women were admitted free of charge.[132] Annual suppers and dances were sponsored by the employees of most of the larger department stores and factories. These events, referred to as "reunions," were always well attended. The annual reunion of the retail clerks at the Royal Stores which took place 28 January 1920 was reported to have been "thoroughly enjoyed by all. Employees held the delightful event in the firms' building on Duckworth Street and entertainment consisted of cards, supper and a dance."[133] The factory workers at the Imperial Tobacco Company held a social 13 February 1924 attended by "the entire staff and their friends."[134] The annual Easter dance for the workers at the Newfoundland Clothing Company factory occurred several months later. "Elaborate preparations were made by the employees of the firm to make the occasion an enjoyable one. Many novelties were introduced, a special music program had been arranged and the catering was in the hands of the Ladies

---

[129] P.O'Neill, The Oldest City: The Story of St. John's Newfoundland, Vol.I (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcepic, 1975), pp. 263-265.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Evening Telegram, 2 February 1932. According to regulations published in this newspaper, Catholics were forbidden to attend dances or parties during Lent.

[132] Evening Telegram, 12 February 1923.

[133] Evening Telegram, 28 January 1920.

[134] Evening Telegram, 13 Februrary 1924.

Auxiliary."[135] A dance for the operatives at the White Clothing Company took place 19 January 1929 on the top floor of the factory, and "refreshments were served by the Ladies' Committee."[136] Female workers took an active part in the planning of these events, and in most instances were responsible for the preparation, as well as the serving, of food and drinks. Even after the onset of the Depression and the financial hardship that ensued, workers at some firms still made an effort to continue these social events. An announcement was made in the Evening Telegram, 24 January 1933, that "The annual re-union of the Royal Stores will be held at the firm's Duckworth Street building tonight."[137] Almost the entire staff of the Browning-Harvey confectionery factories attended a dinner and dance in October 1938.[138] Employees of the larger firms also organized annual picnics. These outings to locations outside the city such as Paradise, or Mount Pearl, afforded workers the opportunity to engage in a variety of sports and games. At one outing for workers from the White Clothing factory, Jean Will was elected by popular vote to be "Miss White Clothing Company."[139]

A number of voluntary associations in the city also attracted single working women with leisure time.[140] All of the major churches had organizations in place for young adult females. The women who joined such groups usually participated in various charitable activities, aided foreign missionaries, or studied the Bible. These

---

[135] Evening Telegram, 13 April 1924. The Ladies' Auxiliary seems to have been an informal committee of female factory operatives who arranged for the food on such social occasions.

[136] Evening Telegram, 20 January 1929.

[137] Evening Telegram, 24 January 1933.

[138] Evening Telegram, 15 October 1938.

[139] Evening Telegram, 22 August 1929; see also 7 July 1938 for details of outing by employees of the same factory that particular year.

[140] Only those associations which were expressly for young single women will be considered in this section.

church groups allowed women of the same religion a chance to socialize with one another. The Girls Friendly Society for example, was an association for single women who were members of the Church of England. The Girls Friendly Society in Newfoundland Members' Guide stated that, "Members of the Society shall be girls and young women from the age of 16 years of age and upwards."[141] If women wanted to remain in the association after they married they could do so only as "Branch Helpers."[142] The YWCA proved to be an especially popular organization for young adult women after it came to St. John's in 1926. When a membership campaign was initiated in the fall of that year, the YWCA offered "to give girls clean, wholesome fun under the right conditions," and "a home downtown as a resting and meeting place for all."[143] In addition to providing an inexpensive place to live for a small number of working women, the YWCA also set up swimming, dressmaking, first aid, basketry and leather work, and home nursing classes for its members.[144] At the YWCA, the women played basketball and volleyball, bowled, and borrowed books from its library.[145] In March 1927, the Macdonald Fellowship Club was set up under the auspices of the YWCA for "business and professional women."[146] The object of the club was "to afford its members a means of social intercourse."[147] The club met every

---

[141] The Girls Friendly Society in Newfoundland Members' Guide (St. John's: n.p., 1929).

[142] Ibid.

[143] Evening Telegram, 2 October 1926.

[144] Evening Telegram, 20 September 1930.

[145] Evening Telegram, 8 Janurary 1927; 26 March 1927. At that time this was the only library accessible to young women who were not in school since St. John's did not have its first public library until 1934.

[146] Evening Telegram, 31 March 1927.

[147] L. Saunders, "The Macdonald Fellowship Club," in The Book of Newfoundland, Vol.II, p. 116.

month to discuss "current topics," and held debates three or four times a year.[148] The Macdonald Fellowship Club mainly attracted teachers, nurses, and stenographers. Members were required to resign from the association when they married.[149] Another social club for working women was organized at the YWCA in 1930.[150] This association, called the Jolly Workers, was intended for women employed in city stores and factories. Those who joined participated in singsongs, attended lectures, and ran dances. After the YWCA summer camp opened in July 1934, they also had the opportunity to take their vacations there.[151] During the course of the 1930's several other organizations sponsored by the YWCA were created: the Good Companions Club for "young business girls" and the Frilone Club for domestics. In 1937, a club was also organized for women who were unemployed.[152] It was reported that this group engaged in singing and folkdancing.[153]

The decision to get married almost always signalled the end of full time wage labour for women. It was taken for granted by women themselves that once they married, they would no longer work full time for wages. "You put your resignation in right away, as soon as you knew you were getting married. There was no such thing as working after you married then."[154] For many young women a forthcoming marriage was greatly anticipated. One informant emphasized, "I was happy to be getting

---

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Evening Telegram, 17 May 1930.

[151] Evening Telegram, 5 June 1934. The camp opened on July. For the first ten days junior members were going to be there and the rest of the time "the camp will be open to all business and industrial workers."

[152] "St. John's YWCA, Report for 1937," Among the Deep Sea Fishers, Vol.XXXVI, No.2 (July 1938), p. 57.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Interview with Stella Wiseman, May 1986.

married, that was the lifestyle then. You got married and made your home, reared your children and were a helpmate to your husband. That was what was expected of you and you were happy with it."[155]Most often it was a time for celebration with friends and co-workers at showers. St. John's newspapers frequently reported these ritualized events throughout the 1920's and 1930's. In September 1924, the female employees of Dicks and Company "waited on Miss Mercedes Wadden of the Duckworth Street office staff, and presented her with a handsome silver tea pot and salad bowl to match before her contemplated marriage."[156] Mrs. Dominy tendered a surprise shower for Miss Alfreda Winslow at her home on Barnes Road in October 1928. "Lady employees of the Royal Stores clothing factory numbering about fifty" attended this social event.[157] It was noted that Miss Winslow, along with Miss Jean Redmond who was also present, would soon be leaving their jobs to get married.[158] Gladys French was given a shower at the YWCA in June 1932 that sixty of her co-workers from Ayre and Sons attended. She was presented with a "purse of gold." "Miss French has been in the employ of this company for some time but on Saturday severed her connection to embark on the matrimonial sea."[159] All the larger companies had the unwritten rule that women could not remain after marriage even if they wanted to. No written regulations existed in private businesses or in the government prohibiting employment for married women until September 1933 when the Commission instituted the following rule: "On marriage, a woman civil servant shall retire from office unless it is definitely in the interests of the Public Service that she should be

---

[155]Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

[156]Evening Telegram 14 September 1924.

[157]Evening Telegram, 24 October 1928.

[158]Ibid.

[159]Evening Telegram, 3 June 1932.

retained for a further period."[160] This rule was enforced throughout the 1930's.

### 3.3. Married and Widowed Working Women.

Once women married they entered an entirely new stage in their lives. They took on the responsibilities of managing their households. Their lives from that point onward became focused upon taking care of their husbands' needs, doing domestic labour, and eventually, bearing, as well as raising children. Domestic responsibilites were immense for married women throughout this period, especially for those from the working class. Advances in household technology had barely reached middle-class households in St. John's by this time, let alone working-class households. Unlike middle-class women, few working-class women had the option to hire domestic servants to help them with their housework. Most working-class households still had wood or coal stoves which required a great deal of attention. A large number of homes did not have any running water either, thus forcing women to take empty pails to a nearby tap, line up behind others getting water, and carry a heavy pail back to their houses. This process had to be repeated frequently every day.[161] Hard physical labour was necessary daily to keep working-class households running smoothly. Married women were also in charge of the family budget which meant that they had to take their husbands' small wages and buy the most they could with them. Living on a low income, always anticipating periods of short work or unemployment, working-class wives sometimes displayed great skill in transforming their husbands' scanty wages into decent living standards. In a letter written in 1923, "A Loving Mother" described how difficult it could be to keep a family fed and clothed:

---

[160] PANL, Executive Council, GN9/1, Minute Books, Minutes of Commission of Government, 4 September 1933 #633.

[161] Evening Telegram, 21 March 1927. In an article on housing conditions in St. John's mention was made of the fact that there were large areas of St. John's without running water. For more details of housing conditions in St. John's, see also, To the Citizens of Saint John's, Is All Well? (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1927).

> There is nobody knows more than the women what it costs to keep the home going. It is hard enough when times are fairly good; but it is awful when times are bad and employment is only to be had once in a while. The Women I Say, have the hardest end of it scraping and paring, mending and patching, and trying to make the few dollars that their husbands earn meet all the household expenses.[162]

In a letter written a year later, another woman echoed some of the same sentiments. "It is the women indeed who know to their sorrow what it is to live in a city when hard times are upon us. There is the rent to pay, the coal to be got, the food to be bought, the children's school fees, and hardest of all, the boots and clothing to cover us decently."[163] It took extra time out of an already busy day for women to try to stretch their husbands' earnings as far as possible.[164]

Because most married women experienced such heavy domestic responsibilities, they were reluctant to seek full-time wage labour outside the home even when there was a strong economic impetus for them to do so. They tried to avoid it at all possible costs. The percentage of working women who were married in the inter-war period was extremely small (1.4 per cent in 1921 and 2.6 per cent in 1935).[165] [See Table 3-2.] Those few women who did were almost exclusively from the working class. For married middle-class women, waged work continued to be such a social taboo that their presence in the labour force was almost nonexistent. Unlike working-class

---

[162] Evening Telegram, 12 April 1923.

[163] Evening Telegram, 22 January 1924.

[164] Relying almost entirely on oral testimony, Elizabeth Roberts has constructed a richly textured picture of the lives of working-class women in three towns in northern England between 1890 and 1940. She maintains that most married working-class women devoted their time to domestic labour while also doing everything possible to "make ends meet." See, E. Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890-1940 (London: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 125-168.

[165] For the 1921 census only thirteen working women in this sample were married and in the 1935 census only thirty-one. Such a small sample size creates problems when generalizing about the entire population. Since the enumerators' instructions for the 1921 and 1935 censuses have not yet been found it is difficult to determine how they defined whether a person was employed or not. From working with the census closely over a long period of time it seems to me that there is a significant undercounting of married women who were wage-earners, especially those who were shopkeepers, laundresses, and charwomen.

women there was little possibility that they would experience the pressure of economic necessity. Most husbands of the women who worked were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled blue-collar workers. A small percentage did not have a job at all.[166] These women's wages were needed to subsidize the earnings of their husbands. In a majority of the households with a married female wage-earner, the husband and wife supported the family (53.8 per cent in 1921 and 52.1 per cent in 1935), while in a large proportion of other homes one other child aided the family economy.[167]

The married women who did work were substantially older than single wage earners. Most of these women fell between the ages of 30 and 64. [See Table 3-13.] Relatively few married women worked at an early stage in their family's life cycle when their children were young. The burden of domestic work and childcare at these stages made employment all but impossible. Most married women worked when at least half of their children were age 15 or older. By this time their children were already in school. [See Table 3-14.] These older, married women tended to be employed primarily as owners of confectionery and grocery stores and to a lesser extent as charwomen, boardinghouse keepers, and dressmakers. [See Table 3-15.] These occupations allowed women employment while maintaining a close supervision of their own residence. In fact, their domestic duties could be interspersed with duties related to their paid employment. Children could also be taken care of while working. None of these jobs would have provided the women with a large income, but it was enough to make a difference to their families' comfort.

While married working-class women tried to avoid full-time wage employment

---

[166]The occupation of heads of households with a working wife in 1921 are as follows: Proprietor(1) 7.7 per cent; Commercial(1) 7.7 per cent; Skilled(6) 46.2 per cent; Semi-skilled(1) 7.7 per cent; Unskilled(2) 15.4 per cent; Unemployed(2) 15.4 per cent. In 1935 the occupation of heads are as follows: Proprietor(2) 6.5 per cent; Professional (2) 6.5 per cent; Commercial(2) 6.5 per cent; Skilled(5) 16.1 per cent; Semi-skilled(4) 12.9 per cent; Unskilled (9) 35.5 per cent; Unemployed (7) 22.6 per cent.

[167]46.1 per cent in 1921 and 47.2 per cent in 1935.

outside their homes, there is some evidence to suggest that they were quite willing to pursue part-time paid labour. Resourceful at procuring extra income for their families, women took in boarders, washed laundry, and sewed garments. While only a small number of married women appear in the census as boardinghouse keepers, quite a few took in one or two boarders. Having a boarder meant additional labour for women who were probably already overburdened, but it was work that they could do at home. Washing clothes for others was much more labour intensive and time consuming than taking care of boarders.[168] While the work was disadvantageous because the women had to go out to get the clothes, it was a form of paid labour that could be done in their own homes. The clothing industry in St. John's employed a substantial number of married women as outworkers. Testifying before the Newfoundland Royal Commission on the Tariff in 1922, Mr. William White of the White Clothing Company stated that, up to 1920, the industry employed 500 persons in various factories and an additional 200 were provided with work at home. "Depression in the trade and unfair competition reduced the available market for local manufacturers who had to curtail their staffs to thirty per cent of normal strength."[169] Even with this reduction approximately 65 outworkers remained employed in the clothing industry, of which a large proportion must have been married women. The wages offered for piece work were extremely low; the Royal Commission had estimated that outworkers made less than fifty cents a day.[170] Constrained by lack of alternatives, the necessity for extra income, and the need to remain at home, married women nevertheless continued to do such work. Several other forms of paid labour

---

[168] Advertisements were placed in the newspapers regularly by washerwomen who stipulated that the washing would be done in their own homes. Evening Telegram, 24 June 1920; 17 November 1923; 29 February 1927; 3 May 1927.

[169] Excerpt of the Report and Findings of the Royal Commission of 1922, in The Liberal Press, 16 March 1929. It is not known to what extent outwork prevailed in St. John's during the rest of the 1920's and 1930's.

[170] Ibid.

attracted married women. Some women earned money selling Christmas cakes during the month leading up to the holiday season. Those who were ambitious offered their cakes for sale in the newspapers.[171] During the late 1920's blueberry picking became a lucrative pastime for married women in the months of August and September. The International Fruit Company which was established in June 1927, offered "to pay cash to all pickers who will deliver to them the berries in good condition at the rate of 5 cents per pound."[172] The market for blueberries sharply decreased after the onset of the Depression, and this form of paid labour became limited.

While most women left the labour force when they married, and were reluctant to pursue full time wage labour from that point onwards, the termination of a relationship through death, separation or divorce caused some to return to work. Divorce was relatively rare at this time. Neither the 1921 nor the 1935 census even included "divorced" in the section relating to marital status. Only four women in the sample were listed as being separated in 1921 and eleven in the sample for 1935. Although divorce and even separation were still uncommon, widowhood occurred much more often. Loss of a spouse happened far more frequently for women than men. The death of a husband moved many women to yet another stage in their lives. Over 5 per cent (5.1) of wage-earning women were widows. [See Table 3-2.] A substantial proportion of these women were age 40 or older.[See Table 3-13.] Most widowed wage-earners headed up their own households (66 per cent in 1921 and 83 per cent in 1935). [See Table 3-16.] Along with the title had come the responsibility of ensuring the economic survival of their families. Like married women, the stage of their families'

---

[171] Evening Telegram, 2 December 1923; 15 December 1925; 7 December 1926; 28 November 1931. An advertisement in this last issue stated: " Mrs. McCardie is now prepared to take orders for Xmas cakes, fruit cakes, Xmas puddings, mince pies and varieties of small cakes including short bread."

[172] Evening Telegram, 6 August 1927. Four married women who went out picking on the Southside hills in September 1927 were so eager in their quest for berries that they did not notice the fog coming in. As a result, they lost their way in the fog and had to spend the night in the open. Evening Telegram, 13 September 1927. The women were identified as Mrs. Bayley of Temperance Street, Mrs. Pyrord and Mrs. Gidnor of Duckworth Street, and Mrs. Murray of Bannerman Street.

life cycles had an impact on the employment of widows. Only a small proportion of widows were working at early stages in their families' life cycles. Most worked when at least half of their children were 15 or older. [See Table 3-14.] Widows were most likely to be employed as boardinghouse keepers, shopkeepers, and charwomen. [See Table 3-15.] As noted already, these occupations provided more flexible hours or work, and allowed women who were in charge of their own households the opportunity to carry out domestic duties.

The pattern of women's paid work did not change substantially during the inter-war years. Like women elsewhere, wage employment for those in St. John's bridged the gap between school and marriage. The female labour force in this city was overwhelmingly young and single. Working women tended to be under 25, single, and lived at home with their parents. At this stage in their life cycles they were as yet unencumbered by the responsibilities of domestic labour or childcare, and thus free to work full time. Class background proved to be a determining factor along with age and marital status in women's entry into the labour force. Working-class women were far more likely to work than middle-class women, primarily because of the necessity for them to contribute to the household economy. Middle-class women sought wage employment in ever increasing numbers, but at no time equalled the numbers of working-class wage-earners. Class background also influenced the type of employment which women managed to secure. Most working-class women worked as domestics, sales clerks or factory operatives because these occupations required only a minimum amount of education and skills. Working-class women did not have the level of education, time, or financial resources that middle-class women possessed in order to train as teachers, nurses, or even typists. Regardless of the occupation, waged work for women meant poor working conditions, long hours of labour, and low wages. In the manufacturing and retail sales sector, employment was seasonal. Women overlooked many of the negative aspects of the job when recalling their time in the

workplace, and instead, stressed the positive experiences, most of which involved socializing with co-workers. The much smaller number of married and widowed women who engaged in wage labour rarely did so full-time. They often worked part-time, at a stage when their children were at least of school age. The occupations that married women selected allowed them to carry out their paid labour, as well as their domestic duties. Like single women, married and widowed women were motivated by the need to provide for their families.

**Table 3-1:** Age Groups of Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age Groups | # | % | # | % |
| Up to 14[a] | 16 | 1.8 | 11 | .9 |
| 15 - 19 | 293 | 32.1 | 201 | 16.9 |
| 20 - 24 | 323 | 35.4 | 477 | 39.4 |
| 25 - 29 | 135 | 14.8 | 215 | 17.8 |
| 30 - 34 | 36 | 3.9 | 93 | 8.1 |
| 35 - 39 | 30 | 3.3 | 73 | 6.0 |
| 40 - 44 | 18 | 2.0 | 38 | 3.1 |
| 45 - 49 | 17 | 1.9 | 30 | 2.5 |
| 50 - 54 | 21 | 2.3 | 25 | 2.1 |
| 55 - 59 | 6 | .7 | 11 | 1.4 |
| 60 - 64 | 7 | .8 | 11 | .9 |
| 65 and up[b] | 11 | 1.2 | 14 | 1.2 |
| | 913 | 100.0 | 1210 | 100.0 |

[a]The youngest working woman in the samples was 11.
[b]The oldest working woman in the samples was 85.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-2:** Marital Status of Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marital Status* | # | % | # | % |
| Single | 849 | 93.0 | 1103 | 91.2 |
| Married | 13 | 1.4 | 31 | 2.6 |
| Separated | 4 | .4 | 11 | .9 |
| Widowed | 47 | 5.1 | 65 | 5.4 |
| | 913 | 100.0 | 1210 | 100.0 |

*No divorced women appeared in either of the samples.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

*Table 3-3:* Age and Marital Status of Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | Single | | | | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Age Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Up to 14 | 16 | 1.7 | 11 | .9 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 15 - 19 | 293 | 32.1 | 201 | 16.6 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| 20 - 24 | 321 | 35.2 | 474 | 39.2 | – | – | 2 | .2 | – | – | 1 | .1 | 2 | .2 | – | – |
| 25 - 29 | 131 | 14.3 | 207 | 17.1 | – | – | 4 | .3 | 1 | .1 | 1 | .1 | 3 | .3 | 3 | .2 |
| 30 - 34 | 34 | 3.7 | 89 | 7.4 | 1 | .1 | 4 | .3 | – | – | 2 | .2 | 1 | .1 | 3 | .2 |
| 35 - 39 | 21 | 2.3 | 58 | 4.8 | 2 | .2 | 5 | .4 | 2 | .2 | 1 | .1 | 5 | .5 | 9 | .7 |
| 40 - 44 | 8 | .9 | 23 | 1.9 | 2 | .2 | 1 | .1 | – | – | 2 | .2 | 8 | .9 | 12 | 1.0 |
| 45 - 49 | 9 | 1.0 | 11 | .9 | 3 | .3 | 7 | .6 | – | – | 1 | .1 | 5 | .5 | 11 | .9 |
| 50 - 54 | 9 | 1.0 | 11 | .9 | – | – | 4 | .3 | – | – | 1 | .1 | 12 | 1.3 | 9 | .9 |
| 55 - 59 | 2 | .2 | 9 | .7 | 2 | .2 | 1 | .1 | 1 | .1 | 2 | .2 | 1 | .1 | 5 | .4 |
| 60 - 64 | – | – | 4 | .3 | 3 | .3 | 3 | .2 | – | – | – | – | 4 | .4 | 4 | .3 |
| 65 and up | 5 | .5 | 5 | .4 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 6 | .7 | 9 | .7 |
| | 849 | 93.0 | 1103 | 91.2 | 13 | 1.4 | 31 | 2.6 | 4 | .4 | 11 | .9 | 47 | 5.1 | 65 | 5.4 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-4:** Relationship of Single Working Women to the Heads of Their Households, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship | # | % | # | % |
| Head | 16 | 1.9 | 33 | 3.0 |
| Daughter | 457 | 53.8 | 577 | 52.3 |
| Servant | 291 | 34.3 | 381 | 34.5 |
| Boarder | 42 | 4.9 | 41 | 3.7 |
| Female Relative | 43 | 5.0 | 71 | 6.6 |
| | 849 | 100.0 | 1103 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-5:** Relationship of Working Women to the Heads of Their Households by Marital Status, 1921 and 1935

| | Single | | | | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Relationship | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Head | 16 | 1.9 | 33 | 2.7 | - | - | 1 | .1 | 2 | .2 | 5 | .4 | 31 | 3.4 | 54 | 4.5 |
| Wife | - | - | - | - | 13 | 1.4 | 29 | 2.4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Daughter | 457 | 50.1 | 577 | 47.7 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | .2 | 1 | .1 |
| Servant | 291 | 31.9 | 381 | 31.5 | - | - | 1 | .1 | - | - | 2 | .2 | 5 | .5 | 7 | .6 |
| Boarder | 42 | 4.6 | 41 | 3.4 | - | - | - | - | 1 | .1 | 1 | .1 | 3 | .3 | 2 | .2 |
| Female Relative | 43 | 4.7 | 71 | 5.9 | - | - | - | - | 1 | .1 | 1 | .1 | 6 | .6 | 1 | .1 |
| | 849 | 93.0 | 1103 | 91.2 | 13 | 1.4 | 31 | 2.6 | 4 | .4 | 11 | .9 | 47 | .6 | 65 | 5.4 |

Source: Derived From Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-6:** Occupation Groups of Heads of Households With Working Daughters Living at Home, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation Groups | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 41 | 9.0 | 78 | 13.5 |
| Professional | 9 | 1.7 | 15 | 2.6 |
| Commercial | 33 | 7.2 | 38 | 6.5 |
| State Employee | 15 | 3.3 | 12 | 2.1 |
| Service | 14 | 3.1 | 12 | 2.1 |
| Skilled | 104 | 22.7 | 125 | 21.7 |
| Semi-Skilled | 29 | 6.3 | 37 | 6.4 |
| Unskilled | 109 | 23.1 | 60 | 10.4 |
| Unemployed | 69 | 15.1 | 146 | 25.3 |
| Unemployed, Age 65 and over | 38 | 8.3 | 54 | 9.4 |
| | 458 | 100.0 | 577 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations included in each group see Appendix B.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-7:** Occupation Groups of Heads of Households With Daughters Living at Home, By Gender and Marital Status, 1921 and 1935

| | Marital Status | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Married Male | | | | Widowed Male | | | | Widowed Female | | | |
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Occupation Group | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 33 | 7.2 | 59 | 10.1 | - | - | 1 | 0.1 | 10 | 2.2 | 18 | 3.1 |
| Professional | 8 | 1.8 | 13 | 2.2 | - | - | 2 | 0.3 | - | - | - | - |
| Commercial | 31 | 6.8 | 34 | 5.8 | 2 | .4 | 2 | 0.3 | - | - | - | - |
| State Public | 15 | 3.3 | 14 | 2.4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Service | 8 | 1.8 | 6 | 1.0 | - | - | 1 | 0.1 | 6 | 1.3 | 5 | .9 |
| Skilled | 102 | 22.3 | 121 | 20.9 | 2 | .4 | 4 | 0.6 | - | - | - | - |
| Semi-skilled | 24 | 6.3 | 34 | 5.8 | - | - | 2 | 0.3 | - | - | 1 | .1 |
| Unskilled | 100 | 21.9 | 53 | 9.1 | 4 | .8 | 5 | 0.9 | - | - | 1 | .1 |
| Unemployed | 6 | 1.3 | 44 | 7.6 | 1 | .2 | 5 | 0.9 | 63 | 13.6 | 97 | 16.8 |
| Unemployed 65 & up | 7 | 1.5 | 24 | 4.2 | 3 | .7 | 2 | 0.3 | 28 | 6.1 | 28 | 4.9 |
| | 339 | 74.1 | 401 | 69.1 | 12 | 2.6 | 24 | 3.8 | 107 | 23.2 | 150 | 30.8 |

There were not any married women who were heads of households.

For listing of occupations in each group see Appendix B.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-8:** Occupation Groups of Single Women Living at Home, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation Groups | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 2 | .4 | 1 | .2 |
| Professional | 31 | 6.8 | 44 | 7.6 |
| Office Work | 125 | 27.3 | 170 | 29.5 |
| Retail Work | 147 | 32.1 | 148 | 25.6 |
| Service | 15 | 3.3 | 49 | 8.5 |
| Semi-skilled | 43 | 9.4 | 10 | 1.7 |
| Unskilled | 95 | 20.7 | 155 | 26.9 |
| | 458 | 100.0 | 577 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations in each group see Appendix A.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

*Table 3-9:* Occupation Groups of Single Working Women, and Occupation Groups of Parents, 1921 and 1935

| Occupation Groups Working Women | Occupation Groups Heads of Households: Proprietor, Professional, Commercial, State | | | | Skilled, Semi-Skilled, Unskilled & Service | | | | Unemployed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | .3 | 2 | .4 | - | - |
| Professional | 19 | 4.1 | 21 | 3.6 | 5 | 1.1 | 8 | 1.4 | 8 | 1.7 | 16 | 2.8 |
| Clerical Work | 37 | 8.1 | 63 | 10.9 | 57 | 12.4 | 40 | 6.9 | 30 | 6.6 | 67 | 11.6 |
| Retail Work | 28 | 6.1 | 35 | 6.1 | 89 | 19.4 | 66 | 11.4 | 30 | 6.6 | 47 | 8.1 |
| Service | 2 | .4 | 13 | 2.2 | 7 | 1.6 | 17 | 2.9 | 6 | 1.3 | 18 | 3.1 |
| Semi & Unskilled | 11 | 2.4 | 9 | 1.6 | 94 | 20.5 | 100 | 17.4 | 33 | 7.2 | 55 | 9.5 |
| | 97 | 21.1 | 141 | 24.4 | 252 | 55.0 | 233 | 40.3 | 109 | 23.8 | 203 | 35.1 |

For listing of occupations in each group see Appendix A and B.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-10:** Age Groups of Single Working Women Who Headed Their Own Households, Lived as Boarders, or Lived With Relatives, 1921 and 1935

| | Head | | | | Boarder | | | | Relative | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Age Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Up to 14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2.3 | - | - |
| 15 - 19 | - | - | - | - | 4 | 9.5 | 1 | 2.4 | 6 | 14.0 | 3 | 4.2 |
| 20 - 24 | 1 | 6.3 | 2 | 6.1 | 18 | 42.9 | 13 | 31.7 | 12 | 27.9 | 18 | 25.4 |
| 25 - 29 | - | - | 2 | 6.1 | 12 | 28.6 | 7 | 17.1 | 11 | 25.6 | 15 | 21.1 |
| 30 - 34 | - | - | 3 | 9.1 | 5 | 11.9 | 6 | 14.6 | 3 | 7.0 | 9 | 12.7 |
| 35 - 39 | 2 | 12.5 | 6 | 18.2 | 2 | 4.8 | 8 | 19.5 | 4 | 9.3 | 10 | 14.1 |
| 40 - 44 | 1 | 6.3 | 2 | 6.1 | - | - | 2 | 4.9 | 1 | 2.3 | 10 | 14.1 |
| 45 - 49 | 3 | 18.8 | 3 | 9.1 | 1 | 2.4 | 1 | 2.4 | 3 | 7.0 | 2 | 2.8 |
| 50 - 54 | 5 | 31.3 | 6 | 18.2 | - | - | 1 | 2.4 | - | - | 2 | 2.8 |
| 55 - 59 | 1 | 6.3 | 6 | 18.2 | - | - | 1 | 2.4 | - | - | 1 | 1.4 |
| 60 - 64 | - | - | 1 | 3.0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 65 and up | 3 | 18.8 | 2 | 6.1 | - | - | 1 | 2.4 | 2 | 4.7 | 1 | 1.4 |
| | 16 | 100.0 | 33 | 100.0 | 42 | 100.0 | 41 | 100.0 | 43 | 100.0 | 71 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-11:** Occupation Groups of Single Working Women Who Headed Their Own Households, Lived as Boarders, or Lived With Relatives, 1921 and 1935

| | Head | | | | Boarder | | | | Relative | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Occupation Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 4 | 25.0 | 12 | 36.4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2.8 |
| Professional | 1 | 6.3 | 4 | 12.1 | 8 | 19.0 | 5 | 12.2 | 3 | 7.0 | 11 | 15.5 |
| Office Work | 1 | 6.3 | 3 | 9.1 | 6 | 14.3 | 17 | 41.5 | 9 | 20.9 | 26 | 36.6 |
| Retail Work | 1 | 6.3 | 2 | 6.1 | 18 | 42.9 | 8 | 19.5 | 12 | 27.9 | 12 | 16.9 |
| Service | 1 | 6.3 | 3 | 9.1 | 1 | 2.4 | 3 | 7.3 | 3 | 7.0 | 5 | 7.0 |
| Semi-skilled | 5 | 31.3 | 5 | 15.2 | 4 | 9.5 | 1 | 2.4 | 5 | 11.6 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Unskilled | 3 | 18.8 | 4 | 12.1 | 5 | 11.9 | 7 | 17.1 | 11 | 25.6 | 14 | 19.7 |
| | 16 | 100.0 | 33 | 100.0 | 42 | 100.0 | 41 | 100.0 | 43 | 100.0 | 71 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations included in each group see Appendix A.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-12:** Occupation Groups of Single Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation Groups | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 4 | .7 | 16 | 1.5 |
| Professional | 43 | 5.1 | 64 | 5.8 |
| Office Work | 141 | 16.6 | 216 | 19.6 |
| Retail Work | 178 | 21.0 | 170 | 15.4 |
| Service | 310 | 36.5 | 440 | 39.9 |
| Semi-skilled | 57 | 6.7 | 17 | 1.5 |
| Unskilled | 114 | 13.4 | 180 | 16.3 |
| | 849 | 100.0 | 1103 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations included in each group see Appendix B.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-13:** Age Groups of Married, Separated and Widowed Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Age Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Up to 14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15 - 19 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 20 - 24 | - | - | 2 | 6.5 | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 9.1 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 25 - 29 | - | - | 4 | 12.9 | - | - | 1 | 9.1 | 3 | 6.4 | 3 | 4.6 |
| 30 - 34 | 1 | 7.7 | 4 | 12.9 | - | - | 2 | 18.2 | 1 | 2.1 | 3 | 4.6 |
| 35 - 39 | 2 | 15.4 | 5 | 16.1 | 2 | 50.0 | 1 | 9.1 | 5 | 10.6 | 9 | 13.8 |
| 40 - 44 | 2 | 15.4 | 1 | 3.2 | - | - | 2 | 18.2 | 8 | 17.0 | 12 | 18.5 |
| 45 - 49 | 3 | 23.1 | 7 | 22.6 | - | - | 1 | 9.1 | 5 | 10.6 | 11 | 16.9 |
| 50 - 54 | - | - | 4 | 12.9 | - | - | 1 | 9.1 | 12 | 25.5 | 9 | 13.8 |
| 55 - 59 | 2 | 15.4 | 1 | 3.2 | 1 | 25.0 | 2 | 18.2 | 1 | 2.1 | 5 | 7.7 |
| 60 - 64 | 3 | 23.4 | 3 | 9.7 | - | - | - | - | 4 | 8.5 | 4 | 6.2 |
| 65 and up | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 6 | 12.8 | 9 | 13.8 |
| | 13 | 100.0 | 31 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 | 65 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-14:** Life Cycle Stages of Married, Separated and Widowed Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Stages | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Up to 45, No child | 2 | 15.4 | 4 | 12.9 | 2 | 50.0 | 3 | 27.3 | 7 | 14.9 | 7 | 10.8 |
| Child 11 and under | - | - | 4 | 12.9 | - | - | 1 | 9.1 | 5 | 10.6 | 3 | 4.6 |
| 11 - 15 None over 16 | 2 | 15.4 | 5 | 16.1 | 1 | 25.0 | 2 | 18.2 | 4 | 8.5 | 6 | 9.2 |
| Some or all 16+ | 7 | 53.8 | 15 | 48.4 | - | - | 4 | 36.4 | 22 | 46.8 | 36 | 55.4 |
| Over 45, No child | 2 | 15.4 | 3 | 9.7 | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 9.1 | 9 | 19.1 | 13 | 20.0 |
| | 13 | 100.0 | 31 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 | 65 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-15:** Occupation Groups of Married, Separated and Widowed Working Women, 1921 and 1935

| | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Occupation Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 9 | 64.2 | 11 | 35.5 | - | - | 1 | 9.1 | 18 | 38.3 | 25 | 38.5 |
| Professional | - | - | 1 | 3.2 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2.1 | 3 | 4.6 |
| Office Work | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2.1 | 1 | 1.5 |
| Retail Work | 1 | 7.7 | 1 | 3.2 | - | - | 3 | 27.3 | 5 | 10.6 | 5 | 7.7 |
| Service | 1 | 7.7 | 11 | 35.5 | 3 | 75.0 | 5 | 45.5 | 16 | 34.0 | 23 | 35.4 |
| Semi-skilled | 1 | 7.7 | 3 | 9.7 | - | - | 1 | 9.1 | 4 | 8.5 | 5 | 7.7 |
| Unskilled | 1 | 7.7 | 4 | 12.9 | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 9.1 | 2 | 4.3 | 3 | 4.6 |
| | 13 | 100.0 | 31 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 | 65 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations in each group see Appendix A.

Source: Derived from the Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 3-16:** Relationship of Married, Separated and Widowed Working Women, to the Heads of Their Households, 1921 and 1935

| | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Relationship | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Head | - | - | 1 | 3.2 | 2 | 50.0 | 5 | 45.5 | 31 | 66.0 | 54 | 83.0 |
| Wife | 13 | 100.0 | 29 | 93.5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Daughter | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 18.2 | 2 | 4.3 | 1 | 1.5 |
| Servant | - | - | 1 | 3.2 | - | - | 2 | 18.2 | 5 | 10.6 | 7 | 10.8 |
| Boarder | - | - | - | - | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 9.1 | 3 | 6.4 | 2 | 3.1 |
| Female Relative | - | - | - | - | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 9.1 | 6 | - | 1 | 1.5 |
| | 13 | 100.0 | 31 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 | 65 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

# Chapter 4

# "It Was The Thing To Do": Domestic Service

> Wanted immediately, a good general girl; must have references; none other need apply; good wages to right party; washing out; outport girl preferred; apply between the hours of 10 and 11 a.m.[1]

Occupational choices for women in St. John's were limited during the inter-war period, and employment opportunities in general were restricted. Domestic service proved to be one of the few occupations where women found that positions were readily available in substantial numbers, although this was more the case in the 1920's than in the 1930's. Domestic service had been, and would continue to be during these decades, the largest employer of women in the city. Domestics totalled 35.9 per cent of the female labour force in 1921 and 36.7 per cent in 1935. Domestic service was by no means the preferred occupation of women. Because this type of work entailed long hours of hard physical labour, offered meager wages, and severely limited the freedom of workers, many young women, particularly those from the city, attempted to avoid domestic service if at all possible. This chapter considers the dichotomy of rural and urban women's perceptions of domestic service, the difficulties employers faced in getting and keeping domestic help, the experiences of women in service, and finally, the type of household in which domestics laboured.

Domestic service encompassed a variety of different job designations: housekeeper, cook, chamber maid, dining room maid, and general servant. The

---

[1] Evening Telegram, 15 September 1930.

majority of domestics, however, were employed as general servants, carrying out a vast array of assigned tasks. During this period domestic service dictated that women live within the confines of the homes where they worked, with only brief periods of time off.[2] In 1921, a mere 2.7 per cent of the women who listed domestic service as their occupation did not "live in," while in 1935 they totalled just 1.8 per cent.[3] This occupation primarily attracted women who were young and single. In 1921, 93.5 per cent of the domestic servants in St. John's were single and under the age of 30. By 1935, this figure had dropped, but only to 87.2 per cent. [See Table 4-1.] Because of the requirement to reside with one's employer almost no married women, and only a few widows, worked as live-in domestics.[4] Live-in domestic work discouraged women who had their own households to manage and children to be cared for. In regard to the latter, employers probably would not have been interested in providing room and board for a servant as well as her children. Most often, those widowed women who were employed as domestic servants did not have any children living with them.[5]

Women from the outports were much more willing than their counterparts from

---

[2]The pattern of employment for domestic servants in St. John's differed substantially from that found in many North American urban centres. The proportion of women in domestic service in relation to the entire female labour force was certainly higher, as was the proportion of women who lived in. Historians have documented the decline of domestic service in Canada and the United States. See, D.G. Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univeristy Press, 1981), pp. 185-200; see also, G. Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada," in Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930 (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), pp. 71-126.

[3]Derived from the Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal). The data included in this chapter relates to live-in domestics and the households where they resided. The data has been extracted from the sample of every third household with a working woman. For details of the methodology see Appendix C.

[4]It is probable that a greater number of married and widowed women worked as servants, but did not live in. They went to their employers' houses in the morning and returned to their own residences after they finished their work. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many women did this since, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the census enumerators in 1921 and 1935 tended to overlook the paid labour performed part-time by married as well as widowed women.

[5]A search of the nominal census records for 1921 and 1935 failed to produce a single example of a domestic, single or widowed, who had children living with her. Of course, it is possible that some domestics had one or more dependents living with relatives.

St. John's to work as domestics.[6] One journalist stated in 1921 that, "The public should be made aware of the large number of girls who come in from the outports in the hope of obtaining situations as domestic servants."[7] Millie Vail, who left Greenspond, Bonavista Bay in 1925 to work as a servant in St. John's, suggested that it was a common practice for young women from her outport to leave and enter service in the capital city. Four of Millie's sisters found employment as live-in domestics at one time or another during the 1920's and 1930's. "It was the thing to do, to come to St. John's and do housework."[8] The greatest influx of outport women occurred at the end of the fishing season each September. These women were the daughters of fishermen whose services were needed during the summer months to "make fish."[9] With the end of the fishing season they were free to secure jobs in St. John's. An employment agency announced in September 1927, "Ladies if you want general maids, housemaids, cooks, or anything in that capacity we have them. The girls are coming in from the outports and are wanting jobs."[10] Some young women considered the move from the small

---

[6]It is impossible to provide an exact percentage of outport women who worked as domestics in St. John's. The census enumerators in 1921 did not gather information on the permanent residence of domestics, only where they were born. From the supplementary evidence, it is apparent that at least a majority of the city's domestics were from outports. This pattern diverges from the one found in Canada and the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century. Rural women did migrate to urban centres in Canada and the United States to work as domestics, but they did not account for the majority of domestics. Instead domestic service attracted large numbers of newly arrived immigrants, and in the case of the United States, urban black women. For rural women as domestics see, A. Brookes and C. Wilson," Working Away From the Farm: the Young Women of Huron County," Ontario History, Vol.77, No.4 (December 1985), pp. 281-300; for discussion of immigrants as servants see, M. Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930," in The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Vol.2, edited by. A. Prentice and S. Trofimenkoff (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), pp. 102-121; for discussion of black women as domestics see, F. Dudden, Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), pp. 48-59.

[7]Evening Telegram, 6 October 1921.

[8]Interview with Millie Vail, June 1987. Mrs. Vail was born Millie Saunders, 28 January 1909, in Greenspond. She was the second oldest in a family of eight. Her father was an inshore fisherman. At the age of sixteen, Millie came to St. John's in 1925. She stayed with the same family for seven years until she left to get married.

[9]For discussion of women's involvement in the fishery see, H. Murray, More Than 50% (St. John's: Breakwater,1979); M. Porter, "'She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew': Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," Labour/Le Travail, 15 (Spring 1985), pp. 105-23.

[10]Daily News, 29 September 1927.

outports to St. John's as an opportunity to travel and experience life in a city. Leah White, who came to St. John's in 1938, explained, "Everybody was leaving, going to St. John's. I thought it was a big deal to come to the big city. It was something. You weren't going to stay at home and do nothing."[11] There is a strong indication that most outport women were also motivated by that fact that their leaving meant one less family member that had to be provided for through the winter months, and that their earnings could make an important difference to their families' finances. The remote possibilty of full-time paid employment for young women in the outports suggests that it was logical for them to seek work where the opportunities were more abundant. Mabel Jones, who entered service in 1932, stated: "I figured it was hard on the family to support me, and give me what I wanted. I just wanted to help out and so I came here and went to work."[12] As already outlined in Chapter 2, fishermen in the outports experienced a great deal of hardship throughout the 1920's and 1930's because of the relatively low prices they received for their fish; many found it extremely difficult to clothe and feed their families. Having a daughter in service did alleviate the economic hardships of a substantial number. Gee White left Greenspond in the autumn of 1934 to work as a cook for a family in St. John's. As she recalled, her father had been injured while working "down on the Labrador."[13] It had been difficult for him to provide for the family in previous years, but this injury meant no earnings at all.

> He couldn't work. He was home all summer. I wondered what we were going to live on. It was going to be a hard winter. So when a friend of my father's received a telegram saying this family needed a girl for just plain

---

[11]Interview with Leah White, March 1987. Mrs White was born Leah Burry in Greenspond, 2 August 1919. Her father was an inshore fisherman. She came to St. John's in 1938 and worked for two years as a domestic. She left her job as a servant to work in the laundry of the Lunatic Sanatorium in 1940. Leah married in 1946.

[12]Interview with Mabel Jones, June 1987. Mrs. Jones was born Mabel Saunders on 18 March 1914 in Greenspond. She was the sixth in the family of eight. Her father was an inshore fisherman. She came to St. John's in 1932. Mabel left her first employer after a year for another family where she received a higher rate of pay. She stayed with them until she married in 1942.

[13]At this time fishermen from the island of Newfoundland still travelled in large numbers to the coast of Labrador each summer to catch fish.

cooking I decided to take the job.[14]

During the seven years Gee lived as a domestic in the city she often sent a portion of the wages she earned home to her mother. Another informant stated that she also sent money home. "If I had a dollar to spare I sent it home because at that time I figured my parents could do with it too. As I said, my father was a fisherman."[15]

Outport women tended to seek employment almost exclusively as live-in domestics throughout these decades. They chose to fill positions as domestic servants largely because they were provided with a place to live in the city free of charge.[16] In addition, there were few jobs available to women at this time which offered high enough wages to cover the expenses of living as boarders. By working as domestics, outport women did not have to worry about the high price of room and board in the city, and they could perhaps even save some of their earnings. Living in an employer's household meant security and protection for these young women who were separated from their own families. Parents were reassured that their daughters were living with a family under the direct supervision of a responsible adult. Furthermore, domestic work did not require any special job skills or the attainment of a certain level of education. Most women coming from outports had not had the opportunity to take specialized commercial or industrial skills courses at school. As servants, they only had to carry out many of the same tasks which they had done for their mothers. Leah White suggested that, "It was only a girl with a better education who could take any

---

[14]Interview with Gee White, March 1987. Mrs. White was born Joyce Carter on 18 September 1915 in Greenspond. She was the fifth child in a family of eleven. Her father took part in the Labrador fishery during the summer, and the sealfishery during the spring. She came to St. John's in 1932, and remained as a domestic with the same family for seven years until she married in 1939.

[15]Interview with Leah White, March 1987.

[16]Ibid.

better job than housework."[17]

While outport women attempted to find work primarily as live-in domestics, those from St. John's tried to avoid this particular occupation as much as possible. One St. John's informant indicated there was a definite stigma attached to domestic service work so that women tried to find employment in almost any other occupation.[18] Mary Norris stated emphatically that she would rather not have worked at all, if the only job open to her had been as a domestic. She even went so far as to suggest, "I just never would have done it, no matter what."[19] She believed that toiling in an overcrowded, poorly ventilated work room at the White Clothing Company factory was a more desirable job than working as a domestic. This sentiment was echoed by Jenny Fogwill who worked ten to twelve hours daily, six days a week in a small grocery store at this time.[20] It was definitely easier for young women from St. John's to avoid live-in domestic work because they did have the option of living with their parents and looking for work in a factory, store, or office. Millie Vail argued that women from the city were more likely than those from the outports to know someone, either a friend or a relative, who could help them to get a job. She took a typing course at night while employed as a domestic, but she never managed to secure a job as a stenographer. "I tried to get work, but there was nothing on the go then. You had know someone to get something, to get a job besides housework."[21] When other work could not be found at any of these locations, and a family was in economic need, some female residents of St. John's did succumb to life as a domestic servant. When the first available job came

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] Interview with Mary Norris, May 1986.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Interview with Jenny Fogwill, November 1986.

[21] Interview with Millie Vail, June 1987.

open in another occupation, however, they immediately quit.[22]

Some women who resisted going into service in St. John's were willing to travel abroad to work as a domestic because they would receive a higher level of income there.[23] Others who were already working as domestics in the city left their positions for more lucrative employment elsewhere.[24] Young women could easily secure positions in Canada or the United States at higher rates of wages than they could get in St. John's. The wages offered to women willing to leave Newfoundland for domestic service in Canada and the United States ranged between $30.00 and $40.00 a month.[25] Advertisements appeared at regular intervals in city newspapers offering domestic work in Hailfax, Montreal, Toronto, Boston, and New York. One typical notice read, "Lady sailing by next Rosalind wishes to engage female houseworkers, lives near New York City in winter, at seaside in summer; with private bath for maid; small family, good wages.[26] While immigration to these countries was fairly restricted for Newfoundland men throughout this period,[27] women going to work as servants met few barriers. As explained by a Canadian government official, "the Canadian

---

[22] Evening Telegram, 23 January 1921. Several women at a Ladies' Current Events Club meeting in which there was a lengthy discussion on the "domestic question" mentioned that their servants had recently left their employ for jobs in stores. For further discussion of the activities of women in the Current Events Club see, "Current Events Club - Woman Suffrage - Newfoundland Society of Art, in The Book of Newfoundland Vol.I, edited by J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: The Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), pp. 199-201.

[23] For an interesting discussion of four Newfoundland women's experiences as domestics in Boston see, Shelley Smith, "A Better Chance in the Boston States: An Ethnographic Account of Migratory Domestic Service Among Newfoundland Women, 1920-1940"(Honours Dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, May 1984).

[24] In her article, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1971-1921," Acadiensis, Vol.XV, No.1(Autumn 1985), pp. 3-33, Pat Thorton maintains that the migration out of Newfoundland between 1871 and 1921, which was substantial, tended to be female-led. Her article indicates that a large number of young women left the island during this time period. There are no studies covering 1922 to 1939, but one suspects that this trend continued.

[25] Evening Telegram, 15 March 1921; 19 January 1923; 25 June 1923; 17 February 1930; 1 April 1933.

[26] Daily News, 15 August 1921.

[27] For discussion of difficulties encountered by Newfoundland men attempting to enter Canada see P. Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939," Acadiensis, Vol.XI, No.2 (Spring 1983), pp. 69-83.

Immigration Act will allow women to land in Canada provided they are in good health and have assured employment or are such persons as in the opinion of officials could easily secure work as domestics." American regulations were quite similar to Canadian ones at this time.[28]

Many of the matrons interested in hiring domestics stated a special preference for "outport girls." It was quite common to find job advertisements such as the one placed by Mrs. J. Baird of Water Street which stipulated, "Wanted - for housework, an honest, clean girl; outport girl preferred,"[29] or the one inserted by Mrs. B. McCarthy of Rennies Mill Road which stated, "Wanted Immediately, a general housemaid, outport girl preferred."[30] On several occasions employers even offered to advance passage money as an incentive for women to come into St. John's. Women from the outports were sought in large part because employers believed they would remain longer as their servants than those from the city.[31] Employers generally recognized that, unlike women from St. John's, they could not easily return home to their parents when they became dissatisfied with their jobs. As mentioned previously, outport women could not easily leave domestic positons for employment as sales clerks or factory operatives since the wages they would have received from these jobs would not have covered the expenses of paying room and board. One informant stated, "There just wasn't enough money in that type of work."[32] In addition, being at a distance from close family members, outport women were less likely to complain about the restricted number of

---

[28] Evening Telegram, 26 August 1922.

[29] Evening Telegram, 20 November 1920.

[30] Evening Telegram, 25 April 1924.

[31] Evening Telegram, 9 June 1922; 27 February 1926.

[32] Interview with Mabel Jones, June 1987.

outings granted them each week.[33]

Outport women who left domestic service jobs without finding other positions, or were fired, often found themselves in difficult circumstances. St. John's newspapers frequently reported court cases involving unemployed domestics charged with vagrancy or loitering because they did not have any money or a place to stay. The judge usually ruled for the women to be taken to the penitentiary for a brief period of time as a means of "safe-keeping." A seventeen-year-old domestic from Portugal Cove without a home was "sent down" for 10 days in January 1923.[34] A thiry-five year-old domestic "belonging to Fogo" was charged in August 1924 for loitering in a church and doing slight damage to its organ." The accused was found amongst the organ pipes following services last night. According to witnesses the woman has no home and has been frequenting various churches where she has slept."[35] Her sentence was eight days in jail. In April 1931, a young domestic from Bay Roberts was taken in on a vagrancy charge, and remanded at the penitentiary for thirty days.[36] In January 1934, a thirty-nine year-old "who had no home was taken in at the lock-up for safe-keeping."

37

---

[33]A small number of advertisements appeared which indicated another type of preference. In these cases a demand was made for women of a specific religion. For example, an advertisement appeared in the Daily News, 24 September 1920 which stated, "Wanted, General Maid where another kept; wages to commence $20 a month; Catholic girl preferred." An advertisement in the Evening Telegram, 14 July 1924, noted, "Wanted - A Good General Servant with knowledge of plain cooking, Protestant preferred." Yet another advertisement in the Evening Telegram, 24 November 1928 stipulated, "Wanted immediately, a good general maid; Protestant preferred; fond of children; references essential." It is difficult to determine the extent of this type of preference on the part of employers for domestics of a particular religious denomination. Equally, there is little evidence in regard to the desire of domestics to work for an employer of a particular religious denomination. The religion of individual domestics was recorded for the purposes of this quantitative study but no attempt was made to gather information on their employers' religion. However, it is still possible to say something on this topic. The proportion of domestics who were Anglicans was much larger that the proportion of all Anglicans for the entire city.[See Table 4-2.] Catholic and Methodist women on the other hand were noticeably under represented.

[34]Evening Telegram, 12 January 1923.

[35]Evening Telegram, 18 August 1924.

[36]Evening Telegram, 25 April 1931.

[37]Evening Telegram, 4 January 1934.

Throughout the 1920's, the demand for young, single women to work as domestics was never fully met by the supply. Even the large number of women coming in from the outports did not fully meet the demand. The women who wanted domestics for their households found that they were difficult to find. While they could state a preference for an "outport girl," they would not necessarily get one. The Ladies Current Events Club held a meeting in January 1921 to discuss at length the "domestic question" in the city.[38] Not a day passed without at least half a dozen advertisements appearing in the daily newspapers. "Wanted Immediately - A Good Servant; young woman able to hustle; references required, start immediately, good pay."[39] Some employers tried to make the position sound as attractive as possible. This was certainly the case in the following advertisement: "Wanted - a maid, no cooking or washing; house contains all modern conveniences; best locality in East End; excellent wages."[40]

In the latter part of the decade an employment agency called the Reliable Agencies and Domestic Help Bureau opened up in the city with the sole purpose of attracting women into domestic work. This agency offered money and gifts to entice women into this line of employment.[41] The company placed this notice in one newspaper: "Domestic Help Wanted. Experienced general maids and cooks. Gold chain and locket given to each girl."[42] Several times the Reliable Agencies and

---

[38] Evening Telegram 23 January 1921. For discussion on the domestic question in Canada see, M. Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics For Ontario Homes, 1870-1930," Ontario History, Vol.72 No.3 (Spring 1980), pp. 148-73; G. Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," in Women at Work, pp. 71-126. For the U.S. see, D. Katzman, Seven Days A Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 223-265.

[39] Evening Telegram, 6 March 1924.

[40] Evening Telegram, 8 September 1923.

[41] Evening Telegram, 23 February 1927; 11 May 1927. On this date the agency offered one pair of stockings free to each woman who signed with the agency.

[42] Evening Telegram, 11 June 1927.

Domestic Help Bureau conveyed that it had as many as fifty job openings around the city for domestics.[43] The large number of available jobs clearly indicated that the various methods of enticement used by the agency and individual employers, were not very successful and women remained, for the most part, reluctant to fill the positions.

These conditions changed to some degree during the 1930's. While the economic situation on the Island had been depressed throughout the 1920's, the outlook became significantly worse with the onset of the Depression. Women who had previously been unwilling to engage in domestic employment now found themselves without a choice, as other job opportunities became scarce. The demand for domestics stayed much the same, but the supply rose dramatically as unemployment increased. Employers did not have to rely so much on advertisements in the newspapers, or on employment agencies, since eager applicants were plentiful. Job advertisements continued to appear, but in far fewer numbers. The Reliable Agencies and Domestic Bureau continued to operate, but the number of positions it offered had been greatly reduced. Advertisements started to appear regularly which were placed by women seeking jobs. These types of ads had rarely been seen during the 1920's. The following notice printed on 14 March 1931 is indicative of the economic climate: "Wanted by an outport girl, position as housekeeper; can furnish good references."[44] Some women even indicated that they would work for a reduced wage. "Wanted - Position as servant; can furnish references; would be willing to work for small salary."[45]

Considering the low wages, long hours of work, lack of freedom and isolation experienced by domestics in St. John's, it is easy to comprehend the reluctance of some young women to enter this occupation, and once in a position, the desire not to remain

---

[43] Evening Telegram, 14 April 1927; 7 November 1928.

[44] Evening Telegram, 14 March 1931.

[45] Evening Telegram, 14 October 1932.

for an extended period of time. Domestics were among the lowest paid female wage-earners in the city. Earnings ranged from $10.00 to $20.00 a month.[46] Domestic help was needed, but evidently employers were willing to pay only a small price to get it. A few did not want to give their domestics any wages at all. Over the course of the decade there were a handful of court cases which involved disputes over payment of wages to domestics. In 1923, a domestic servant named Nettie Parsons was charged with striking her mistress. When the case came to court, it became clear that the action had been provoked because Nettie had not been paid. According to the newspaper report:

> A servant girl was fined $1 in the court this morning for striking her mistress. It appears that the trouble arose over a month's wages being owed the domestic which her mistress refused to pay her. It was ordered that the lady of the house pay the girl a full month's wages.[47]

A similar case was brought to public attention in the fall of 1925, when an unidentified seventeen-year-old domestic originally from Little Bay was charged with stealing two signed cheques totalling $15.00 from her employer. She maintained throughout the trial that the money had been owed her and represented a month's wages.[48] A sixteen-year-old domestic named Gertie Spurrel took civil action amounting to $200.00 against her employers in June 1926. She was an orphan and had come from North Head, Placentia Bay, four years before to work for this family. "She received no wages

---

[46]It has already been noted that data was not gathered on individual earnings for 1921. One must therefore rely upon the testimony of informants and wages offered in job advertisements. Interview with Millie Vail, June 1987. Millie received $10.00 a month during the six years she worked as a domestic. MUNFLA 80-29, Rodney Vatcher interview with Anny Sears. Anny received $10.00 a month. Evening Telegram, 11 October 1922; Job advertisement: "Wanted A real good girl, one who can take some responsibility where another girl is kept, $15 a month or more to the right person." 1 February 1924; job advertisement: "Wanted Immediately - A general Servant, must understand cooking; wages $12 a month." 3 January 1929; job advertisement: "Wanted Immediately - A Cook and Nursemaid; references required, excellent wages, $20 a month."

[47]Evening Telegram, 24 November 1923.

[48]Evening Telegram, 7 October 1925. The domestic did not receive the wages she asserted she was owed.

during her four years of service, but had been provided with boots and clothing."[49] She only left their employ and brought charges against them after being "badly ill-treated."[50] Of course, the rationale for paying such low wages, or in some cases no wages, was that these women were being given food, shelter, and sometimes clothing. Employers assumed that domestics should not expect much in the way of actual monetary earnings. These types of court cases continued to surface during the 1930's. In June 1933, a domestic sued her mistress for a month's wages ($7.00) and an additional $1.00 from a previous month.[51] The plaintiff received only $1.00 because she had left her employer without giving notice. In June 1938, a domestic named Annie Pike pressed her mistress for payment of wages through the courts. She was awarded a payment of two months wages totalling $16.00.[52] According to data gathered from the 1935 census, over 8 per cent of domestics did not receive any wages at all, while almost 48 per cent earned $100.00 or less. Some 40 per cent made between $101.00 and $200.00 while the rest, (4 per cent) made between $201.00 and $300.00[53] The average annual income of domestics in 1935 was $100.00. At this level of income many would have received less than $9.00 a month.[54]

Domestics had to work many hours and perform arduous tasks in order to earn their wages. As Leah White described her regular work day, she awoke every morning at 7 a.m. to light the stove and start making breakfast. She then cleaned most of the

---

[49] Evening Telegram, 4 June 1926.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Evening Telegram, 2 June 1933.

[52] Evening Telegram, 17 June 1938.

[53] Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Laborador, 1935 (Nominal).

[54] It is possible that in some instances the women would have received payment in kind.

morning before preparing lunch. The afternoon was taken up with still more cleaning and planning of the evening meal. Her work day did not end until 8 or 9 p.m.[55] Leah did not consider that her hours of work were any greater than those of any other domestics she knew.[56] Mabel Jones' portrayal of her work day closely matched that of Leah White's. She also mentioned that specific tasks were designated for certain days of the week. On Mondays Mabel washed clothes, on Tuesdays she ironed, on Wednesdays she scrubbed and waxed the floors, and on Fridays she polished the silver. These chores had to be carried out in addition to all the other cleaning that had to be done daily.[57] Washing was considered by most domestic servants to be the most physically taxing chore they had to perform. Not many households, including the ones in middle-class neighbourhoods, contained a wringer washing machine by the early 1920's; thus, domestics had to spend entire days standing over a tub washing clothes on a board. Millie Vail recalled that she worked for two years before her employer bought a washing machine in 1927. She felt the machine made the task less physically tiring, but washing remained time consuming.[58] More and more matrons acquired wringer washers throughout the 1920's and 1930's although they still were not a standard item in many households at the end of the Depression.[59] Some employers did hire washerwomen to clean their clothes thus relieving their servants for other tasks.[60]

---

[55]Interview with Leah White, March 1987.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Interview with Mabel Jones, June 1987.

[58]Interview with Millie Vail, June 1987.

[59]Interview with Leah White, March 1987. The household where she worked in 1938 and 1939 did not possess a washing machine.

[60]Job advertisements again proved to be a valuable source of such information. Ads appeared regularly asking for washerwomen. In addition, employers trying to hire live-in domestics often stated that they had their washing done by someone outside of their households.

Employers had almost complete control over the lives of their domestic servants. The activities of domestics were closely monitored and even after work their time was not their own. Not surprisingly, many of these women felt constrained. One informant stated,

> You always felt bound down. You were a slave. If you went out, although these people were nice that I worked for, you always felt obligated to get back on time. You were always watching the clock. You had no freedom.[61]

Gee White, who cooked for four years before being given the responsibilty of taking care of her employer's children, liked the change primarily because it gave her freedom.[62] She was able to take the children to school and to parks whereas before she had laboured all day in the household. Since so much time was spent in the employer's home domestics often felt isolated as well. There was almost none of the camaraderie experienced by women working in the stores on Water Street and in the factories. In 1921, 84.1 per cent of the households with servants present had only one domestic in residence. In 1935, these types of households accounted for 88.5 per cent. [See Table 4-3.] For the vast majority of these women, domestic service was a lonely existence.

Domestics were allowed only brief periods of time away from their place of work. Leah White indicated:

> I got Tuesday and Thursday night off and every other Sunday. That was your rule; your time out. The rest of the time you were in. You went out at 8 o'clock and came in at 10. By the time you got supper cleared away, did this and that, and got yourself ready, it was 8 o'clock. You had to be in at 10. There was no ten after, no quarter after, you had to be in by ten.[63]

Leah added that most of the domestics she knew were given the same nights off. Gee White considered herself fortunate to be allowed out every second night, and she did

---

[61] Interview with Mabel Jones, June 1987.

[62] Interview with Gee White, March 1987.

[63] Interview with Leah White, March 1987.

not have to work every second Sunday. If she wanted to stay out after 10 p.m. she had to ask the permission of her employer for "late leave."[64] Standard practice dictated that domestics were given two weeks of holidays each summer to visit their parents in the outports.

Since women in service had so little free time, they had few opportunities to engage in social activities. Mabel Jones remembered that the nights she did not have to stay in were often spent walking up and down LeMarchant Road with other domestics.[65] Millie Vail recalled that there was rarely any time to go downtown to see a movie so she went to friends' homes.[66] No social clubs existed specifically for domestics during the 1920's, but in the 1930's several organizations appeared. Under the auspices of the YWCA, the Frilone Club was created in 1934.[67] Women who joined this club attended lectures, and participated in singsongs as well as dances. A Young Women's Club was formed in 1938 under the sponsorship of the United Church. Its organizers felt that "the girls working in homes needed a place in which to relax and meet their friends."[68] The young women knitted or sewed, and occasionally staged a concert. Leah White, who was a member of the club, enjoyed the opportunity to meet other women "from all over Newfoundland." "That was somewhere to go you see. You really felt like you were getting somewhere, that you were somebody."[69]

As we know so little about the households in which domestics laboured a brief

---

[64]Interview with Gee White, March 1987.

[65]Interview with Mabel Jones, June 1987.

[66]Interview with Millie Vail, June 1987.

[67]Evening Telegram, 4 June 1934.

[68]United Church Archives, WY-1400 Emmanuel House, Box 1, United Church Service Centre Report 1939.

[69]Interview with Leah White, March 1987.

examination is necessary. Based on the census data, the majority of domestics worked in middle- and upper-class homes, while a small, but substantial minority, were employed in working-class households. In 1921 and 1935, over 40 per cent of the heads of households containing a servant could be classified as a proprietor of some kind. [See Table 4-4.] Overall, 73.7 per cent in 1921 and 74.7 per cent in 1935 had occupations which would have been considered white-collar. Those with blue-collar occupations, or who were unemployed, totalled 26.4 per cent in 1921 and 25.4 per cent 1935. Very few of these homes were headed by women (7.2 per cent in 1921 and 8.3 per cent in 1935).[70] Domestics were not always hired by those who could easily afford them. The data also suggests that domestics were employed by those who needed their help. The total number of people who resided in such homes were large. In fact, a significant proportion of households with domestics had between four to sixteen persons living in them. The average household size was seven (in 1921 and 1935). The average number of children per household was three for both census years. Many of the families with domestic servants were at early stages in their life cycles when the burden of domestic labour and childcare was the greatest. [See Table 4-5.]

Prior to World War II, domestic service was the leading occupation for working women in St. John's. Women employed as live-in servants constituted over one-third of the female labour force during the 1920's and 1930's. This type of work was not the first occupational choice of urban women. Middle-class women would not consider taking jobs as domestics, while working-class women tried to secure work in factories or stores, before they accepted positions as servants. In many instances, domestic service was an occupation of last resort when no other job could be found. Women from outports, as opposed to urban women, were much more willing to take jobs as

---

[70]The data collected in this study substantiates the assertion by Edward Higgs that domestics did not work exclusively in middle- and upper-class households. See, E. Higgs, "Domestic Serivice and Household Production," in Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England, 1800-1918, edited by. A.V. John (London: Blackwell, 1986), pp.125-135.

domestics; in fact, domestic service was the most popular occupation for the large number of fishermen's daughters who left their outports every year in search of wage labour in St. John's. Those from outports, many of whom had little formal education, were eager to take positions which did not require any training or a particular level of education. Domestic service also provided women who were living away from their parents with a place to reside free of charge. For a significant number of outport women domestic service was considered "the thing to do," part of their life cycles. They went into service in St. John's after leaving school and remained there until they got married. During the 1920's, a shortage of domestics existed in the city. While economic conditions were poor, there were still enough alternative forms of employment for many urban women to avoid domestic service, and the number of rural women coming into the city for this type of job was simply not large enough. The onset of the Great Depression changed this situation.The demand for domestics remained much the same, but the supply rose sharply. The women who entered domestic service were accorded a very low status, faced long hours of hard labour for low wages, and had little personal freedom.

**Table 4-1:** Age and Marital Status of Domestic Servants, 1921 and 1935

| | Single | | | | Married | | | | Separated | | | | Widowed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | | 1921 | | 1935 | |
| Age Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Up to 14 | 6 | 2.0 | 2 | .5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15 - 19 | 120 | 40.7 | 93 | 23.8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 20 - 24 | 121 | 41.0 | 192 | 49.1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 25 - 29 | 29 | 9.8 | 54 | 13.8 | - | - | 1 | .3 | - | - | - | - | 1 | .3 | 2 | .5 |
| 30 - 34 | 4 | 1.4 | 20 | 5.1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 35 - 39 | 1 | .3 | 6 | 1.5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 40 - 44 | 2 | .7 | 4 | 1.0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 1.0 | 1 | .3 |
| 45 - 49 | 2 | .7 | 3 | .8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | .3 | 1 | .3 | 2 | .5 |
| 50 - 54 | 4 | 1.4 | 2 | .5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | .3 | - | - | - | - |
| 55 - 59 | 1 | .3 | 1 | .3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 60 - 64 | - | - | 2 | .5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 65 & up | - | - | 2 | .5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | .5 |
| | 290 | 98.3 | 381 | 97.4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | .3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | .6 | 5 | 1.6 | 7 | 1.8 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 4-2:** Religious Denominations of Domestic Servants, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | | 1935 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Religion | # | % | % City Population | # | % | % City Population |
| Anglican | 105 | 35.6 | 23.0 | 137 | 35.0 | 24.3 |
| Catholic | 130 | 44.1 | 48.6 | 144 | 37.6 | 47.5 |
| Methodist[a] | 47 | 15.9 | 21.0 | 89 | 22.8 | 22.2 |
| Presbyterian | 2 | .7 | 2.9 | 15 | 3.8 | 2.1 |
| Salvation Army | 10 | 3.4 | 2.6 | .3 | .3 | 2.0 |
| Congregational | 1 | 0.3 | .6 | .5 | .5 | .4 |
| | 295 | 100.0 | 98.7* | 391 | 100.0 | 96.5* |

[a]After 1928 this denomination became part of the United Church.

*This percentage does not total 100 because not all religious groups in the city are included in this table.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 4-3:** Number of Servants Per Household, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Servants | # | % | # | % |
| 1 | 211 | 84.1 | 315 | 88.5 |
| 2 | 36 | 14.3 | 40 | 11.2 |
| 3 | 3 | 1.2 | 1 | .3 |
| 4 | 1 | .4 | 0 | 0 |
| | 251 | 100.4 | 356 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador Census, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 4-4:** Occupation Groups of Heads of Households With Domestic Servants, 1921 and 1935

| | 1921 | | 1935 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation Groups | # | % | # | % |
| Proprietor | 109 | 43.4 | 147 | 41.3 |
| Professional | 39 | 15.5 | 60 | 16.9 |
| Commercial | 25 | 10.0 | 45 | 12.6 |
| State, Public | 12 | 4.8 | 14 | 3.9 |
| Service | 1 | .4 | 2 | .6 |
| Skilled | 31 | 12.4 | 36 | 10.2 |
| Semi-skilled | 10 | 4.0 | 13 | 3.7 |
| Unskilled | 8 | 3.2 | 10 | 2.8 |
| Unemployed | 16 | 6.4 | 29 | 8.1 |
| | 251 | 100.0 | 356 | 100.0 |

For listing of occupations in each group see Appendix B.

Source: Derived from Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

**Table 4-5:** Life Cycle Stages of Families With Domestic Servants, 1921 and 1935

| Stages | 1921 # | 1921 % | 1935 # | 1935 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Up to 45, No Children | 9 | 3.6 | 12 | 3.4 |
| Up to 45, 1 child under 1 | 14 | 5.6 | 13 | 3.7 |
| All children under 11 | 79 | 31.5 | 82 | 23.0 |
| Half children under 15 | 43 | 17.5 | 71 | 19.9 |
| Half children 15 and up | 24 | 9.6 | 35 | 9.8 |
| All children 15 and up | 46 | 18.3 | 89 | 25.0 |
| No Family | 36 | 14.3 | 54 | 15.2 |
| | 251 | 100.0 | 356 | 100.0 |

Source: Derived From Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935 (Nominal).

# Chapter 5

## "She Hopes For A Better Day": Women and the Labour Movement

Only a factory girl, and she works in a mill,
But her hands are deft and her arms are strong,
And she sings at her work the whole day long,
And she works with a right good will,
For a mother at home is growing old,
And wintry winds are chill;
And she longs for the day to quickly come,
When mother may have a better home, -
And she toils in the mill.

Only a factory girl, her Mother's hope and Stay,
But her love is strong for everyone,
Like the glowing beams of the morning sun,
As she ushers in the day.
Her flowers she gives to the sick and poor,
And she always keeps an open door,
For all to come that way,
And for all who live by constant toil,
In the mill, or mine or in the soil,
She hopes for a better day.

In February 1919, a young woman recited this poem at a union meeting in St. John's.[1] One person in attendance noted that the recitation provided a rare personal glimpse in the life of a female factory worker.[2] Through the poem this woman made it clear that despite labouring long hours at her job, she earned barely enough to support her family. In addition, she expressed a sincere desire to improve not only her own situation, but that of everyone who lived by "constant toil." The participation of this

---

[1] Daily News, 22 February 1919.

[2] Ibid.

woman in a union suggests she believed collective organization would help her to achieve that desire. This chapter focuses upon the activities of women in the labour movement during the period between the two world wars. The young woman who recited "Only a Factory Girl" was not extraordinary. In the years between 1918 and 1939 there were large numbers of female wage-earners who sought to improve working conditions, and to achieve higher wages through their involvement in unions. This was particularly the case at the beginning and the end of the period under consideration. Working women in St. John's made a significant contribution to the city's labour movement.

Until recently little had been written about union activities in the city during the inter-war period. Bill Gillespie's book, A Class Act, provides a basic chronology of events in the labour movement but gaps remain.[3] In particular, almost no attention has been given to the involvement of women in union activities. This oversight has left the impression that few joined unions, and those who did played insignificant or even non-existent roles in the running of them. While men did fill most union executive positions and accounted for the majority of unionized workers, it is also true that at the end of the war, and again in the late 1930's, hundreds of working women became members of unions, actively participated in them, and when necessary, engaged in strikes.

There were formidable barriers to organizing women during the inter-war period. They faced special difficulties in organizing which male workers did not

---

[3]There are only a few preliminary historical studies of the labour movement in Newfoundland, none of which cover the 1920's or the early 1930's in any detail. See B. Gillespie, A Class Act: An Illustrated History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's: Creative, 1986); B. Gillespie, "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, 1936-1963," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980); A. Akeyeampong, "Labour Laws and the Development of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland, 1900-1960," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1967); R. Hattenhauer, " The History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador," (Unpublished manuscript, Memorial University of Newfoundland).

experience.[4] Perhaps one of the greatest barriers confronting working women proved to be isolation. As mentioned in preceding chapters well over a third of the women in the city's female labour force worked as domestic servants. Usually the sole employee working in a private household, these women did not have much contact with other domestics. Since the hours of work were long and often irregular, they had little time for organizing meetings.[5] On several occasions, a small number of domestics demonstrated an interest in organization, but no union materialized. In the late 1930's, the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council (NTLC) discussed possible organization, but no membership drive resulted.

Domestics were not the only working women to experience isolation. A large proportion of women worked in establishments with only a few employees. Only in the department stores on Water Street, and in some of the larger factories, were female wage-earners working together in significant numbers. Historian Wayne Roberts has argued that the concentration of workers in centralized establishments was one precondition for successful union organization.[6] The only working women in St. John's who organized and participated actively in unions were those employed as factory operatives, and later, sales clerks.

The fact that women were employed in unskilled jobs, and thus, had little job

---

[4]There has been a great deal of discussion in the literature on the problems facing working women who sought to organize. See, A. Kessler-Harris, "Where are the Organized Women Workers?" Feminist Studies, Vol.3, No.1-2 (Fall 1975), pp. 92-110; P. Foner Women and the Labour Movement: From World War I to the Present (New York: Free Press, 1980), pp. 27-32; W. Roberts, Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914 (Toronto: New Hogtown, 1976), pp. 1-5; R. Frager, "No Proper Deal: Women Workers and the Canadian Labour Movement," in Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement, edited by L. Briskin and L. Yanz (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1983), pp.44-66; J. White, Women and Unions (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1980).

[5]For attempts to organize domestics in Canada, see S. Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915," BC Studies, No.41 (Spring 1979), pp. 36-45. Rosenthal admits that there were formidable barriers confronting domestic servants, but some did manage to overcome them, forming a union in Vancouver after the turn of the century. See also, G. Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," in Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930, edited by J. Acton et al. (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974), pp. 110-113.

[6]W. Roberts, Honest Womanhood, p. 10.

security, created another barrier to organization. Working women took threats of dismissal by employers seriously, since they could so easily be replaced by another woman from the large pool of unemployed in the city. As a result, some women were reluctant to join a union. Women's status as unskilled workers created further problems for their organizations since their lack of skills meant exclusion from most craft unions.[7] An attempt was made to overcome this obstacle at the end of World War I with the creation of a union for the city's female operatives. Nevertheless, the vast majority of working women in St. John's still remained unorganized. A greater proportion of women were included in the unions formed by the NTLC in the 1930's primarily because the trade unionists made an effort to organize unskilled as well as skilled workers.

Another inhibiting factor in the union organization of women was their youth. As noted previously, the female work force in St. John's consisted almost entirely of women who were young and single. Full-time wage employment was a relatively brief period in the lives of women before they married. Because most women were engaged in paid labour for only a limited timespan, few of them developed the extensive knowledge of the workplace, or the confidence and expertise necessary for collective organization. One scholar has suggested that this short stay in the labour force meant that women demonstrated less commitment to improving job conditions, and consequently less interest in organization.[8] At least some women thought it easier to quit after experiencing problems on the job than to organize and protest.

---

[7]Alice Kessler-Harris argues that conservative craft unions like the American Federation of Labor in the United States had a strong bias towards skilled labour with little interest in organizing unskilled workers. The AFL demonstrated repeatedly in the early decades of the twentieth century that it was particularly reluctant to aid in the organization of women. See, A. Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 150-157, 202-204.

[8]R. Frager, "No Proper Deal," p.48.; see also, S. Eisenstein, Give Us Bread But Give Us Roses: Working Women's Consciousness in the United States, 1890 to the First World War (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp.137-145.

While working women faced formidable obstacles to their organization, a large number were able to overcome them. On 18 August 1918 the following invitation appeared in a St. John's newspaper:

> At the request of a large number of those interested there will be a meeting of girl workers of all city factories in the British Hall at 8 o'clock for the purpose of forming a Ladies' Branch of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association. All those ladies who are wage-earners in any capacity are also invited to be present.[9]

This invitation signalled the formation of the city's first autonomous union made up exclusively of female workers. As the notice indicated, the initiative behind forming this organization came from the women themselves rather than any male union leaders. Working women in St. John's had previously engaged in a number of strikes and been involved in a number of unions, but the actual number of unionized female workers had never been very large, and the women in all instances had been under the direct guidance of an all-male union leadership.[10] Although intended as a branch of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association (NIWA), an all-male industrial union formed in 1917, this new organization had complete control over its own finances and could draft its own by-laws.[11] As it turned out, the initial invitation elicited an enthusiastic response. Female employees from the Newfoundland Clothing, British Clothing, Imperial Tobacco, Knitting Mills, Standard Manufacturing, Colonial Cordage, F.P. Wood (confectionery), and Browning's (bakery and biscuit) factories were all present, as well as a representative of domestic workers.[12] The women in

---

[9] Daily News, 8 August 1918.

[10] J. Chisholm, "Working Women as Wage-Earners: St. John's, 1890-1914," (Unpublished Paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, April 1987).

[11] For further details on this union see, P. McInnis, "Newfoundland and World War I: The Emergence of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987.)

[12] Daily News, 8 August 1918; Evening Telegram, 9 August 1918.

attendence elected Mrs. Julia Salter Earle (an engrossing clerk with the Newfoundland government) as the President of the NIWA Ladies' Branch, Miss Josephine Kennedy (a tailoress at the Royal Stores Clothing Factory) as Vice-President, Miss Beulah Bishop as Treasurer, and Miss Genevieve James as the Financial Secretary.[13] Some sixty women became members of the union that night, and by November the ranks had swelled to over 400.[14] Factory workers constituted most of the membership, although a few domestics joined as well. Attempts were initially made to attract women from other occupations but proved unsuccessful.

The formation of the NIWA Ladies' Branch took place at a time when the organization of male workers in St. John's was on the upswing. It also occurred when the participation of women in the work force was at its highest level in the city's history. As already noted, the war created greater employment opportunities for women, particularly in manufacturing. While work was reasonably easy to secure, women experienced low wages, long hours of work, and poor working conditions. The cost of living in St. John's had also been increasing at an alarming rate throughout the war, a factor which tended to negate any wage increases women managed to secure.[15] In fact, there was some feeling among workers that wage increases lagged behind price increases. Unlike other countries such as Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, Newfoundland did not have any legislation governing conditions in factories,

---

[13] Daily News, 9 August 1918.

[14] Evening Telegram, 7 November 1918.

[15] P. O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort, 1914-1918," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1983), p. 130.

maximum hours of work, or minimum wages.[16] In a letter of appeal to the Newfoundland government, the President of the Ladies' Branch, Julia Salter Earle, criticized the politicians for their lack of action. She went on to add, "I am willing as a representative of the 'Factory Girls' to talk to you Gentlemen of the Government if permitted, to show you the real condition of things, to make your heads bow in shame to see how those girls in Newfoundland have been and are being treated."[17] In a letter to a St. John's newspaper Earle explained in greater detail the plight of female factory workers: "There are those who toil so hard all day, sometimes having to stand from 7 o'clock in the morning until 6 p.m. with no words of sympathy, working in every case for a wage which cannot give anything but bread, butter, and tea."[18] She also mentioned that some members of the union made as little as $1.60 to $3.50 a week "and for the public holidays which they are forced to take, a sum is deducted from even this small wage."[19] With the economy booming and the demand for consumer products still on the rise, many of the city factories were running at full capacity. On some occasions this meant that operatives not only had to work long hours during the day, but also at night. Earle commented on this situation, "I stood outside one of our factories the other night about 9:30 p.m. and waited as the girls lined out. With very little strength left, they wandered home, too tired in many cases to even enjoy the rest

---

[16]For discussion of legislation in Great Britain see, J. Lewis, Women in England, 1870-1950 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1984); for the U.S. see. A. Kessler Harris, Out to Work; for Canada see, M. McCallum, "Keeping Women in Their Place: The Minimum Wage in Canada, 1910-1925," Labour/Le Travail, No.17 (Spring 1986), pp.29-56; for labour legislation that was passed in Newfoundland see, I. Sparks, "Pre-Confederation Labour Legislation in Newfoundland," (Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969); Newfoundland, Report of the Royal Commission on Labour Legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's: Queen's Printer, 1972); E. Ayeampong, "Labour Laws and the Development of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland, 1900-1960."

[17]Evening Telegram, 7 April 1919.

[18]Daily News, 8 March 1919.

[19]Evening Telegram, 22 February 1919.

which nature craves to enable them to start again the next day."[20] Employers required their operatives to work in the evening whether they wanted to or not. At one factory, women received as little as fifteen cents for working an additional three hours in the evening.

Under the energetic direction of its president, the NIWA Ladies' Branch sought to alleviate the difficulties of working women, especially those employed in factories. For several years following World War I, union members worked quite actively towards achieving shorter hours of work, better working conditions in the factories, and higher wages for women. The Armistice did not bring about any immediate changes to the St. John's economy or to the employment of women. Not until the winter of 1919-1920 did the economy become depressed and workers were left idle. Once the depression struck, the ranks of the Ladies' Branch were depleted due to the large number of women thrown out of work, and the branch's involvement in the labour movement declined. While the union had been active, it was not entirely successful in reaching its goals but some visible gains were made.

The Ladies' Branch devised various strategies to accomplish its goals. Not long after its formation, the women of the NIWA waged two strikes. Both strikes in November 1918 demonstrated that the union women were willing to engage in collective protest to further the interests of their union. The first strike began at Browning's, a large manufacturer of bread and biscuits, on 20 November 1918. The women struck work along with the NIWA men employed at the factory. The work stoppage took place over a demand for higher wages. One newspaper report indicated that, "striking employees want the same scale of wages as are given at Harvey and

---

[20] Daily News, 30 January 1919.

Company's bakery."[21] The workers considered this a reasonable request, but the manager of Browning's refused to meet with employee representatives. The NIWA and its Ladies' Branch fully supported the strike with financial assistance to the workers.[22] The factory operatives at Browning's stayed out nearly three weeks but had to admit defeat when management remained firm on its commitment not to meet with the workers. On 13 December, the President of the NIWA, Philip Bennett, suggested it would be best if striking workers returned to work.[23]

The second strike involved employees of the Colonial Cordage Company which was locally referred to as the Ropewalk. Workers at this factory stopped work on 21 November 1918, because they refused to work with a woman who had not yet joined the Ladies' Branch.[24] One source explained, "It appeared that one of the female employees of the Ropewalk had refused to join the union, and her comrade employees refused to work with her."[25] The operatives returned to work a few hours later, but only after the foreman had dismissed the non-union worker. Work ceased again that same day, but this time at the behest of the manager of the Ropewalk. He objected to the cessation of work without any notification given to him as well as the dismissal of a worker without his consultation. When the manager reached an impasse with the union representatives, he decided on a lockout. Financial support was offered by the

---

[21] Evening Telegram, 23 November 1918. Harvey and Company was the other large bakery and biscuit factory in the city. Browning's and Harvey and Company merged in 1931. See, A.B. Morine, ed., The Story of Newfoundland (St. John's: n.p., 1959), p. 161.

[22] Evening Telegram, 23 December 1918. The NIWA was reported to have voted money towards support of the strikers. Evening Telegram, 12 December 1918. The Ladies Branch held a dance on 12 December to raise funds for the striking workers.

[23] Evening Telegram, 14 December 1918.

[24] The majority of employees at the Colonial Cordage Company were women. Like the strike at Browning's, the women of the Ladies' Branch struck with men who were members of the NIWA.

[25] Evening Telegram, 23 November 1918.

NIWA and the Ladies' Branch during this strike as well.[26] The workers remained out of work until a compromise was reached on 2 December 1918. The announcement came the next day that, "The Ropewalk trouble is a far way to being adjusted."[27] The woman who had previously refused to join the Ladies' Branch would be allowed to return to work only when she paid the initiation fee, and the workers agreed to notify management of any problems before a future walkout.[28]

The women who participated in both of these strikes achieved little for their efforts, and in fact, suffered a loss of wages. Yet, the women showed in both instances that they were willing to take action and experience hardships to further the aspirations of organized workers. While neither of these strikes were a complete success, they did not seriously impair the enthusiasm of the NIWA Ladies' Branch members. The union remained active and continued to acquire recruits throughout the winter of 1918-1919. By the spring of 1919 union membership numbered 450, and by the summer over 500.[29]

With such a large union behind them, it was possible for the executive of the Ladies' Branch to lobby effectively for changes. During 1919, executive members met on a number of occasions with managers of city factories employing women, and pressured them for improvements in their treatment of female workers. The continuous efforts of these women proved to be of some value. In March 1919, the Royal Stores clothing factory announced the institution of an eight-hour day. A newspaper article exclaimed, "The Royal Stores clothing factory, the pioneer factory of Newfoundland, is the first to commence the long looked for and so much debated eight

---

[26] Evening Telegram, 7 December 1918.

[27] Evening Telegram, 3 December 1918.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Evening Telegram, 7 May 1919; 25 August 1919.

hour day."[30] This was a real benefit to the women who worked there because their hours of work were reduced and their wages remained at the same level. Not long after, two clothing factories followed the lead of the Royal Stores. On 12 May 1919, the NIWA Ladies' Branch publicly thanked the managers of the Newfoundland Clothing and Semi-Ready Clothing factories "for their kindness in granting the 8 hour day with full pay. The Ladies' Branch expect to see other factories falling in line."[31] The Newfoundland Clothing Company also installed a "modern bathroom" (hot water baths) for the benefit of its female employees. A newspaper report explained that "This step is being taken because of the fact that homes of many employees lack sanitary means of bathing, and it is felt that this new improvement will better the health of the workers of the factory."[32] That same year, the Imperial Tobacco Company opened a lunch room which provided meals for two or three cents, and hired a nurse to look after the health of the employees.[33] In addition, the Colonial Cordage, Imperial Tobacco, Newfoundland Clothing and Standard Manufacturing factories instituted sick insurance schemes, seemingly at the behest of the NIWA and its Ladies' Branch. Julia Salter Earle stated that these factories had "acceded to the wishes of the NIWA in giving the girls their money when ill."[34] These changes did not take place simply because the executive of the Ladies' Branch pressured factory managers for changes, but they were a factor. In a speech to the Newfoundland Social Services League in November 1919, Warwick Smith, a leading member of the NIWA, documented some of the changes which had taken place in the city's factories:

---

[30] Daily News, 20 March 1919.

[31] Evening Telegram, 1 May 1919.

[32] Evening Telegram, 1 February 1919. Julia Salter Earle suggested that it was the efforts of the Ladies' Branch which brought about the installation of the baths.

[33] Daily News, 22 February 1919.

[34] Ibid.

> Many improvements have been brought about during the last few years, through the influence of the city's unions. In most of the factories the 8 hour system has been inaugurated, and better treatment all round has resulted. Some of the employers have established a lunch counter, where meals are served at cost. Several have established sickness insurance schemes, and another gives every employee a week's vacation yearly with full pay. Yet another has employed a trained nurse to administer first aid in case of accident.[35]

The Ladies' Branch was one of those unions which played a key role in bringing about this transformation.

The union did not focus its energy exclusively on influencing factory managers. The Ladies' Branch also solicited the support of members of the Legislative Assembly for labour legislation the NIWA wished passed. As an automomous organization affiliated with the NIWA the Ladies' Branch presented their case for passage of the legislation. The union made numerous appeals to the government, particularly for a minimum wage law. Julia Salter Earle stated in a request to the government, "I am President of the Branch because I love the girls and want to see them treated a square deal at any rate. Gentlemen of our Executive Government I am depending upon you for the 'Minimum Wage'."[36]

The union did not advocate a minimum wage for women alone. The women of the Ladies' Branch agreed with the men of the NIWA that a minimum wage had to be secured for both men and women. While a full scale campaign was undertaken to secure the minimum wage by the Ladies' Branch in 1919 and 1920, the government refused to take any action.[37] Other legislation sponsored by the Ladies' Branch such

---

[35] Evening Telegram, 20 November 1919.

[36] Evening Telegram, 7 April 1920. Campaigns were waged in Canada and the United States by labour union representatives and social reformers prior to, and during the war, for a minimum wage exclusively for women. A number of historians have suggested that this type of protective legislation had a restrictive influence on the employment of women. See, A. Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, pp. 152-167; M. McCallum, "Keeping Women in Their Place," pp. 29-35.

[37] Evening Telegram, 30 January 1919; 24 April 1919.

as child labour laws, a compulsory education law, and an eight-hour day law met with the same response. The women were operating under a disadvantage when lobbying the government because they lacked the vote. Yet, the men of the NIWA who had the franchise found it difficult to persuade the government to act upon their suggestions as well.[38]

The primary purpose of the Ladies' Branch was to work towards transforming the conditions of work for female wage-earners, but the union also functioned as an important social outlet for members. While meetings were held to discuss union business, they also provided an opportunity for women to socialize. At the end of some meetings, impromptu concerts were held where members sang songs or recited poems.[39] The union purchased a gramophone so that women could listen to records. Lecturers were invited, and they discussed such topics as "The Factory System in Canada and the United States" and "The Principles of Trade Unionism".[40] Furthermore, the union women hosted a number of public dances as well as sales of their own craft work.[41] The sales of craft work were held to raise money for the acquisition of permanent space where union members could meet on a more frequent basis. Julia Salter Earle explained the need for such space, "How they would appreciate such comfort as this and what it would mean to them after a long day's toil to be able to enter a cosy clubroom...the evening finished up with a nice cup of tea."[42] Unfortunately, the union never managed to raise enough money for permanent clubrooms. The social activities of the Ladies' Branch did much to enrich the lives of

---

[38]The NIWA did not succeed in pressuring the government to pass any labour legislation.

[39]Evening Telegram, 12 February 1919.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Evening Telegram, 4 March 1919; 17 April 1919.

[42]Evening Telegram, 8 March 1919.

its members. The concerts, lectures, sales, and dances provided the women with enjoyable experiences outside the drudgery of their jobs. Their social activities did much to forge solidarity among the union women.

There were plans in the summer of 1919 to form another union of working women in St. John's to include female sales clerks and office employees. That such a union was even considered could be credited to the Ladies' Branch. Since women of the NIWA had been effective in addressing the problems of female factory workers and pressing for improvements, some labour leaders believed a similar union could benefit female sales clerks and office employees. On 26 June 1919 a meeting was held with the intention of creating a union of male sales clerks and office hands. A large and enthusiastic audience encouraged the formation of a branch affiliated with the NIWA. An announcement made at the meeting stated: "It is understood a women's branch will be formed shortly."[43] No move was made immediately in that direction. A "Concerned Citizen" writing to a local newspaper several weeks after the formation of the union for male clerks wondered, "When will the lady assistants form an association?" This same person suggested that such a step was necessary since the female sales clerks had to work ten to twelve hours per day and "are the poorest workers in this town."[44] As it turned out, a ladies' branch for retail clerks never materialized. Although it is not clear why one was never organized, it is likely that the onset of a depression in the winter of 1919-1920 was a significant factor.

The depression had a crushing impact on the union movement in St. John's. As the city's unemployment rate spiralled upwards membership in unions began to fall. The Ladies' Branch was no exception. It lost members as large numbers of women were thrown out of work because so many factories in the city closed down or ran

---

[43] Daily News, 27 June 1919.

[44] Evening Telegram, 15 July 1919.

short-time in 1920 and 1921. The union found it increasingly difficult to push for improvements because the number of members was so small and female workers were vulnerable. Although in decline, the Ladies' Branch tried to aid those women who found themselves unemployed. The union offered:

> To the girls out of work on account of the factories closing, especially to the fatherless, and the girls boarding from the outports, we say 'Do not be afraid and appeal to us. We know you and we know our motto: Each for all and all for each. The bands of steel that bind us, remind us of our duty.'[45]

Julia Salter Earle made an appeal to the members of the House of Assembly to recognize the plight of unemployed women. "Do not forget the hundreds of girls also out of work on account of the factories closing." She also made this point to male unionists. She reminded them that women as well as men were out of work. "Many of the girls who worked in factories now closed are in want."[46]

By the end of 1921, the union's efforts to support unemployed women were no longer feasible. The Ladies' Branch had lost not only its members but its influence. With the decline, the union also lost its enthusiasm. Notices of meetings no longer appeared in newspapers and nothing was reported about the activities of the Ladies' Branch. The union continued to exist for at least another four years, but it ceased to be an active organization. It experienced a brief resurgence in the spring of 1925 when Joseph Smallwood formed the Newfoundland Federation of Labour.[47] Along with the rest of the NIWA, the Ladies' Branch pledged its support for the federation in May 1925. A newspaper report at the time noted, "Support of the Ladies' Branch of the NIWA was pledged to the Newfoundland Federation of Labour last night at a largely

---

[45] Evening Telegram, 4 May 1921.

[46] Evening Telegram, 20 April 1921.

[47] Evening Telegram, 1 May 1925.

attended special meeting of the union."[48] When the federation collapsed less than six months later, the demise of the Ladies' Branch soon followed. The extinction of this union was also precipitated by the involvement of Julia Salter Earle in municipal politics. Earle ran unsuccessfully for city council in the fall of 1925 and again in 1929.[49] She had always been a driving force behind the union, and when she shifted her attention to politics, the Ladies' Branch could not survive.

Over the next twelve years the organization of working women was almost non-existent in St. John's. With the demise of the Ladies' Branch no other union in the city included working women. The International Union of Boot and Shoe Workers included a sizeable female membership at one time, but an unsuccessful strike in 1923 severely depleted union ranks.[50] No one in the city stepped forward during those years to attempt the formation of another union for female workers. Throughout this period the union movement in St. John's, and in Newfoundland, was at a low ebb. Union membership declined during the late 1920's and the 1930's when the country plunged into an even deeper economic depression. Unions were in a weakened condition and union members' jobs were in a precarious position. Bill Gillespie has calculated that in 1933 only 7,010 Newfoundland workers were members of trade unions.[51] In St. John's, the Longshoremen's Protective Union (LSPU) accounted for the largest group of unionized workers, although a sizable proportion of its membership was unemployed or worked only part-time for a large portion of the year. The rest of the organized workers in the city were enrolled in various nearly-dormant craft unions, and locals of

---

[48] Evening Telegram, 7 May 1925.

[49] Evening Telegram, 5 October 1925; 1 November 1929.

[50] PANL, Newfoundland Federation of Labour Papers, P8/B/47, Box 1, File 1, Letter from the Secretary Treasurer, F.A.F. Lush to the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council, 23 March 1938.

[51] B. Gillespie, "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, 1936-1963," p. 41.

the three international unions at the Newfoundland Railway. While the NIWA still existed, it attracted almost no members. In 1935, the situation began to improve when Walter Sparks led the campaign to form a local of the International Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, Freight Handlers and Station Employees (BRC).[52] Although the union met tough opposition from the Commission of Government which ran the railway, it managed to secure a collective agreement in the fall of 1936. Encouraged by the success of the clerks, dockyard and repair shop workers joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM), and the International Brotherhood of Carmen (IBC). While the formation of these unions was a positive development, union membership in St. John's remained small. Since these unions were made up almost exclusively of male workers, only a few female workers profited from their formation. Within the next year and a half, however, St. John's would experience a surge in union strength and the number of organized female workers would start to increase dramatically.

The resurgence of the labour movement could not have occurred soon enough for working women. Without unions or protective labour legislation, most female workers had been experiencing increasingly oppressive working conditions and extremely low wages. Any improvements which had been achieved for working women by the NIWA Ladies' Branch were abandoned once it collapsed and economic conditions in the city grew more depressed. An investigation conducted by an organization called the Old Memorials' Association in 1935, supports this argument. Over several months, this association made inquiries into conditions in factories, stores and offices around the city. A summary of their findings presented to the Commission of Government revealed appalling conditions.[53] At one factory, they found working women who were paid eight cents an hour and were expected to work

---

[52]Interview with Walter Sparks, October, 1986.

[53]CNS, Rolf Hattenhauer Collection, Letter from Sadie Organ, Secretary of the Old Memorials' Association, 10 May 1935. This association included alumni of Memorial College in St. John's.

nine hours a day (not including time for meals). At another factory both male and female workers were paid by the day and "when the factory is obliged to close on Christmas Day, a day's pay is deducted from the weekly wage." The investigators discovered that at most stores, employees were expected to work long hours for low wages and had to work overtime for months before Christmas. At one particular store, sales clerks were obliged to take part of their wages in goods from another firm. In regard to offices, they found that a number were "dark, overcrowded, poorly lit, and badly ventilated." The Commission did little in response to the findings of this enquiry.

One of the only steps the Commission did take was to pass the "Shop Closing Hour Act" in May 1936, which governed hours of work for employees in retail shops.[54] As noted previously, special provisions in the law applied to female workers. Women did not have to work more than forty-eight hours in one week or more than eight hours in any day except the one day each week their stores remained open past 7:30 p.m. Female sales clerks were also to be given seats behind the counters. While this piece of legislation meant a substantial reduction in hours of work for sales clerks, no legislation was immediately forthcoming for factory workers who also worked long hours.

The passage of the Shop Closing Hour Act did not end concern for workers in St. John's, particularly female workers. Throughout 1937 and the early months of 1938, a great deal of attention was given to the exploitation of working women. One citizen writing to The Leader in May 1937 expressed outrage at the treatment of some working women:

> I venture to bring to the notice of your readers the bitter recriminations voiced by some young ladies of the city who were obliged to work in these sweatshops at starvation wages. How can it be possible that some employers

---

[54] Acts of the Honourable Commission of Government of Newfoundland, 1936, (St. John's: King's Printer, 1936), pp. 21-25. This act is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

of female help pay only $1.50 to $ 1.75 per week?[55]

An article in this same paper several months later outlined the working conditions and low wages at a couple of the city's largest laundries which hired women exclusively.[56] The greatest public outcry came from a letter written by a young "factory girl" which appeared in the Evening Telegram in early 1938. She wrote:

> Just think how we are treated making a small sum of thirty-three cents per day, leaving in the morning at seven and reaching home again at seven in the night. Half holidays which are fixed for those working in stores are enjoyed. They get paid for it. But don't think for a moment that a girl working in the factory calls it a half holiday. We call it a half day off.[57]

This letter produced a flood of letters in reply, only a couple of which tried to refute the woman's allegations. "A Manufacturer" stated, "I doubt very much if there are many girls employed in the city at the low rate mentioned, certainly not in any reputable industry managed by Newfoundlanders."[58] Another gentleman argued that a forty-four to forty-eight hour week was observed by most factories except in the busy period when workers laboured fifty-two hours.[59] The rest of those writing to the newspaper supported the woman's statements and called for changes. One writer observed that some factories in the city paid their female workers at piecework rates that were so low that they had to work as fast as they could to earn anything at all. He added, "There are many girls earning less than two dollars per week in so-called factories or sweatshops."[60] Someone else suggested that it was established practice for factory

---

[55] The Leader, 22 May 1937.

[56] The Leader, 3 July 1938.

[57] Evening Telegram, 2 February 1938.

[58] Evening Telegram, 4 February 1938.

[59] Evening Telegram, 5 February 1938.

[60] Ibid.

employees to receive a half or whole holiday at the expense of their own pay envelopes.[61] An editorial noted, "How many girls are employed at the same low rate the Telegram is at present unable to determine but from the number of similar cases to which its attention has been called it would say not a few."[62]

One woman writing to the newspaper proposed that agitation over "the factory girl's plea" be kept up until a board of enquiry was appointed and given full authority to probe into the affairs of any business that did not pay a living wage.[63] Local representatives of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council also called for an enquiry. They wanted an investigation into conditions of work in the city's factories.[64] The Commission of Government waited another year before it would initiate an an investigation by Thomas Liddell, chief conciliation officer for the United Kingdom. The broad mandate given to Liddell was to survey industrial and labour conditions throughout Newfoundland. His findings and recommendations were not published until 1940. In the interim, workers in St. John's took matters into their own hands. In 1938 alone, over a dozen new unions emerged in the city and several others were revitalized; the number of organized working women reached its highest level in the city's history.

The Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council, a federation of unions from across the island, had only been in existence a couple of months, when its St. John's Executive Committee began to make plans for a massive organizing campaign in their

---

[61] Evening Telegram, 17 February 1938.

[62] Evening Telegram, 4 February 1938.

[63] Evening Telegram, 4 February 1938.

[64] The Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council was founded 27 July 1937. See, Proceedings of the First Convention of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council, (n.p., n.d.).

city.[65] Since the attempt to recruit existing unions outside the NTLC had met with little success, priority was given to organizing new unions. Bill Gillespie has pointed out that, fortunately for the NTLC, the St. John's Committee contained some of its most able leaders. Walter Sparks, Irving Fogwill, Frank Fogwill and Eleazer Davis of the BRC, along with Ron Fahey, Alexander Piercey and F.A.F. Lush of the IAM were the seven men on the committee that spearheaded the drive.[66] In the fall of 1937 these men devised a strategy which required each one to take responsibility for one occupational category. Each organizer would then go to any establishment in the city that employed large numbers of the appropriate type of worker and talk to those interested in forming a union. Once a few willing contacts were found they were left to spread the idea until they created enough interest to warrant the surreptitious distribution of union cards. After a sufficient number of cards were signed the NTLC would call a meeting and ask prospective members to pay an initiation fee, adopt a constitution and set of by-laws, and elect a slate of officers. Following this strategy the committee approached prospective union members in the closing months of 1937. The organizers discovered that many of the workers they approached, both male and female, were eager to join a union.

Walter Sparks organized the retail clerks. In a few months he contacted workers in more than seventy Water Street firms, and promoted the concept of a single union to encompass all retail and clerical employees in St. John's. By February 1938, he felt that the time had arrived to call a founding meeting. If the meeting failed to attract enough support, the whole organizing drive would have stumbled. On the other hand, success would have given workers reluctant to offend their employers by becoming involved in trade union activities the courage to form organizations of their own. In

---

[65] See, B. Gillespie, "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, 1936-1963."

[66] Interview with Walter Sparks, October 1986.

conjunction with some of the retail clerks, Sparks reserved Pitts Memorial Hall for 17 February.[67] At least one employer who found out about the meeting tried to discourage his employees from attending. As an incentive not to participate in a retail clerks' union, John Ayre gave all his employees a larger bonus than unual, and a promise of an increase in wages on 16 February.[68] In spite of such tactics, some 650 clerks signed up that first night.[69]

Female retail clerks and office employees made a significant contribution to this union. On the first evening when the Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees (NPASOE) was founded, a large contingent of female workers was present.[70] Although they risked the loss of their jobs, women stepped forward to take a more active role in the union. These women, along with six men, volunteered to write the union's constitution. Another three took part in a six-member committee given the responsibility of formulating by-laws.[71] A general meeting was held on 18 March 1938 with the purpose of adopting a constitution and by-laws, and electing an executive. Amelia Fogwill, a sister of Irving and Frank, was elected vice-president.[72] Women also filled positions on the union's working, auditing and social committees. Within a few months the membership of the NPASOE reached over 1,600. Almost 40 per cent were women. [See Table 5-1.]

The success of the retail workers encouraged others to form unions. In March,

---

[67] Evening Telegram, 18 February 1938.

[68] Observer's Weekly, 20 February 1938.

[69] Evening Telegram, 18 February 1983.

[70] Interview with Walter Sparks, October 1986.

[71] CNS, Walter Sparks Collection, Constitution and by-laws of NPASOE.

[72] Evening Telegram, 8 March 1938.

the Tin and Sheet Metal Workers' Association, the Carpenters' Protective Association, the Newfoundland Barbers' Association, the Bakery Workers' Protective Union, the Aerated Water, Brewery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers' Protective Union, and the Garment Workers' Protective Union were founded.[73] In April, these groups were followed by the Union of Municipal Workers, the Electrical Telephone and Allied Trades Protective Association, and the Printing and Allied Trades Protective Union of Newfoundland.[74] Then came the creation of the Cordage, Twine and Allied Workers' Protective Association, the Journeymen and Apprentice Painters' Union and the Plumbers' and Pipefitters' Protective Association in May.[75] Within a few months a large number of St. John's workers were organized. [See Table 5-1.]

Working women played a visible role in the founding of a number of these unions, particularly those employed as bakery, garment, aerated water, confectionery, tobacco, telephone and cordage workers. At the founding meeting of the Garment Workers' Protective Union the following observation was made: "Over seventy-five per cent of those present on Thursday were ladies, and the general atmosphere was one of brightness, colour, and fellowship."[76] Women took part in writing the union's constitution and by-laws. They also filled positions on the union's auditing committee and as trustees.[77] The membership of the Garment Workers' Protective Union was made up largely of women, reflecting their dominance in the clothing industry. Almost 80 per cent of the membership was female. [See Table 5-1.] Women constituted over half of the members in the Aerated Water, Brewery, Butterine,

---

[73] Evening Telegram, 21 March 1938.

[74] Evening Telegram, 2 May 1938.

[75] Evening Telegram, 13 May 1938.

[76] Evening Telegram, 29 March 1938.

[77] Labour Herald, 26 August 1938.

Confectionery and Tobacco Workers, and over a third in the Bakery Workers' Protective Union, the Electrical, Telephone and Allied Workers Protective Union of Newfoundland, and the Cordage,Twine and Allied Workers Protective Union of Newfoundland. In all these unions where women joined up in sizeable numbers they took an active part in setting them up and running them.[78]

The St. John's Executive Committee of the NTLC did not attempt to organize domestics. The organizers agreed that such a task would be quite difficult because of the isolation of domestics in private households.[79] All of their organizing attempts involved workers who were concentrated in large numbers, either in stores or factories. The Executive Committee did not rule out domestics completely; rather, the men were content to see whether the women would take enough interest to approach them. A small number of female domestics did seize the initiative and contacted the members of the Executive Committee. A Miss Julia Rickert wrote a letter to them asking when a union for domestics would be formed. Rickert indicated that she knew of several women besides herself who were interested in joining such an organization.[80] In reply, she was informed, "We trust that an opportunity will be forthcoming whereby membership in a union covering your class of work may be possible."[81] A letter from "A Maid" in one newspaper stated:

> It is wonderful to see all the unions that have been organised during the past few weeks. I know it means a better city to work (in). But why not organize a union for the maids to see that they get shorter hours and better wages. We just want fair play and to be treated as human beings and not

---

[78] Labour Leader, 21 May 1938.

[79] Interview with Walter Sparks, October 1986.

[80] PANL, Newfoundland Federation of Labour, P8/B/47, Box 1, File 4, Letter from Miss Julia Rickert to the NTLC, 10 March 1938.

[81] Ibid., Letter from F.A.F. Lush, Secretary, Executive Committee, NTLC, 10 March 1938.

machines.[82]

A delegate to the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council in September 1938 suggested that an effort should be made to unionize domestic workers, but none was immediately forthcoming.[83]

The St. John's Executive Committee took at least an initial step in this direction by publishing a series of articles supporting the idea of a domestic's union in their newspaper, the Labour Herald. One article proposed that "The abuses of the domestic workers' problem can be solved by the organization of the St. John's domestic workers. The organization could establish a general wage of twenty dollars a month which is little enough for any female to clothe and enjoy herself on."[84] Another article stated, "The domestic workers of Newfoundland have not yet been organized - the most exploited and ill-treated of female workers. The need of a domestic workers' union is immediate."[85] In spite of this type of public support for the idea, an organizing campaign was never mounted. The St. John's Executive Committee believed that there were too many obstacles to overcome in order for them to succeed

All the newly formed unions attempted to negotiate agreements with city factory owners, or in the case of NPASOE, with store owners. In at least two cases the unwillingness of employers to negotiate led to a strike. Female union members played a visible role in both. On 17 July 1938, members of the Bakery Workers Protective Union (BWPU), stated that they were prepared "to take a stand in obtaining a decent standard of living," and unless negotiations were initiated before July 20 they would

---

[82]Evening Telegram, 1 April 1938.

[83]Report of Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council, St. John's, September 6th to 10th, 1936 (n.p., n.d.).

[84]Labour Herald, 6 January 1938.

[85]Labour Herald, 16 December 1938.

cease work on 22 July at noon.[86] Earlier that year the union had submitted contract proposals to bakery owners, but had only managed to sign agreements with a few of them.[87] When the employers did not respond on the date suggested, the union found itself with no alternative but to strike. Within a week the smaller soft bread bakeries acceded to the union's terms. They signed an agreement which stipulated a closed shop, a reduced work week, a 10 per cent increase, and an $18.00 minimum wage for employees.[88] The union secured an easy victory with the soft bread owners, but the hard biscuit manufacturers turned out to be formidable opponents. During the second week, the managers of the three remaining plants affected by the strike -- Mammy's Bakery, Browning-Harvey's and Purity -- began to train new staff.[89] The strikers were supposed to be comforted in this turn of events by the offer that their employers were still willing to hire them back without prejudice. With the employers adamantly refusing to consider the demands of the BWPU, confectionery workers at two of the factories (most of whom were women) went out on strike 11 August 1938 in sympathy with the bakery workers. The members of the Aerated Waters, Brewery, Butterine, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers Union (ABBCTU) at Browning-Harvey and Purity were commended for their efforts by city union leaders, but their actions did little to bring a successful end to the strike.[90] The employers responded by hiring even more strike breakers. While the strikers received support from the local labour unions, the job action continued until December when the bakery and confectionery

---

[86] Evening Telegram, 18 July 1938.

[87] Labour Herald, 16 September 1938.

[88] Labour Herald, 8 August 1938.

[89] Evening Telegram, 10 August 1938.

[90] Evening Telegram, 11 August 1938.

unions admitted defeat. Over 150 men and women were left without jobs.[91]

The employees of the Avalon Telephone Company, who were members of the Electrical, Telephone and Allied Workers' Protective Association (ETAWPA) struck work on 22 October 1938. The forty-four female telephone operators and fifteen men in the electrical department who went on strike indicated that such actions had been taken only after "weeks of fruitless negotiations" with the telephone company.[92] The workers demanded a closed shop, a nine-hour day, and a wage increase for the telephone operators to $65.00 a month. The women were then earning from $15.00 to $55.00 a month.[93] Refusing to negotiate with the union while it demanded a closed shop, the Avalon Telephone Company began to train operators within a matter of days of the work stoppage. By the fourth day of the strike, most of the men in the electrical department had returned to work, leaving the women to try to reach a settlement.[94] Eventually, the women accepted the futility of their efforts, and ceased attempting to get the Avalon Telephone Company to negotiate.[95] These women who stayed out found themselves without employment.

The Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees was more successful in reaching an agreement with store owners. The union took the initiative in November 1938, forwarding copies of a proposed agreement. Over a period of a year and a half members of NPASOE, and representatives of the Importers Association which included most of the city's retail owners, tried to come up with a

---

[91] Newfoundland, Industrial Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's: Robinson, 1940), p. 50.

[92] Labour Herald, 26 October 1938.

[93] Evening Telegram, 26 October 1938.

[94] Evening Telegram, 27 October 1938.

[95] Labour Herald, 4 November 1938.

document that was acceptable to both parties.[96] On 20 May 1940 a contract was finally signed, affecting 1,800 workers in seventy-four firms.[97] The workers attained shorter working hours and higher wages.[98]

Between the two world wars working women in St. John's experienced two waves of intense union organization. The first period of union activity occurred as World War I came to a close. During the war women had entered the local labour force in unprecedented numbers, and their presence had become particularly noticeable in the secondary manufacturing sector. Due in large part to the explosive growth of the NIWA, substantial gains were being achieved in the organization of male workers. Out of these circumstances, the NIWA Ladies' Branch was formed in August 1918. A broadly based union of female operatives from most of the city's factories, the NIWA Ladies' Branch attained a membership of over 500 within its first year. Under the leadership of its president, Julia Salter Earle, the Ladies' Branch pressured a number of factory owners to make improvements in working conditions and to reduce the hours of work. Before anything further could be achieved by this union, however, and before another branch of the NIWA could be formed for female sales clerks, the country was struck by an economic depression which severely weakened the city's union movement. While the NIWA Ladies' Branch existed until 1925, it ceased to be active after 1921. From the early 1920's until the mid-1930's labour organizations in St. John's were quiescent. Only a few unions remained with drastically reduced memberships. None of them included more than a handful of female members. The labour movement finally started to recover with the formation of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council in the fall of 1937. This event signalled the beginning of

---

[96]CNS, Walter Sparks Collection, Box 1, File 1, Reports of meetings between representatives of store owners and NPASOE, 8 December 1938, 7 December 1939.

[97] Daily News, 21 May 1940.

[98]CNS, Walter Sparks Collection, Box 1, File 1, Copy of NPASOE agreement, 20 May 1940.

the second wave of union organization for working women. The St. John's Executive Committee of the NTLC embarked on an ambitious organizing campaign in the spring of 1938, and with the focus on unskilled factory operatives, and shop and office employees, a large number of the members in the newly formed unions were women. They became members of the garment, tobacco, confectionery, cordage, shop and office, bakery, and telephone workers' unions. In almost every case, women took an active role in setting up and running the unions. Depite these gains, the majority or working women remained unorganized.

**Table 5-1:** St. John's Unions Formed in 1938.

| Union | Number of Males | Percentage of Males | Number of Females | Percentage of Females | Total Number |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aerated Waters, Brewery, Butterine, Confectionery, and Tobacco Workers | 214 | 47.4 | 238 | 52.6 | 452 |
| Bakery Workers' Protective Union | 129 | 66.2 | 66 | 33.8 | 195 |
| St. John's Bricklayers and Masons | 41 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 41 |
| Carpenters' Protective Association of Newfoundland | 354 | 97.0 | 11 | 3.0 | 365 |
| St. John's Journeymen Coopers' Union | 160 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 160 |
| Electric Telephone and Allied Workers Protective Association | 98 | 62.4 | 58 | 37.6 | 156 |
| Union of Municipal Workers | 245 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 245 |
| Nail, Foundry and Associated Workers Union | 92 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 92 |
| Plumbers' and Pipefitters' Protective Association of Newfoundland | 40 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 40 |
| Newfoundland Protective Association of Shop and Office Employees | 1012 | 61.1 | 647 | 38.9 | 1659 |
| Cordage Twine and Allied Workers' Protective Union of Newfoundland | 42 | 64.7 | 23 | 35.3 | 65 |
| Journeymen and Apprentice Painters' Protective Union | 57 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 57 |
| Garment Workers' Protective Union of Newfoundland | 73 | 20.6 | 283 | 79.4 | 356 |
| Printing and Allied Trades Protective Union of Newfoundland | 83 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 83 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Screen Workers' Guild | 24 | 66.7 | 12 | 33.3 | 36 |
| Newfoundland Workers Association | 750 | 48.7 | 10 | 1.3 | 760 |
| Total | 3414 | 71.7 | 1348 | 28.3 | 4762 |

Source: PANL GN22 Department of Labour, Register of Trade Unions C. 1938.

# Chapter 6

# Conclusion

During the 1920's and 1930's working women in St. John's were prominent in the city's work force. In many instances their earnings made an important contribution to the economic survival of their families. An ever greater number of women entered the work force during the early years of this century, reaching a peak in World War I. The depression which struck the country with such intensity after the war, meant that hundreds of women were laid off or forced to work "short time." Full-time wage employment was equally scarce for men in the city. Despite the poor economic conditions, women's presence in the labour force remained, for the most part, intact in 1921, and their participation increased over the next decade and a half. When Newfoundland slipped further into economic depression in the 1930's, employment in St. John's became even harder to secure; yet, women continued to constitute a significant proportion of the work force. Since so many males could not find work, it proved essential for their daughters and their wives to labour for pay. As cheap, unskilled workers, women were preferred for particular types of jobs over men. The range of occupational choices for women throughout this period remained narrow. In more than a few cases, working women's wages kept their families from privation.

The pattern of women's paid work did not change dramatically from the early 1920's to the latter part of the 1930's. Full-time female wage-earners tended almost exclusively to be young and single. Work force participation for most marked a discrete stage in their life cycles between leaving school and getting married. Single working-class women who made up the majority of the labour force sought wage

employment most often out of economic necessity. In many instances their earnings were needed to supplement the meager earnings of their fathers. There were also numerous other examples of young, single women supporting families by themselves or with other siblings, because their fathers did not have a job or had died. Single middle-class women were not as likely to work, but an increasing number entered the labour force during the inter-war years. Class background had an impact on the occupation that single women chose. Working-class women tended to be employed in blue-collar occupations in addition to retail sales, while middle-class women were concentrated almost exclusively in white-collar occupations. Working-class women lacked the education as well as the monetary resources to train for a female profession or to enroll in a commercial course. Waged work for almost all women, regardless of the occupation, offered only long hours, low pay, and poor working conditions. In manufacturing and retail sales, the work tended to be seasonal so that intense periods of activity, usually requiring workers to labour overtime, were followed by slack periods when the hours of work were reduced along with the wages. The women who endured such hours and wages remember their time in the work force less for the negative aspects of the labour they had to carry out, and more for the positive relationships which they developed with co-workers. For most single women, wage employment afforded women many opportunities to socialize inside and outside the workplace.

Far fewer married and widowed women engaged in paid labour; the immense responsibilities of domestic labour and childrearing facing these older women precluded even those who might have needed to work out of economic necessity from engaging in waged labour. The married and widowed women who worked did so most often on a part-time basis at a stage when most of their children were old enough to be in school. The occupations that they chose allowed them to carry out their paid labour, as well as their domestic duties. It is difficult to ascertain their exact numbers since

the census is so unreliable in this regard, but it would appear from the available fragmentary evidence, that part-time work of some form or another was relied upon by a significant proportion of married and widowed working-class women in the city.

A prominent feature of the St. John's labour force throughout the 1920's and 1930's was the large-scale employment of women as live-in domestics. St. John's had the largest proportion of domestic servants in a female labour force (over a third) of any urban centre in North America. This occupation was not the first choice of urban working-class women, who looked for work in the factories or stores before they considered employment as domestics. Live-in domestic service was an occupation of last resort. Large numbers of women from outports, on the other hand, arrived in St. John's annually seeking positions as domestic servants. Outport women were more than willing to enter service, and in fact, it seems to have been their preferred occupation. Domestic service provided employment for women with little formal education, and in need of a place to live free of charge. Outport women tended to view domestic service as "the thing to do," an expected part of the life cycle. During the 1920's the city experienced a shortage of domestics. While economic conditions were poor in this decade, alternatives to domestic service existed for urban women, and the supply of rural women in search of domestic service positions never exceeded the demand. As the 1930's unfolded, the demand for domestics remained the same, but the supply increased sharply as unemployment levels rose. Throughout the inter-war years, women who entered domestic service endured long hours of hard labour, received low wages, were given little free time, and were accorded the lowest status in the female labour force.

Between the two world wars, working women in St. John's experienced two waves of union organization. The first wave of union activity came at the end of World War I when women's presence in the labour force reached unprecedented numbers and union organization of male workers was on the rise. While a number of unions with

female members existed in the city, the formation of the NIWA Ladies' Branch created the first autonomous labour organization comprised solely of women. A broadly-based union of female operatives from almost all of the city's factories, the NIWA Ladies' Branch attained a membership of over 500 within its first year. Under the leadership of its president, Julia Salter Earle, and through the collective action of its members, this union achieved shorter hours of work and better working conditions for operatives in the factories. The post-war depression which resulted in so many layoffs seriously depleted the membership of the NIWA Ladies' Branch. While the union continued to function until 1925, it ceased to be an active organization by the end of 1921. From the early 1920's until the mid-1930's the city's labour movement went into a serious slump which meant that almost no working women were organized. Only a few unions remained with drastically reduced membership, none of which included more than a handful of female members. The labour movement only started to recover with the formation of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council in 1937, which triggered the second wave of organization for working women. In the spring of 1938, the St. John's Executive Committee of the NTLC attempted to organize a variety of workers in different industries. Their efforts were successful, and many members of the newly formed unions were women. They joined the garment, tobacco, confectionery, cordage, shop and office, bakery, and telephone workers' unions in large numbers. Women participated in setting up, as well as running, these unions. Despite these gains, however, the majority of women in the city remained unorganized.

As the first comprehensive study of working women in St. John's this thesis has demonstrated the importance of women's paid labour within the local economy as well as the significant contributions made by women's labour to the survival of their households. While the pattern of women's work conforms generally to the findings of other researchers examining women's labour in urban North America, some differences do emerge. First, the importance of domestic service in St. John's is even

greater than in other North American cities; the migration of outport women to St. John's in search of work has been noted. Second, the absence of large groups of European migrants to Newfoundland meant that the female labour force was more ethnically homogeneous than in most North Amercian cities where recent immigrants were often unable to obtain jobs other than menial ones because of language. Third, while the role of religion is not clear from available sources, religious background apparently could influence employment patterns.

The role of religion in affecting women's employment is an example of an area needing further study. Other areas which have been touched on, but require more study include: educational background as it influenced women's job opportunities, the wage employment of married and widowed women, the family economy, the migration of women from outports to St. John's as well as from Newfoundland to Canada and the United States in search of work, a detailed picture of the local demographic structure, the role of kinship in employment patterns, and finally, an indepth consideration of gender and class in the St. John's work force. A great deal more research needs to be done before historians will be able to fully comprehend the past lives of wage-earning women in St. John's.

# Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES:

I MANUSCRIPTS

i. Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

Bowring Brothers. Papers. P7/A/3.

Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921, 1935, (Nominal).

Ellis, Eric. Papers. PN55.

Great Britain. Colonial Office Original Correspondence, Secretary of State: Despatches from Governors' Offices and Individual Minutes and Draft Replies. C.O. 194.

Newfoundland Board of Trade. Correspondance. P8/B/11. 1919-1939.

Newfoundland. Colonial Secretary. Special Subject Files. GN2/5.

Newfoundland. Commission of Government. Department of Justice and Defence 1934-1938. Memoranda. GN38, S4-1-1.

Newfoundland. Commission of Government. Natural Resources. General Administration. Papers and Memos, Reports of Natural Resources Divisions. GN38, S2-1-6.

Newfoundland. Commission of Government. Secretary of the Commission, Miscellaneous Papers. Petitions sent to Commission of Government. GN38, S1-2-6.

Newfoundland. Commission of Government. Secretary of the Commission. Miscellaneous Papers, re Report on Industries, agreements. GN38, S1-2-4.

Newfoundland. Department of Justice. Departmental Files. GN13/1.

Newfoundland. Department of Labour. GN22/1.

Newfoundland Federation of Labour Papers. P8/B/47.

Newfoundland. Department of Natural Resources. Departmental Files. GN31/3/A.

Newfoundland. Executive Council Minute Books. Minutes of Commission of Government, GN9/1.

Newfoundland. Governor's Office. Register of Miscellaneous Despatches and Local Correspondence. GN1/3/A.

Newfoundland. Proceedings of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1933. (Typescript).

Rowe, C.F. Papers. P6/A/40.

ii. United Church Archives.

Emmanuel House Papers. WY-1400.

iii. Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives.

Hattenhauer, Rolf. Collection.

Sparks, Walter. Collection.

II NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Among the Deep Sea Fishers, 1914-1938.

Colonial Commerce, 1916.

Commercial Annual, 1915-1921.

Daily News, 1918-1939.

Daily Star, 1918.

Evening Telegram, 1918-1939.

Labour Herald, 1938-1939.

Labour Leader, 1938.

Liberal Press, 1922-1929.

Newfoundland Magazine, 1917-1920.

NTA Journal, 1920-1939.

Observers Weekly, 1934-1939.

Worker (Toronto), 1935.

III INTERVIEWS

i. Memorial University Folklore and Language Archives

Paula Densmore interview with Elizabeth Brien. 86-065.

Rodney Vatcher interview with Anny Sears. 80-29.

## ii. Interviews by Author

Fogwill, Jenny. She was born Jenny Horwood on 18 October 1912 in St. John's. At the age of 14 she took a job in a small confectionery store. After three years at this job Jenny was hired as a cash girl at Ayre and Sons. She remained there until 1935 when she married Irving Fogwill who became an important labour leader in St. John's. Interview, November, 1987.

Jones, Mabel. She was born Mabel Saunders on 18 March, 1914 in Greenspond. She came to St. John's in 1932 at the age of 18 to work as a domestic. After one year Mabel left her first employer for another family where she remained for seven years. She left their employ in 1941 to get married. Mabel and Millie Vail are sisters. Interview, June 1987.

Lush, F.A.F. One of the founders of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour. Interview, November 1986.

Norris, Mary. She was born Mary Taylor on 31 October 1900 in St. John's. At age 15 Mary started work at the Newfoundland Knitting Company. She left work at this factory after two years for another job at the White Clothing Company. She married William Norris in 1920. Her daughter is Dorothy Froggott. Interview, May 1986.

O'Dea, Agnes. She was born on 24 August 1911 in St. John's. She attended Mercy Convent in St. John's, and then Loretto Abbey in Toronto. She received a bachelor's degree in Library Science from the University of Toronto in 1932. In 1935, she returned to St. John's and was hired to help set up the Gosling Library. Miss O'Dea worked as a professional librarian until her retirement in 1976. Interview, August 1986.

Froggott, Dorothy. She was born Dorothy Norris on 16 December 1922 in St. John's. At age 12 she started work at the Browning-Harvey confectionery factory in the marshmellow room. She was employed by this company until she married in 1942. Mary Norris is Dorothy's mother. Interview, May 1986.

Sparks, Walter. One of the founders of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour. Interview, November 1986.

Strong, Hazel. She was born Hazel Guest on 2 June 1909. She started work as a waitress at the age of 22 in 1932. Hazel worked in the small restaurant adjacent to the Hotel Newfoundland. In 1939 she left the work force to marry Cyril Strong, who later became an important labour leader in Newfoundland. Interview, February 1987.

Vail, Millie. She was born Millie Saunders on 28 January 1909 in Greenspond. She came to St. John's at the age of 16 in 1925 to work as a domestic. She stayed with the same family for seven years until she left to get married. Interview, June 1987.

White, Leah. She was born Leah Burry on 2 August 1919 in Greenspond. She came to St. John's in 1938 at the age of 1919 to work as a domestic. She left her position as a domestic after two years to work in the laundry of the Lunatic Sanatorium. After several years at this position she went to New York where she worked in a dry cleaning store. Leah returned to St. John's in 1946 to get married. Interview, March 1987.

White, Gee. She was born Joyce Carter on 18 September 1915. She came to St. John's in 1932 at the age of 17, and remained as domestic with the same family for seven years until she married in 1939. Interview, March 1987.

Wiseman, Stella. She was born on 21 March 1918 in St. John's. She began work at the Imperial Tobacco Company at the age of 19 in 1937. She worked there for three years until she married. Interview, May 1986.

## IV PRINTED SOURCES (Government)

Canada. 1931: Classification of Occupations, Seventh Census of Canada 1931. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937.

Canada. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931. Ottawa: King's Printer 1942.

Canada. Sixth Census of Canada, 1921. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929.

Great Britain. Royal Commission on the Natural Resources Trade, Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions. Minutes of Evidence Taken in Newfoundland in 1914. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1915.

Newfoundland. Acts of the General Assembly of Newfoundland. 1919-1933.

Newfoundland. Acts of the Honourable Commission of Government. 1934-1939.

Newfoundland. Annual Report of the Commission of Government. 1936-1939.

Newfoundland. Annual Report of the Department of Education, 1920-1939.

Newfoundland. Colonial Secretary's Office. Census of Newfoundland and Labrador. St. John's: The Office, 1904.

Newfoundland. Colonial Secretary's Office. Census of Newfoundland and Labrador 1911. St. John's: The Office, 1914.

Newfoundland. Colonial Secretary's Office. Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1921. St. John's: The Office, 1924.

Newfoundland. The Civil Service Viewed From a Denominational Standpoint, 1908. St. John's: n.p., 1908.

Newfoundland. The Civil Service Viewed From a Denominational Standpoint, November 1st, 1928. St. John's: n.p., 1928.

Newfoundland. Consolidated Statutes of Newfoundland, Third Series. St. John's: Robinson, 1919.

Newfoundland. Department of Health and Welfare. Tenth Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1935. St. John's: The Office, 1937.

Newfoundland. Estimates of Expenditure, 1920-1921. St. John's: King's Printer, 1921.

Newfoundland. Industrial Survey of Newfoundland. St. John's: Robinson, 1940. Report on labour relations to the Commission of Government by Thomas K. Liddell.

Newfoundland. Proceedings of the House of Assembly. 1919-1937.

Newfoundland. Report by the Commission of Government on the Economic Situation, December, 1934. London: HMSO, 1935.

Newfoundland. The Royal Commission 1933: Report. London: HMSO, 1933.

Newfoundland. Report by the Commission of Government on the Unemployment Situation, May 1935. London: HMSO, 1935.

Newfoundland. Report of the Royal Commission on Labour Legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador. St. John's: Queen's Printer, 1972.

St. John's City Directory, 1924. St. John's: St. John's Union Publishing Company, 1924.

V PRINTED SOURCES (Other)

Annual Report of the Council of the Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1921-1939. From 1934 to 1939 annual report published in January issue of Journal of Commerce.

The Girl's Friendly Society in Newfoundland Members Guide. St. John's: n.p., 1929.

Gurney, H.K. Conditions in Newfoundland, March 1933. London: HMSO, 1935.

Mosdell, H.M. 5,000 Facts About Newfoundland. St. John's: n.p., 1921.

Newfoundland Directory 1936. St. John's: Newfoundland Directories, 1936.

Smallwood, J.R., Ed. The Book of Newfoundland. Volume 1-3. St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937.

Report of the Proceedings of Annual Conventions of the Newfoundland Trades and Labour Council. 1937, 1939.

To the Citizens of Saint John's, Is All Well? Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1927.

Who's Who In and From Newfoundland, 1927. St. John's: R. Hibbs, 1930.

Who's Who In and From Newfoundalnd, 1937. St. John's: R. Hibbs, 1940.

SECONDARY SOURCES

I BOOKS

Abbott, E., Women in Industry: A Study in American History. 1910; rpt. New York: Arno and New York Times, 1969.

Acton, J. et al. Eds. Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930. Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974.

Alexander, D. The Decay of Trade: The Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977.

Braverman, H. Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York: Monthly Review, 1974.

Chafe, W. The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Role, 1920-1970 New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Dudden, F. Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1983.

Eisenstein, S. Give Us Bread But Give Us Roses: Working Women's Consciousness in the United States, 1890 to the First World War. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.

Foner, P.S. Women and the American Labour Movement: From World War I to the Present. New York: Free Press, 1980.

Gillespie, B. A Class Act: An Illustrated History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador. St. John's: Creative, 1986.

Gittins, D. Fair Sex: Social Change and Family Structure, Women, Work and the Decline of Family Size, 1900-1939. New York: St. Martin's, 1982.

Greenwald, M. Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1980.

Hareven, T.K. Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between Family and Work In A New England Industrial Community. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Hareven, T. and R. Langenbach. Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory City. New York: Pantheon, 1979.

Harris, B. Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History, Westport, Conn.: Greenwoood Press, 1982.

Hiller, J.K. The Newfoundland Railway, 1881-1949. St. John's: Cuff, 1982.

Ives, E. The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1972.

Johnson, L.C. and R.G. Johnson. The Seam Allowance: Industrial Home Sewing in Canada. Toronto: Women's Press, 1982.

Katzman, D. Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Kessler-Harris, A. Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Lewis, J. Women in England, 1870-1950. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Murray, H. More Than 50%. St. John's: Breakwater, 1979.

Nevitt, J. White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934. St. John's: Jesperson, 1978.

Noel, S.J.R. Politics in Newfoundland. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

O'Neill, P. The Oldest City: The Story of St. John's Newfoundland. Erin Ont.: Press Porcepic, 1975. 2V.

Peiss, K. Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-century New York. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

Perlin, A.B. Ed. The Story of Newfoundland. St. John's: n.p., 1959.

Pinchbeck, I. Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850. 1930; rpt. London: K. Cass, 1969.

Roberts, E. A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940. London: Blackwell, 1984.

Roberts, W. Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893-1914. Toronto: New Hogtown, 1976.

Rotella, E. From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870-1930. Ann Arbor: WMI Press, 1981.

Scharf, L. To Work or to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, Press, 1980.

Smallwood, J.R. Ed. Encyclopedia of Newfoundland. Volume I. St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, 1967.

Sutherland, D.G. Americans and their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University press, 1981.

Tentler, L. Wage Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Thompson, P. Voice of the Past: Oral History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Tilly, L. and J. Scott. Women, Work and Family. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

Wandersee, W.D. Women's Work and Family Values, 1920-1940. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Ware, S. Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s. Boston: Twayne, 1982.

Weiner, L. Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labour Force in the United States, 1820-1980. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 1985.

White, J. Women and Unions. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1980.

II ARTICLES

Alexander, D. "Newfoundland's Traditional Economy and Development to 1934," Acadiensis, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 56-78.

Antler, E. "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishing Families," Atlantis, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 106-113.

Armstrong, P. and H. Armstrong. "Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex." In Politics of Diversity. Edited by R. Hamilton and M. Barrett. London: Verso, 1987. pp. 208-240.

Barber, M. "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930." In The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History Volume 2. Edited by A. Prentice and S. Trofimentkoff. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985. pp. 102-121.

Barrett, M. and M. McIntosh. "The Family Wage: Some Problems for Socialists and Feminists," Capital and Class, Vol. II (Summer 1980), pp. 51-72.

Benson, S. "The Clerking Sisterhood: Rationalization and the Work Culture of Saleswomen in American Department Stores, 1890-1960," Radical America, Vol. 12, No. 2 (March-April 1978), pp. 41-55.

Bird, P. "Hamilton Working Women in the Period of the Great Depression," Atlantis, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Spring 1983), pp. 125-36.

Bradbury, B. "Women's History and Working-Class History," Labour/Le Travail, No. 17 (Spring 1987), pp. 23-43.

Brandt, G. "Industry's Handmaidens: Women in the Quebec Cotton Industry," Canadian Women's Studies/ Les Cahiers de la femme, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1981), pp. 79-82.

Brandt, G. "Weaving it Together: Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," Labour/Le Travailleur, No. 7 (Spring 1981), pp. 113-126.

Brookes, A. and C. Wilson. "'Working Away' from the Farm: the Young Women of North Huron, 1910-1930," Ontario History, Vol. 77, No. 4 (December 1985), pp. 281-300.

Delphy, C. "Women in Stratification Studies." In Doing Feminist Research. Edited by H. Roberts. London: Routledge, 1981. pp. 114-128.

Elliot, R.M. "Newfoundland Politics in the 1920s: The Genesis and Significance of the Hollis Walker Enquiry." In Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation Edited by J.K. Hiller and P. Neary. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. pp. 181-204.

Frager, R. "Women Workers and the Canadian Labour Movement, 1870-1940." In Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement. Edited by L. Briskin and L. Yanz, Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1983. pp. 44-66.

Gardiner, J. "Women in the Labour Process and Class Structure." In Class and Class Structure. Edited by A. Hunt. London: Lawrence, 1977. pp. 22-48.

Hakim, C. "Census Reports as Documentary Evidence: The Census Commentaries 1801-1951. The Sociological Review, No. 28, New Series 3 (August 1980), pp. 551-580.

Higgs, E. "Domestic Service and Household Production." In Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918. Edited by A.V. John. London: Blackwell, 1986. pp. 125-152.

Humphries, J. "Women, Scapegoats and Safety Valves in the Great Depression." Review of Radical Economics, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 98-121.

Humphries, J. "The Working Class Family Women's Liberation and Class Struggle: The Case of Nineteenth Century British History," The Review of Radical Politics, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Fall 1977), pp. 25-43.

Kessler-Harris, A. "Where Are the Organized Women Workers?" Feminist Studies, Vol. 3 No. 1-2. (Fall 1975), pp. 92-110.

Kessler-Harris, A. "Women's Wage Work as Myth and History," Labor History, No. 19 (Spring 1978), pp. 287-301.

Kleinberg, S. "The Systematic Study of Urban Women." In Class, Sex and the Woman Worker. Edited by M. Cantor and B. Laurie. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977. pp. 20-42.

Land, H. "The Family Wage," Feminist Review, No. 6 (1980), pp. 55-77.

Lavigne, M. and J. Stoddart, "Les travailleuses montréalaises entre les deux guerres," Labour/Le Travailleur No. 2 (1977), pp. 170-183.

Lenskyi, H. "A 'Servant Problem' or 'Servant-Mistress Problem'?: Domestic Service in Canada, 1890-1930," Atlantis, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Fall 1981), pp. 3-11.

Lowe, G. "Class Job and Gender in the Canadian Office," Labour/Le Travail, No. 10 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 11-38.

Lowe, G. "Women, Work & the Office: The Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1901-1931," Canadian Journal of Sociology, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1980), pp. 361-384.

McCallum, M. "Keeping Women in Their Place: The Minimum Wage in Canada, 1910-1925," Labour/Le Travail, No. 17 (Spring 1986), pp. 29-56.

Milkman, R. "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis: Some Lessons from the Great Depression." In A Heritage of Her Own. Edited by N. Cott and E. Pleck. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. pp. 507-541.

Neary, P. "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939," Acadiensis. Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 69-83.

Porter, M. " She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew': Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," Labour/Le Travail. No. 15 (Spring 1985), pp. 105-23.

Prentice, A. "The Feminization of Teaching. In The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History. Vol. I. Edited by S. Trofimenkoff and A. Prentice. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977, pp. 49-65.

Rosenthal, S. " 'Union Maids': Organized Women Workers in Vancouver 1900-1915," BC Studies, No. 41 (Spring 1979), pp. 36-55.

Sangster, J. "The Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers," Labour/Le Travailleur, No. 3 (1978), pp. 109-130.

Steedman, M. "Skill and Gender in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940." In On the Job. Edited by C. Heron and R. Storey. Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1986, pp. 152-176.

Strong-Boag, V. "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," Labour/Le Travailleur, No. 4 (1979), pp. 131-164.

Strong-Boag, V. "Working Women and the State: The Case of Canada, 1889-1945," Atlantis, Vol. 16 (Summer 1981), pp. 1-16.

Thornton, P. "The Problem of Out-Migration From Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921," Acadiensis, Vo. XV, No. 1 (Autumn 1985). pp. 3-33.

Wandersee, W. "American Women and the Twentieth Century Work Force: The Depression Experience." In Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History. Edited by M. Kelley. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979. pp. 296-312.

Zimmeck, M. "Jobs For the Girls: The Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850-1914." In Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918. Edited by A.V. John. London: Blackwell, 1986. pp. 153-178.

## III THESES, PAPERS, AND LECTURES

Akyeampong, E. "Labour Laws and the Development of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland, 1900-1960." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1967.

Antler, E. "Fisherman, Fisherwoman, Rural Proletariat: Capitalist Commodity Production in the Newfoundland Fishery." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Connecticut, 1983.

Baker, M. "The Government of St. John's Newfoundland, 1800-1921." Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1980.

Bradbury, B. "The Working-Class Family Economy: Montreal, 1861-1881." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Concordia University, 1984.

Chisholm, J. "Hang Her Down: Strikes in St. John's, 1890-1914." Unpublished Paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, April 1987.

Chisholm, J. "Working-Class Women as Wage-Earners: St. John's 1890-1914." Unpublished Paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland, December 1987.

Gillespie, W. "A History of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, 1936-1963." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980.

Hattenhauer, Rolf. "The History of the Labour Movement in Newfoundland." Unpublished Manuscript, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Joy, J. "The Cooperage Trade in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1870-1914." Paper delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, February 28, 1985.

Joy, J. "The Growth and Development of Trades and Manufacturing in St. John's, 1870-1914." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977.

McDonald, I. "W.F. Coaker and the Fisherman's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1971.

McInnis, P. "Newfoundland and World War I: The Emergence of the Newfoundland Industrial Workers' Association." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987.

O'Brien, P. "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort, 1914-1918." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983.

Smith, S. "A Better Chance in the Boston States: An Ethnographic Account of Migratory Domestic Service Among Newfoundland Women". Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1984.

Sparks, I.D. "Pre-Confederation Labour Legislation in Newfoundland." Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969.

# Appendix A

Classification of Occupation Groups for Working Women

Proprietor

Owner, retail
Boardinghouse keeper
Hotelkeeper

Professional

Health Professional
Physician
Nurse
Nurse in training
Musician
Teacher
Social Welfare Worker
Librarian
Lawyer
Photographer
Professor

Office Work

Bookkeeper
Stenographer
Office Assistant
Telephone Operator

Retail Worker

Cash Girl
Saleswoman
Buyer

Private Service

Housekeeper
Cook
Domestic
Practical Nurse
Charwoman
Laundress
Waitress
Hairdresser
Stewardess

Semi-Skilled

Cutter
Dressmaker
Tailoress
Milliner
Forelady

Unskilled

Gardener
Assistant in Fishery
Factory operative (Not spec.)
Confectionery factory worker
Bakery Assistant, factory
Tobacco factory worker
Packer, factory
Boot and shoe factory worker
Ropemaker
Sewing operative
Bookbinding assistant
Operative match factory
Operative, butterine factory
Bottler
Knitter

# Appendix B

## Classification of Occupation Groups for the Heads of Households

### Proprietor

Owner, dairy
Owner, shoe repair
Owner, knitting mill
Owner, clothing factory
Owner, printing firm
Jeweller
Owner, shipping
Building contractor
Owner, garage
Owner, telegraph
Owner, transportation and communications
Owner, retail
Owner, import and export
Owner, paint company
Owner, lumber company
Owner, mine
Owner, bakery
Railway officer
Manager, street railway
Banker
Owner, insurance
Insurance official
Owner, photography
Boarding-house keeper
Hotelkeeper
Undertaker
Auctioneer
Captain, ship
Income

### Professional

Religious worker
Clergyperson
Lawyer
Physician
Optician
Nurse
Journalist
Musician
Accountant
Teacher
Magistrate
Dentist
Civil Engineer
Electrical Engineer
Librarian

### Commercial

Traveller
Collector
Draper
Buyer
Salesperson
Agent, broker
Insurance agent
Real estate agent
Messenger
Ticket Agent
Stenographer
Bookkeeper
Office clerk
Telephone operator
Telegraph operator
Sales Agent

### State Employee

Inspector, customs
Public service official
Police
Fireman
Army, navy, airforce

### Private Service

Waitress
Chauffeur
Janitor
Cook
Practical nurse
Laundress
Charwoman
Barber, hairdresser

Skilled

Foreman, tobacco
Foreman, dairy
Foreman, railroad
Foreman, brewery
Foreman, furrier
Foreman, building
Wharfmaster
Furniture maker
Upholsterer
Baker
Butcher
Sailmaker
Cooper
Carriage maker
Printer
Bookbinder
Moulder
Blacksmith
Boilermaker
Mechanic
Stonecutter
Patternmaker
Motorman
Stationery engineer
Stone Mason
Carpenter
Cement finisher
Electrician
Painter
Plasterer
Plumber
Steamfitter
Engineer, Locomotive
Engineering officer, ship

Semi-skilled

Fireman, boiler
Porter
Brakeman
Boot and shoe worker, shop
Locomotive fireman
Conductor
Cutter
Butterine Maker
Lineman
Fireman, ship
Purser, ship
Truck driver
Teamster
Taxi Dispatcher
Tailoress
Dressmaker
Milliner

Unskilled

Miner
Fisherman
Factory operative (not spec.)
Packer, factory
Shipper
Warehouseman
Boot and shoe worker, factory
Sewing operative
Longshoreman
Labourer
Watchman
Farm labourer
Cigarette maker
Weighman
Delivery man

No Employment

No Employment, Age 65 and Up

# Appendix C

## St. John's Working Women Code Book

Purpose: To collect data for M.A. thesis.

Individual

| Variable No. | Variable Name | Fields | Field Location | Coding Instructions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Case No. | 4 | 1 - 4 | Sequential, assigned by coder |
| 2 | Household | 7 | 5 - 11 | Sequential, assigned by coder |
| 3 | Page No. | 3 | 12 - 14 | Corresponds page on census |
| 4 | Surname | 20 | 15 - 34 | Surname of Woman |
| 5 | First | 20 | 35 - 54 | First Name of Woman |
| 6 | Age | 2 | 55 - 56 | Age in Years |
| 7 | Marital | 1 | 57 | Matrimonial legal status<br>1 Single<br>2 Married<br>3 Widowed<br>4 Separated<br>5 Divorced |
| 8 | Relation | 2 | 58 - 59 | Relationship to the Head of the Household<br>1 Head<br>2 Wife<br>3 Daughter<br>4 Servant<br>5 Boarder<br>6 Daughter-in-law<br>7 Sister<br>8 Sister-in-law<br>9 Mother<br>10 Mother-in-law<br>11 Niece<br>12 Grandniece<br>13 Granddaughter<br>14 Cousin |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | Cycle | 1 | 60 | Stage of Individual Life cycle<br>1 Woman under 45, no children<br>2 Children all 11 and under<br>3 Some children 11-15, none over 16<br>4 Some or all children over 16<br>5 Woman over 45, no children |
| 10 | Child | 2 | 61 - 62 | Number of Children |
| 11 | Birthplace | 1 | 63 | 1 Newfoundland<br>2 England<br>3 Ireland<br>4 Scotland<br>5 Canada<br>6 United States<br>7 Other |
| 12 | Nationality | 1 | 64 | 1 British<br>2 Canadian<br>3 American<br>4 Irish<br>5 Other |
| 13 | Occupation | 3 | 65 - 66 | Attach codes |
| 14 | Earnings | 7 | 67 - 73 | Yearly earnings in Dollars. |
| 15 | Religion | 1 | 74 | 1 Anglican<br>2 Roman Catholic<br>3 Methodist<br>4 Presbyterian<br>5 Salvation Army<br>6 Congregational<br>7 Episcopalican<br>8 Other Religion<br>9 No Religion |

Household

| Variable No. | Variable Name | Fields | Field Location | Coding Instructions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Household | 7 | 1 - 7 | Sequential, assigned by coder |
| 2 | Page No. | 3 | 8 - 10 | Corresponds page on census |
| 3 | Ward No. | 2 | 11 - 12 | 1 Ward 1, West<br>2 Ward 2, West<br>3 Ward 3, West<br>4 Ward 4, West<br>5 Ward 5, West<br>6 Southside<br>7 Ward 1, East<br>8 Ward 2, East<br>9 Ward 3, East<br>10 Ward 4, East<br>11 Ward 5, East |
| 4 | Marital Head | 1 | 13 | Matrimonial Legal Status.<br>1 Single<br>2 Married<br>3 Widowed<br>4 Separated<br>5 Divorced |
| 5 | Gen Head | 1 | 14 | Gender of Head of Household<br>1 Male<br>2 Female |
| 6 | Occ Head | 3 | 15 - 17 | Occupation of Head-Attach codes |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Stage Fam | 1 | 18 | Stage of Family Life Cycle<br>1 No Family<br>2 Wife under 45, no children<br>3 Wife under 45, 1 child under 1<br>4 All children under 11<br>5 Half children under 15<br>6 Half children 15 and over<br>7 All children over 15 |
| 8 | Children | 2 | 19 - 20 | Number of children |
| 9 | Size of House | 2 | 21 - 22 | Number in Household |
| 10 | No. of Serv. | 2 | 23 - 24 | Number of Servants |
| 11 | Serv. Code | 1 | 25 | Code for type of house<br>1 Servant only household<br>2 Working woman and servant household<br>3 Working woman only household |
| 12 | House Struct. | 3 | 26 - 28 | Type, Distinction, Inmates |

| Type | Distinction | Inmates |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Solitary | 1 Widowed | 1 No Boarders |
| | 2 Single | 2 1 Boarder |
| | 3 Separated | 3 Servant |
| | 4 Divorced | 4 Servants |
| | | 5 Servant & boarders |
| | | 6 Boarder & servants |
| | | 7 Servant & boarders |
| 2 Family | 1 co-resident siblings | |
| | 2 Co-resident relatives of other kinds | |
| | 3 Persons not evidently related | |
| 3 Conjugal Units | 1 Married couple alone | |
| | 2 Married couple with children | |
| | 3 Widow with children | |
| | 4 Widower with children | |
| | 5 Lone female parent with children not a widow | |
| | 6 Lone male parent with children not a widow | |

4 Extended Family
1 Extended up - parent(s) present
2 Extended down - married child(ren)
3 Extended down for two generations - grandchildren present
4 Extended "laterally" - cousins, siblings present
5 A combination of any 1 to 4

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | Total Work | 2 | 29 - 30 | Total number of people in household working |
| 14 | Wom Work | 2 | 31 - 32 | Number of Women Working |
| 15 | Kind Wom | 2 | 33 - 34 | Women working |

0 None
1 Wife
3 Wife and 2 or more daughters
4 Daughter
5 2 or more daughters
6 Female boarders
7 2 or more female boarders
8 Female relative
9 2 or more female relatives

1 No boarder or relative
2 Female boarder
3 2 or more female boarders
4 Female relative
5 2 or more female relatives

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 | Men Work | 2 | 35 - 36 | Number of men working |
| 17 | Kind Men | 2 | 37 - 38 | Men Working |

0 None
1 Husband/father
2 Husband and son/brother
3 Husband and 2 or more sons
4 Son/brother
5 2 or more sons
6 male boarder
7 2 or more male boarders
8 male relatives
9 2 or more male relatives

1 No male boarder or male relative
2 Male boarders
3 2 or more male boarders
4 male relatives
5 2 or more male relatives

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | Head Earn | 7 | 39 - 45 | Head Yearly Earnings in Dollars |
| 19 | Total Earn | 7 | 46 - 52 | Total Yearly Earnings of Household in Dollars. |

## QUESTIONS ASKED IN INTERVIEWS

When and where were you born?

Could you tell me something about your family? How many brothers and sisters did you have? Where were you positioned in the family? (oldest, youngest)

What was your father's occupation? What type of work did he do?
Did your father work at the same place all the time you were growing up or did he work at a number of different places?

Did your mother ever go out to work -- not necessarily full time -- but perhaps part time or every so often in order to bring some extra money home? Did your mother do anything like knitting or sewing at home to earn extra money?

Could you tell me something about your schooling? Where did you go to school and for how long? (determine denomination)

How old were you when you left school? How did you feel about leaving?

When you were going to school did you help your mother around the house? What did you do to help out?

When you were growing up (and going to school) what did you think you wanted to do or to be when you became an adult?

If went to high school -- Besides the regular subjects such as Math, English, and History what other subjects did you take in high school?

If trained to be a nurse, teacher -- Can you describe your training to become a _____? How long was it? What were you taught?

Did you work while you were still going to school?

How did you actually get your first job? Did you decide to look for work or did your parents?

Could you tell me about the type of work you did at this job? How much were you paid? (hourly wage or piece work)

Did you ever have to work overtime? Were you paid extra?

What hours did you work? How many days a week did you work?

Did you get holidays? Did you get paid holidays?

Were you ever laid off or paid off for a certain period of time?

What type of supervision did you have on this job? Were there particular written rules which all employees had to follow? What did you think about your foreman or forewoman? How did your employer treat you?

How did you feel about your work? Did you like or dislike it?

Would you have preferred another type of occupation for yourself?

Did you receive any type of wage increase while you were at this job? Were you given more responsibilities or given a promotion?

Were you ever injured or did you see anyone else injured while you were working at this place?

What did you wear to work? Was there a particular uniform you had to wear? Did you have to pay for it?

How many people worked in your department? Were they all women? Did you come into contact with the men who worked there?

Did you belong to a trade union or protective association when you worked at this job? Did you take part in any of its activities? Was there ever a strike where you worked?

What did your mother and father think about you starting to work (working at this particular job)?

Did you live at home when you were working?

Did you keep all your earnings or did you give some to your parents? How much?

What did you spend your wages on? What did you do for entertainment?

After you started work did you still have to do household chores?

Besides yourself who else in your family was working in your family?

If left job for another job -- Why did you change jobs? Did you like this job better? Why? Ask same questions approximately as with previous job.

What age were you when you married? How did you meet your husband?

What was your husband s job when you married him? Did he have other jobs after?

Did you leave your job when you married? How did you feel about that?

Did you ever work outside the home after you married? If did -- How old were your children at the time? Was there any particular reason behind your decision to go out to work at that time?

How many children did you have?