THE POVERTY OF MOTHERING: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN IN A NEWFOUNDLAND COMMUNITY

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WOMEN IN A
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by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the position of labouring women in Stephenville, a southwestern Newfoundland community, from 1900 to 1980. It is a case study concerned with the interaction of mothering and women's oppression. The particular focus of the study has been on the implications of rapid urban and industrial development on the lives of rural women. In essence, by exploring the contradictions of mothering in both a rural and urban context, the study attempts to draw attention to the much-neglected area of reproduction within male oriented studies of Newfoundland society.

The research was carried out mainly by means of tape recorded, informal interviews with Stephenville women from May to September, 1980. The analysis has focused on the qualitative aspects of the oral history gathered and is, therefore, descriptive rather than conclusive in character.

Part 1 deals with some of the theoretical and historical problems encountered in conceptualizing Newfoundland labouring women. Chapter One concentrates on some of the limits of the existing theoretical perspectives of women's position in Newfoundland society. Chapter Two attempts to fit the experiences of labouring women into the Island's history.

The second part of the study, the case study itself, has two chapters. Chapter Three examines the lives of rural Stephenville women, from 1900 to the onset of World War II. Chapter Four describes the particular problems of Stephenville women in the past forty years as their community developed into an industrial growth center.

The overall theme of the study concerns the conjunction of poverty and mothering in Newfoundland society. It is hoped that this study, as a description of a particular community of Newfoundland women, adds an additional dimension to the existing research on social class.

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INTRODUCTION

In Newfoundland, as in all other societies, women do more than bear children: they have also the major responsibility for child-rearing and perform the daily work necessary for the reproduction of the labour force. Prior to industrialization, when the basic unit of production was still the family, women participated fully in most productive activities necessary for subsistence. At this time there was no sharp demarcation between domestic work and wage work and, hence, women's activities generally encompassed the domains of non-wage production, reproduction and consumption. Although women's reproductive labours changed form as the Island of Newfoundland became integrated into the mainstream of North American life, and increasingly became hidden within the nuclear family, women's domestic labour is still crucial to the capitalist economy.[1]

Nevertheless, most discussions of female work have concentrated on the paid labour definition of work and have therefore failed to recognize the importance of women's non-wage work in different historical periods, as well as in contemporary Newfoundland society.[2] One of the results is that two assumptions based on this distinction are used to justify the existing sexual division of labour: first, it is generally assumed that women, since they are biologically equipped to reproduce the human species, obtain social status and personal achievement mainly through marriage and mothering (hence, any Newfoundland woman who chooses to avoid this route is viewed with suspicion and sometimes seen as a traitor to the family and to society itself; second, this distinction between the public world of work and the private world of home means that the non-paid domestic work based on

parenting and marriage, which most women continue to do today (whether they are, in addition, wage workers or not), remains unrecognized and undervalued.[5] Thus, since in our society domestic labour is seen as a "natural" part of mothering, and since most women do mother, there seems to be little reason to argue that women are oppressed.

Labouring women themselves are often unable to say precisely why they feel put down. Nevertheless, they are quite aware that they do have to bear extra burdens:

> I was the second oldest girl, with seven brothers and father to tend on. There was no end to the work around the house for women ... My brothers could at least put their feet up when they were finished with the outside work. The old man's law was that men did not lift a finger in the house. That was women's work. By the time I was sixteen I was so fed up with serving my brothers along with the rest of the work that I just wanted to escape the whole crowd of them.
>
> (Rural housewife, born 1901)

This thesis is based on a case study of Newfoundland women in one community, Stephenville, from 1900 to 1980. The study examines: 1. The productive and reproductive roles of rural Stephenville women prior to WWII. (Here I also try to point out the limited options open to these rural women outside of mothering) ; 2. The problems of urban Stephenville women from 1940 - 1980. I analyse the way domestic work and the function of the family have changed with urban and industrial development. In particular, I attempt to point out why 'working mothers' in this town have become ghettoized on the labour market as well as to explain the specific problems of welfare mothers. Forced to live in the most economically depressed areas of town, many of these

Stephenville women are aware that they are treated unfairly and in their own way are able to explain their 'fate':

> There's a lot of women like myself here in this row of apartments, some like myself deserted and left stranded with the kids to rear up alone, and some more never married and already with youngsters to feed and clothe on welfare handouts. God only knows what their lives are going to be like when their kids are gone and the welfare dries up. The government is not going to look out for them, you can rest assured about that. The Premier don't give a sweet damn about the women herded here in these wooden shacks. We're here just to bring up kids, that's all.
>
> (Welfare mother, born 1946)

Before fitting together the personal life situations of Stephenville women, I shall try to place the experiences of these women in a broader theoretical and historical context. In chapter one I argue that Newfoundland Development Theorists and contemporary Liberal Feminists are both limited in their approach to understanding the specific problems of labouring women. Hence, I suggest a feminist strategy that integrates aspects of both frameworks. In chapter two I attempt to place women in Newfoundland's history. My main reason for doing this is to show that the problems of Stephenville women are not unique though they are specific. By focusing attention on one community of Newfoundland women, I attempt not only to illustrate the problems of labouring women but, furthermore, to add specificity to our knowledge of women's universal oppression. In chapter three I examine the lives of Stephenville women from 1900 - 1940. In chapter four I focus on the period from WWII to 1940. Finally, in conclusion, I suggest some ways to

broaden Liberal Feminism in order to facilitate a better understanding of the struggles of labouring women and to develop a political strategy capable of serving their cause.

Part One

Chapter One: Theoretical Perspectives

Introduction

The historical and present form of women's oppression in Newfoundland society have so far received little or no attention by the Island's sociologists and anthropologists, despite the increasing attempts by socialist feminists elsewhere to develop a feminist theory based on an examination of sexual and class relations throughout history.[1] Instead, in attempting to understand the social and economic problems of Newfoundland's labouring classes, two distinct theoretical approaches have been adopted, neither of which has been successful in adequately conceptualizing the specific form class exploitation has taken in Newfoundland. Moreover, both frameworks have consistently failed to address the problems of Newfoundland women within their families and in the Island's economy.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, most social and economic research concerning Newfoundland society was oriented towards examining outport communities based on a theory of economic dualism.[2] In part as a result of the problems stemming from the failure of the Newfoundland government to "modernize" and "develop" the Island's economy, social research during this period increasingly focused attention on ways outport communities could be maintained while the urban industrial sector of the economy developed. Thus the notion of economic dualism: the separation of the urban and rural; of the traditional economy and the modern economy; the extended patriarchal family and the nuclear family; and, finally, the traditional outport mother and the feminist woman in the urban center of the Island.

From the mid-1970's onwards, the theory of economic dualism came under increasing attack. A more promising approach to the problem of how to conceptualize class exploitation emerged with the adoption of dependency theory, originally developed to apply to Third World Countries that did not fit the traditional Marxist analysis of political economy.[3] Thus, Newfoundland, and likewise most developing societies, were understood to be on the periphery of the "world capitalist system", in essence, backward economies which had not yet caught up with advanced industrial capitalist areas, such as central Canada, the United States and Britain. Furthermore, within underdeveloped regions, such as Newfoundland, there existed a metropolis, (St. John's in the case of the Island). Here was the center of capitalist accumulation and the locus of distribution to the peripheral areas. The metropolis drew migrant labour from the underdeveloped regions, extracted resources, and held the reigns of economic and political power. On the basis of this analysis of the Newfoundland economy, the labouring class was seen as oppressed by outside and indigenous capitalists based in the capital city. Only when the poor of the Island were freed from these oppressors and permitted to participate in deciding how and when the natural resources of the Island were to be developed -- dependency theorists assumed -- would the average Newfoundlander be able to gain equality in society.

For reasons which I shall not attempt to explore here (see chapter two for a more in depth examination of the peculiar nature of Newfoundland's economy), dependency theory, based on the proposition of develop-

ment and underdevelopment, does not neatly fit the history of economic and social development of the Island.[4] In addition, the position of labouring women in Newfoundland, in both historical and contemporary perspective, cannot be explained by this theoretical framework. The specific problems of urban working class women and women in the Island's outport and rural areas have unanalysed by dependency theorists, a problem which I shall discuss in more detail below. At this point in the discussion concerning how to conceptualize Newfoundland women, I would like to stress that it was in part because of this major loophole in dependency theory that I began to search elsewhere for a more adequate framework.

As noted above, socialist feminism as a theory of women's oppression has not yet developed to any significant degree in Newfoundland.[5] The form feminism has taken in the past decade is mainstream or bourgeois feminism.[6] Thus, most politically active feminists are self-consciously middle class, many are from outside the Island, most are involved with national women's groups concerned with women's rights in the Canadian political arena, and, moreover, most have spent little time in rural Newfoundland. Hence, their knowledge of labouring women's lives is quite limited and they are, as I argue below, unable to adequately explain the economic as well as the sexual oppression of poor women.

In this chapter I shall discuss what I see as some of the main problems dependency theory and Liberal Feminism have left unanswered in our understanding of the differences among classes, along with the inequalities between men and women. I shall consider the dependency

theorists first, and then focus on Liberal Feminism. I shall attempt to show that feminist strategy, in order to address the specific problems of Newfoundland labouring women, must broaden the current political struggle of Liberal Feminists and include a struggle for economic independence as well.

Dependency Theory and the Question of Women's Oppression

There are two basic problems that Newfoundland dependency theorists have failed to give significant historical evidence for. One serious shortcoming is that they failed to give a **detailed** account of class society in the preindustrial era. Hence we have at best a vague understanding of the sexual division of labour among the outport family of Newfoundland society, but little opportunity to discover if, in fact, outport and rural women had equal status with the men of their class. In my historical study of Stephenville women (see chapter three), I found that, prior to urban and industrial development, in a number of ways these rural women were subordinate to men, even though their productive activities (seen as women's work) were ardous tasks, fundamental to the survival of the family. Why were these women in my study saddled with nearly exclusive responsibility for domestic labour -- for childrearing and housework in addition to their other productive activities? Why did their husbands and fathers unquestioningly assume that their women kin should serve on them, should not own property, should stay out of politics, and so forth?

A second basic problem with dependency theory and women's oppression concerns the question of the Newfoundland family under industrialization in the Twentieth Century. In particular, is the working class home no more than the locus of consumption, socialization and emotional retreat <u>from</u> work -- as is generally assumed -- and, hence, no longer a center of production? Is women's reproductive role[7] in the Newfoundland family today irrelevant to our understanding of class and sexual divisions? And, furthermore, does it matter at all that the majority of women today are still responsible for childcare and housework while doing another shift of labour in the market place? If all this is indeed so, we have hardly any reason to believe that gender in capitalist society has any materialist basis, nor that sexual inequality exists between working class women and men, especially with the increasing number of women entering the labour force after World War II.[8] In regard to my own study of the situation of Stephenville women after the War (see chapter four), I have found little support for this common held assumption that wage work brings women a step closer to liberation. In fact, what I did find was a community of women used as a labour reserve army, furthermore, those who did work were by and large ghettoized on the market, performing the most boring and low-paying jobs. In addition to all these problems, Stephenville women were still expected to rear children and maintain the family.

What these theorists have consistently failed to take account of is that the workday of most women does not end after an eight-hour shift. When we go beyond the limited notion of labour and broaden our analysis

to include the entire twenty-four hour cycle of the everyday life of the working class, we realize that, far from women's domestic labour being a side issue, it is, instead, of central importance to the reproduction of industrial capitalism. The specific form that female labour takes under industrialism -- where women, on the one hand, perform the necessary work to reproduce the labour force on both a daily and generational basis while, on the other, perform the lowest paid and most menial jobs in the economy -- needs to be carefully considered. In fact, I think that this is central for the development of a theory of the political economy of sexual relations. Without such an analysis of the essential relationships between domestic labour and wage labour and, therefore, of the role of the family, it is virtually impossible for us to really understand the oppression of proletarian women. Why is this the case? It is worthwhile to examine what has been written on women's history in other societies in regard to this question.

Unlike in preindustrial societies, where the relations of production, distribution and consumption were essentially <u>social</u> relations incorporating economic aspects, and where the economy was not seen as a separate entity but was rather embedded in society itself, in most industrial capitalist societies, the household became the enclave of women and the production of commodity goods the extra-domestic territory of men. Women, gradually isolated from relatives and fellow-wives in extended families, became the victims of the inside-outside dichotomy, of the ideological split between the private and the public domains of

daily life. Hence, in contrast to depending theorists' inadequate understanding of reproduction and the family as a natural and unchanging phenomenon, a very different kind of family structure emerged as societies began to industrialize.[9] Many women in fact lost as much as they gained. Thus, in one sense Engels was right in pointing out that as long as a working class woman continues to carry out her labour "in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from social production and unable to earn",[10] and therefore dependent on either her father or husband. Yet when we understand reproduction in all its senses we realize that with industrialization women were deprived of a large part of their previous productive role and, hence, suffered a certain decrease in social status outside the household, since important occupations hitherto regarded as women's work were taken over by men.

For example, in certain gilds women gradually were excluded altogether: the scholars, lawyers, the notaries, the goldsmiths, and so forth.[11] Women's significance as midwives declined significantly as well, supposedly because of their 'lack of competence'.[12] In Catholic countries, where for centuries women held a very prestigious position in society, they also suffered a decline in status. While, prior to the Seventeenth century, the nun or sister in the Convent, without the burdens that accompanied maternity and childcare, often administered sizable monastic communities and even took part in intellectual discourse with men, in the later period, the nun, the rural witch and midwife were forced into a more subordinate status and

suffered ostracization and persecution.[13] As for the average proletarian wife, though she gained freedom in the sense that it became far easier to marry and thus escape life-long dependency on male kin, we must not overlook the fact that, as the importance of her domestic labour outside the narrow confines of the nuclear family declined, and as an increasing ideological importance was placed on motherhood, she too was caught between two worlds. All around her there was talk of freedom: From the endless burdens accompanying compulsory motherhood, from toil in the fields, from the feudal lord and the Church, and so forth. Supposedly, new relations between men and women had also come about. But this was in fact hardly so.

The decline of the household mode of production did, it is true, allow women to earn a wage for their labour, a chance to have some money of their own -- an opportunity unknown to their mothers. In this sense the mill or factory was a step forward toward independence and self-determination. But in a number of other ways industrialization made women even more dependent on the institutions of motherhood and marriage. For one thing, in the area of production women were still not equal to the men of their own class. Industrialization had not changed the type of work women did, though it now meant that they worked for an employer who paid them a wage. The jobs that were available to most women were extensions of their domestic burdens in the family, such as serving, cooking, and textile production. The work was menial and paid considerably less than the work of men. And as factories became increasingly mechanized, women and children were

pushed out of these productive activities as well.

Apart from this form of economic inequality, proletarian women had to face new contradictions in the area of reproduction. Due to advances in medicine and in an increase in the overall standard of living, infant mortality rates gradually declined and female fertility rates increased.[14] The average female became fertile at a much earlier age, and the onset of menopause was extended. In addition to this change in biological reproduction, the presence of large numbers of single women in urban areas looking for work, away from fathers and community controls to supervise courtship and marriage, meant for many working class women an increasing chance to be abandoned by men, and hence a higher rate of illegitimacy. If we take all these things into account, it becomes clear that women's options outside of marriage and motherhood had not broadened to any significant extent. In fact, for economic reasons alone, these institutions were still the only avenue open for most women. As Ann Gordon and Mari-Jo Buhle argue, women lost as much as they gained:

> ... in a society of commodities, the subordinate and secondary value of women's work and woman herself was necessarily degraded. To replace the spontaneous and "relatively" egalitarian division of labour in pre-industrial society, had to come a mode of organization which far more than before thrust women into the role of caring for the home, while men engaged in activities to reshape the world. Furthermore, women's participation in the market economy was mediated through their husbands, thus regulating their own class, status, or privilege to a social function of only their husbands' work. [15]

At least three changes would have been necessary before women

could have gained liberation -- changes, as I have attempted to point out in this section, which dependency theorists fail to take note of in their analysis of class struggle: 1. Motherhood needed to be voluntary, a matter of personal choice for all women; 2. Men had to be more fully involved in housework and child care; and 3. Marraige needed to be made an option for working class women, and not an economic and psychological necessity that it in fact continued to be in industrial society. Of course, women themselves have often been aware of their subordinate status in society and within their family. In Third World Countries today, as well as in peripheral areas such as Newfoundland, there is increasingly the 'technical' means available for women to avoid motherhood. Yet, in these developing societies and even in advanced industrial societies, the assumption remains that women's central role is that of bearer and rearer of society's children and comforter in the home. Feminists have increasingly become aware of the fact that unless this assumption is challenged -- that is: unless biological reproduction is separated from motherhood as a social role -- equality for women in most areas of their lives is virtually impossible.

Contemporary Feminism and Women's Oppression

As early as in 1792, feminists had begun to recognize need for a special women's struggle to gain equality with men. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her Vindications of the Rights of Woman, argued for a feminist strategy for equal rights, starting with the basic liberal right of the individual: the right to vote.[16] In 1869 the first

woman's organization had been founded in Germany.[17] Women writers increasingly began to criticize the institutions of marriage, the bourgeois family, religion, and so forth. In the early Twentieth century, feminists such as Emma Goldman and Margaret Sanger fought for full equality for all women, mainly through their advocacy of generally available birth control. They saw contraception as a prerequisite for working class women easing their domestic burdens and becoming free for political activity.[18] But in the late 1930's, in the middle of a world-wide Depression and due also to the failure of the revolutionary movement of the 1920's, feminism declined as a movement. Some gains in the area of work and in the legal system were made, but to a large extent changes made on paper did little to improve the daily life situations of most labouring women.[19]

Contemporary feminism in the 1960's attempted to question patriarchy in a way the early feminists (and Marxists as well) had failed to do. Simone de Beauvoir in her book The Second Sex, pointed out that we need a feminist theory grounded in an understanding of the biological differences between the sexes.[20] Building on de Beauvoir's rather more abstract analysis, other feminists -- such as Kate Millet, Juliet Mitchell and Nancy Chodorow -- have stressed the need for a theory of the social production of gender and sexuality in understanding the full extent of women's oppression under industrial capitalism.[21] These feminists have become increasingly aware, from the early 1970's on, of the importance of the role of motherhood and the patriarchal family in woman's subjugation. As Millet wrote:

> Perhaps patriarchy's greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity. A referent scarcely exists with which it might be contrasted or by which it might be refuted. While the same might be said of class, patriarchy has a still more tenacious or powerful hold through its successful habit of passing itself off as nature ...[22]

In The Dialectic of Sex Shulamith Firestone articulated this further, attempting to go beyond Marxism and "to develop a materialist view of history based on sex itself."[23] Women's biological function as reproducer of the species was thus called into question. Procreation was seen by such feminists as Firestone as the basis of sexual dualism throughout all of human history. Therefore, it was held, all other forms of exploitation -- class, race, age, etc. -- stems from sexual oppression, especially in the patriarchal family.[24] Destruction of the tyranny inherent in the biological family came to be seen as the cornerstone to liberation. For it was within the family (hitherto dismissed as women's domain only, the site of personal and intimate relations) that men first dominated women. More rights for women within the existing system -- birth control, abortion, educational and political options, and even test tube babies -- should be the focus of feminist strategy for liberation.

I think that the women's movement of the 1960's and 1970's was right in attempting to analyse the family as an important institution of women's subordination. Firestone's analysis was one effort to go beyond it, yet, it was misguided. The critique of patriarchy developed by other feminists (such as Sheila Rowbotham and Michele Barrett)[25] during this period was in fact an advance beyond existing theories of

women's oppression. Nevertheless, in Canada today, mainstream feminism remains the predominant theory of women's subordination.

Although Liberal Feminism may be quite correct in challenging gender definitions in contemporary society, it nevertheless lacks awareness of the very real class differences among women. Most middle class feminists, it seems, want to participate equally in a system which Marxists see as basically oppressive. Because of this, it is quite limited in building a mass based movement. Essentially they fail to make any distinction between women's rights and women's emancipation, a distinction which Gerder Lerner advocates when she asks:

> Just what do we mean, then, when we say feminist? ... The <u>woman's rights movement</u> means a movement concerned with winning for women equality with men in all aspects of society and giving them access to all rights and opportunities enjoyed by men in the institutions of that society. Thus, the women's rights movement is akin to the civil rights movement in wanting equal participation for women in the status quo, essentially a reformist goal ... <u>Woman's emancipation</u> means freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex; self-determination; autonomy ... all of which implies a radical transformation of existing institutions, values and theories.[26]

This shortcoming of Liberal Feminists is especially problematic when the question of the proper place of motherhood and sexuality in women's lives is addressed. Although in the early 1970's the birth-control campaign was seen as an integral part of the overall problems of working class women (such as inequality in the job market, oppressive divorce laws, unequal educational opportunities, un-

equal childcare and housework responsibilities, and so forth),[27] today middle class feminists are becoming increasingly involved in single issue groups. In Newfoundland society, for example, a number of lobbies have been formed (many sponsored by the Federal Government) campaigning for isolated rights: abortion, matrimonial property rights, legal rights. However important all of these issues might be to middle class feminists, the danger is that by devoting all one's time to one specific issue, the overall goal gets lost. I have found this to be the case with many of the middle class feminists of Stephenville. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, the Newfoundland government had resettled hundreds of poor families from all over the Island into the town, a large portion of them headed by women. Female unemployment was extremely high. Social workers suspected sterilization abuse. In spite of medicare, most poor women in the area had no access to decent health care. Many of the middle class feminists I have had contact with believe that if these Stephenville women had access to birth control and abortion, most of their problems would be solved. When in fact birth control became covered under the federal Medicare Program in the 1970's, they gradually became more and more bitter about the labouring women. Why were these women still having babies? Why were they avoiding services such as Planned Parenthood? Why were they instead choosing to 'deliberately' bear babies in order to get welfare? The problem surely must be the women themselves.

There is a very real danger that, in isolating women's issues such as abortion from other social and economic problems, the State will

incorporate a feminist strategy for reproductive self-determination into programs emphasizing sterilization and population control. It is worth quoting a passage from Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born to help us understand the dialectical nature of giving birth and rearing children:

> Nothing, to be sure, had prepared me for the intensity of relationship already existing between me and a creature I had carried in my body and now in my arms and fed from my breasts. Throughout pregnancy and nursing, women are urged to relax, to mine the serenity of madonnas. No one mentions the psychic crisis of bearing a first child, the excitation of long-buried feelings about one's mother, the sense of confused power and powerlessness, of being taken over on the one hand and of touching new physical and psychic potentialities on the other, a heightened sensibility which can be exhilarating, bewildering and exhausting. No one mentions the strangeness of attraction - which can be as single-minded and overwhelming as the early days of a love affair - to be so tiny, so dependent, so folded into itself - who is, and yet is not, part of oneself.[28]

Ann Oakley also brings us to a deep understanding of the complex nature of women's biological reproduction in her work on the sociology of childbirth. She argues that:

> ... there is a crucial dialectic between the way childbirth happens in modern industrial cultures and the way mothers are supposed to be -- married, at home, economically disadvantaged and dependent, and blessed with a maternal instinct that enables them to rear children without first learning to. The interplay between the ideology and practice of childbearing on the one hand and motherhood on the other, catches women in the dilemma of chasing personal satisfaction across the psychological wasteland of reproduction and captive motherhood.[29]

Neither Rich nor Oakley deny that motherhood as an institution of patriarchy has not been oppressive for women. Both are well aware of the politics surrounding this female event and note that throughout history women have often been (ab)used as the 'means of reproduction'. Yet this should not lead us to think of motherhood, as a personal experience, as oppressive. For if feminists are not careful in this regard, conservative population-controllers and eugenicists can again use birth control technology against the poor. A number of historical examples point out the danger involved in basing liberation only on technology. The mass sterilization of Indian women and men under the first Indira Ghandi regime is one clear example of birth control abuse.[30] A similar kind of thing occurred in the 1930's in Germany under Hitler.[31] And today we face new dangers with the developments in biological engineering.[32]

What all these problems mentioned here concerning Liberal Feminism point to is that we still have no way to understand the problems of labouring women. We also need a creible analysis of the differences <u>among</u> women, in order to ensure that the gains made by the Women's Movement can be extended beyond the narrow range of professional, middle class women. As far as my work is concerned, I have found that the revised Canadian family laws have done little to really change the actual life situations of the majority of Stephenville women. Similarly, equal pay laws have mostly gone unnoticed by employers of Stephenville women. The Status of Women committees, which received large federal grants primarily to focus on equal rights for women in the public domain have meant that it was the professional women, and not those

facing welfare cutbacks, who got the jobs, the media coverage, and the free air fares to national conferences. The crucial question is: how can we develop a feminist theory that can tell us whether industrial capitalism is progressive for working class women? To put it another way: were labouring women in the pre-industrial period after all better off than their counterparts today? Should we accept the argument, proposed by Marxists, that with industrial development working class women have "progressed", since they have been forced to enter the sphere of production? The answer is, I think, complex and contradictory. Within the family and in many former areas of women's work in rural society, labouring women have also lost status with urban and industrial change, an event which must be taken into account in any feminist strategy attempting to help poor women. On the other hand, if we put our faith in Liberal Feminism, we still have no real way to account for staggering differences between a bourgeois woman fighting for a seat in parliament or in the government legislature and the labouring mother doing a double shift of labour. As a conclusion to this chapter, I shall now briefly attempt to show how aspects of both Marxism and Liberal Feminism have proved useful for my particular case study of Stephenville women.

Feminist Strategy: The Case of Stephenville Women

Although the largest number of politically active women in Newfoundland are at present Liberal Feminists, it would be wrong to

assume that they represent the only form of Newfoundland feminism. Over the past years, a number of other women have tried to reach working class women on feminist issues, usually with little or no government support and very little backing from middle class feminists. Many of the women I am speaking of have tried to work with Liberal Feminists -- at childcare centers, shelters for battered wives and rape crisis centers -- but have consistently found themselves frustrated and alienated when they insisted on co-operative orgainization and active involvement of working class women themselves. In turning to the Left -- to Marxists, to those involved in the labour movement, and groups concerned with high unemployment and Government cutbacks, these women once again have usually felt let down and disillusioned with the built-in sexism of the Left and its insensitivity to women's specific problems.

It was in consideration of all these things that I decided to go outside the provincial capital and look at the problems of labouring women from the perspective of the 'rest of the Island'. My main purpose was to get a fresh vision and hopefully show that both a class and feminist analysis are necessary. The place I eventually chose for a case study was the town of Stephenville, on the south-west part of the Island. This community had once been my home town, though I had not lived there for some time. Largely because I was partly aware of the hardships many older Stephenville women had faced before their community urbanized during the Second World War, and also because I was still living in the town when it was designated

an industrial growth center by the Federal and Provincial Governments, I set out in 1980 to piece together an historical account of the lives of the women there. Despite a fairly large body of writing on Newfoundland outports and of government reports assessing the economic climate of areas such as Stephenville, there has been almost no work done on women in any of the rural areas of the Province, nor has any attention been paid to their situation today.[33] I realized that many of the Stephenville women who were still alive could tell me much that I needed to know. It is on the basis of oral history that in chapters three and four I shall attempt to respond to some of the questions that have been raised in this chapter, concerning a more adequate way in which to understand women's oppression.

Chapter Two: Placing Women in Newfoundland History

Introduction

The settlers who scattered in the coves and inlets along the coast of Newfoundland throughout the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries did not come without a history. The class structure which gradually was established on the Island inherited from the Mother Country such sexual inequalities as male property rights, patriarchal marriage, sex-based political and legal systems and, most importantly, the family. In this chapter I shall examine some of the ways in which gender hierarchies were rooted in Newfoundland society long before attempts were made to industrialize the Island in the Twentieth century.[1] My second focus shall be on the relationship between the state, patriarchy and capitalism and, especially on how the Welfare State after World War II has institutionalized public-private domains on a political level and in the process has curtailed the available options for a majority of Newfoundland women in a manner that forces women frequently into child bearing and mothering. It is important to realize that industrialization and the Welfare State have not changed in one crucial way in their understanding of human reproduction and patriarchy, that is, their assumption that childbearing and rearing are synomonous, natural and inevitable.

Newfoundland and Women in the Nineteenth Century

Social and Economic Conditions

Newfoundland was granted Responsible Government in 1855. Prior

to this time the Island belonged to Britain and was used as a migratory fishing colony by merchants based in the Mother Country. Largely in order to eliminate competition and have a cheap and mobile labour force to man their fishing vessels, the merchants insisted on laws requiring punishment for anyone trying to remain behind on the Island after the Fall fishery. Hence a peculiar pattern of settlement gradually emerged. Small clusters of fisher-families became scattered all along the Newfoundland coast to eke out a living as best they could and as far away as possible from the British Navy, whose orders were to "burn houses and root out population".[2]

Already at this early stage in the Island's development, women were not treated equally to men. Based on the assumption that they were not "primary producers", they were barred from the Island and were unable to take part in the fishery -- seen specifically as a male sphere of activity. The reduction of women to their biology was at this time behind Britain's policy to ban women from the Island and to punish those who were already there and send them back home, where they supposedly belonged. As far as the merchant class and the Mother Country were concerned, then, women were merely the 'means of reproduction'.

This policy of the State and the dominant class was gradually reformulated in the 1800's. With the emergence of industrial capitalism in Britain and the subsequent breakdown of the mercantile system, restrictions on settlement were no longer enforced. My mid-century a merchant class was well established, with the wealthier merchants

based in the capital city and the smaller merchants setting up operations in one of the many outports settled during this period. In less than a hundred years the dominant attitude towards women had taken an abrupt turn-around. The need for women on the Island was now desperate. Women were needed to produce the labour force necessary to bring in the fish. They were also valuable contributors of household skills and domestic labour necessary to put food on the table and clothe the family. There was now an economic and political need for the patriarchal family on the Island. Somehow women had to be forced to bear the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children, while simultaneously being used as unpaid labourers. Hence, women's fertility and sexuality had to be controlled in a manner that permitted that they be separated from males and at the same time be made dependent upon them. The Church and the Newfoundland government legitimated this notion of women's major function as biological and social mothers, and furthermore, as non-citizens and non-entities before God and the law. These various structures of power, then, contributed to limiting women's options essentially to those of marriage and motherhood.

The Church and the Rule of the Father

In both the outport and the capital city throughout the Nineteenth Century the patriarchal "rule by the father ordained by God" [3] was established. The politics of the family and society were assumed to be identical -- fathers and husbands responsible for their daughters'

chastity and their wives' obedience. Non-married women were forbidden to work outside the family household as long as their domestic labour was vital to the maintenance of the family. The separation of daughter from son contributed to the construction of a very dichotomized view of what either sex could do in life. For women in the isolated outport their role as producer, though vital to the survival of the extended family, was nevertheless, distorted by the restrictions placed by men on their fertility. Hence the ideology of female purity and virginity -- and the corollary of male 'protectiveness' and control -- guaranteed that women would serve their men and rear their children without question. This conception of womanhood was upheld by the local merchant by dealing mainly with fathers and husbands when fixing up the family's account in the fall of the year. Families were almost always entered under the name of the male head. In the case of widowed women, often the husband's name was kept, usually for years. It was virtually impossible for any woman to hold property, for all inheritance of house, land, boats, equipment was passed down from father to son. In the eyes of the priest or minister, women were here on earth to serve men and bear children and, of course, to maintain the Church as well. Church pews were expected to be paid for by the head of the family, with his name written on them. At marriage, a woman took her husband's name and vowed to obey and serve him and bear his children, especially his sons, to work with him and carry on his name. These patriarchal father-son relations, at a time when the family and the economy were to a large extent still not yet separated,

were both economically and politically necessary both for the merchant class and for Newfoundland males as a group. What are some of the characteristics of the 19th century Newfoundland economy that warrented this form of patriarchal power?

The Merchant Class and Domestic Labour

Newfoundland's merchant class was never interested in 'industrializing' the inshore fishery or diversifying the products produced. Rather, it accumulated capital in usury.[4] Hence most merchants not only imported cheap food staples and fishing and household supplies in order to sell them expensively, but they also made money by advancing high interest loans in the form of commodities to the fisher-families. The conditions of unequal exchange between fishermen and merchants were conducted, for the most part, in kind and usually under monopoly circumstances in a system known as the truck system. Thus the single merchant in the isolated outport could set his own terms of trade, and the fishermen had little choice in the matter. A specific price was set for the fish depending on the merchant's estimation of market value. Most merchants paid as little as possible, usurping a hugh surplus above a bare minimum returned to the fisherman. This left the latter often in debt to the merchant, and with nothing left over to modernize his equipment or to improve the quality of his product.

With only primitive fishing equipment and boats, the inshore fishery remained an archaic and seasonal occupation, leaving production

mainly in the hands of "independent" producers.[5] The only way a fisherman could get ahead at all was to fish with his male kin so as to gather the necessary labour and equipment together as cheaply as possible. Thus an extended family network organized along agnatic lines was vital to both the fishermen and the merchants: to the former in order that there be a labour force available to take part in the endeavour, to the latter in order to have a finished product to exchange on the market. For economic reasons alone, then, the outport fishery, in order to survive at all, had to have large groups of male kin living close together to assist in the hauling of boats, repairing equipment, manning cod traps and the like. To maintain this sort of community structure, outport men had to marry exogamally, outside their community, and bring their brides home with them. Cousin marriages were strictly forbidden by the Church. Marriages across religious lines were virtually unknown since the couples involved not only needed permission from father, priest and minister, but, in the case of Catholics, from the Pope himself. What did all this really mean for the outport woman? Why did her society deem it necessary that her father carefully protect her and at the same instance treat her unequally in comparision to her brothers? Why did she also share the ideology that in order to be a 'real woman' she must mother under the terms set first by her father and later by her husband?

As perceived by men and the Church, women fell into two distinct categories: either 'good' or 'fallen' women. Those women whose sexuality and fertility was safely controlled within the bonds of

patriarchal marriage were seen as respectable, 'legitimate' mothers and wives. The women who did not fall within this category of wife/mother were seen as 'loose and out of control', and thus as unvirtuous.

This ideology of a sexual division of labour between the male 'primary producer' and the female housewife and mother -- though it did, as we shall see below, not reflect the real life situation of fisher-families -- was not challenged by outport women. The average woman had, in fact, practically no choice in the matter. The conditions of their society and the structure of the outport family made it doubly sure that women would labour for their male kin until they could be replaced by a sister-in-law or a younger sister. Their only real option to escape servitude to their fathers was to marry outside their community where, however, sexuality and fertility was again controlled, this time by their husband and his kin.

Given the particular conditions of the merchant class system, then, the typical role of a woman was that of housewife and mother, and her role in the economic productive domain -- at the fish, in the gardens, gathering berries and firewood, and so forth -- was determined by that dominant role. In other words, the 'other' work that women performed was interlocked with their mothering role in such a way that, on the one hand, the household tasks and children were looked after and men tended upon while, on the other hand, the kinds of productive activities seen as 'women's work' were also performed. Thus not a minute of the day was wasted. Women never finished work as the fishermen did when the catch was brought in or when Saturday night came. For

women, whether they were mothers, daughters, a son's wife, or grandmothers, their chores were endless and so varied that in one sense the ideology of male kin as 'primary producer' did contain some element of truth. The conditions of the Newfoundland family in the outports and villages, the division of labour in the family, and the ideology of male dominance neatly served to cover up the important work women actually did and, furthermore, to subordinate women to a role as houseservant and reproductive machine.

Faris notes that women's main station in life was to maintain a 'crowd in the boat, a crowd ashore and hardy children'.[6] Yet, whether mothers and daughters were expected to work at the fish flakes curing the cod in a dried salt form for the market,[7] or whether they were required to plant gardens and look after livestock, as was more typical for Stephenville women (see chapter three), their work 'on shore' was vital to the survival of the family. These household productive activities, along with making clothes and cooking meals, as well as tending to children, though time consuming, difficult and requiring a large array of knowledge, nevertheless were seen as particularly well suited for women as the acceptable 'extra' work they did besides bearing children. What we are seeing described here are circumstances which are exploitive for labouring women and labouring men, both forced to work from dawn to dust.[8]

Sexuality and the 'Virtuous Mother'

In order that women not undermine this oppressive system which relegated them to childrearing and home tending, forcing them to spend between seventeen to twenty years in childbearing and lactation

(or, if unable to marry, to labour for their fathers under the social stigma of spinsterhood), a powerful ideology of absolutist rule based on the equation of God -- Priest -- Father -- Merchant had to be enforced. Women had to be deprived of all other options outside of patriarchal motherhood (hence no reproductive control, lesbian motherhood, non-female childrearing, and so forth) and made ideologically and materially dependent on men. This lack of choice was secured in many ways: first, from puberty on, young girls were seen as polluted and evil while menstruating and expected to be hidden away from the men of the house;[9] women were forced to keep their bodies covered at all times (even from themselves), so that they would not 'seduce' men; to lose their virginity outside of marriage warranted public ostracization and years of penance, often spinsterhood and life-long service to fathers and uncles as well; childbirth and ten days of 'lying-in' were perceived by men as the 'bloody curse' which nature put on women. This 'female sickness' males had to be protected from, and hence, expectant mothers were put into confinement until the blood, pain, and after-birth were over and a new member of the family's labour force had been produced and, finally, when women reached menopause and their fertility was no longer in need of male control, they were seen as sexless and dysfunctional, except, of course, in regard to their serving role to the family which never diminished until death.

In retrospect, we should note that in spite of their oppression prior to industrialization, Newfoundland women were not hopeless victims nor did their subordinate status prevent the development of a

female sub-culture. For one thing, the possibility of low return levels for fishermen, precarious catches, large families, and ever-worsening fish markets and increasing competition abroad meant that the problem of making enough to keep the family going was a full-time job for all members of the family. Thus women had an important (though unvalued) productive role and did in fact receive some recognition, especially in old age, for being 'hard-working women'. Also, there were certain occupations, such as midwifery and medicine woman, of laying out the dead, tending to the sick, working in spinning and carding frolics with female kin, and so forth, which were the province of women. These female concerns allowed women to build a kind of private culture among themselves which gave them some measure of worth and dignity and an non-political avenue to vent grievances in connection with their restrictive life situation. And it were precisely these various ways of dealing with their oppression that rural Newfoundland women were gradually to lose throughout the Twentieth Century as Newfoundland became a 'developed' society.

Women's Position in Newfoundland from 1900 to Confederation (1949)

Social and Economic Conditions

Twentieth Century Newfoundland was still basically a rural society, but it witnessed substantial urban development when the economy began to diversify. By 1900, the salt cod fishery was in an extremely precarious position: the bank crash in the 1880's and thus the slump in

markets was partly to blame (export prices for cod, e.g., declined 32 percent between 1880 and 1899)[10], and the problems of production discussed above were also an important contributing factor to the crisis. Merchants were not willing to invest capital in reorganizing and modernizing the inshore fishery or in expanding the product produced, especially if there were any less risky investments available. Meanwhile in other countries at this time, Newfoundland's competitors were doing just this,[11] ultimately leaving the majority of fisher-families unable to make ends meet as had at least been possible in the previous century.

Apart from the archaic inshore fishery, the alternatives were (according to the Prime Minister of the time, Edward Morris): out-migration, confederation with Canada or the United States, opening up the country to capitalists, or starvation.[12] In retrospect it is evident that all of these options were resorted to, but at least diversification of the economy from the point of view of the merchants and the state was seen as the answer to everyone's problems, since it was expected to stimulate consumer needs, and hence increased trade and wealth.

It should be clear at this point that Newfoundland did not neatly fit the Marxist notion of the political economy[13] at any stage in the development of its productive forces. It would perhaps be more realistic to view Newfoundland society as never having passed through a laissez-faire period of capitalism, of never having had a strong internal domestic bourgeoisie to bring it to modernity, i.e., of being to a large extent economically dependent on some other power, be it

Britain or, in more recent history, the American based multi-nationals with their distribution of branch plants concentrated in central Canada. Therefore, attempts to solve the problems of poverty and unemployment came mainly from the state itself. A national policy was adopted to 'open up' the country, especially by investment in railways and the development of an infrastructure which supposedly would gradually lead to the development of the natural resources of the Island: the forests, mines, water power, agriculture, as well as tourism. The merchant class welcomed this strategy to diversify the economy because new export sectors would be developed. Wage work in the mining and forestry industries would ease the problems of unemployment and, furthermore, the state anticipated that it would accumulate enough capital to revolutionize the fishery.

Growth and Development

The result were a number of single-industry, primary resource towns: Iron mining on Bell Island; pulp and paper industries in Grand Falls and Corner Brook; and a zinc mine at Buchans. All were financed by outside capital and, though they did create some employment for males,[14] by 1930 it was increasingly clear that these industrial developments had done little to boost revenue for the Newfoundland government. Instead, what did result was a series of Company towns based on an extremely rigid sexual division of labour.

It was in these single-industry towns that domestic labour underwent change at a very rapid pace.[15] The general pattern was that the

'development' of rural communities surrounding the industry produced the first proletarian families. Men usually came first, found a job with a Company, and some kind of shelter for their families, and then sent word to their wives to join them. A woman had little choice in the matter nor much hope of finding a job of her own when she got there. Unable to survive on her own, with children to feed and clothe, she resigned herself to the faith that life without kin and rural supports would somehow be better since her husband had a job with a decent wage. With her children and the family's possessions she consequently 'followed the movement of capital'.[16] Of course, this was not the pattern for all families. Some men worked part-time as labourers and as part-time fishermen as well, thus leaving their wives and children by themselves. Often these women saw their husbands for only three or four weeks of the year -- as one Stephenville woman put it: 'just long enough to get pregnant again'.[17]

In the capital city of St. John's, working class women were then facing similar circumstances. There were perhaps a few more employment options available for single women there since St. John's was the center of government and of education. Yet, for women without certain typing and bookkeeping skills, and without opportunity to go abroad to receive higher education in medicine or teacher's training, the jobs they were forced to seek out were the lowest paid, the most menial and often only temporary. Outport women who migrated to the city had to face the same restrictions as well, ending up in domestic service in private homes, working in hotels and restaurants, or work as clean-

ing women -- all kinds of labour similar to the various domestic tasks their mothers had done before them. Their wages were always much lower than even that of the males of their own class, so low, in fact, that it was not possible for them to survive alone, especially if they had children. Without birth control, the chances were that for many of these women single parenthood was even more likely than it was in outport communities at this time. Once all this is taken into consideration, marriage was still the preferrable option, still an economic necessity, which often meant the difference between survival and destitution.

Not all women in St. John's, however, were facing such problems. A small group of women from the wealthier class were beginning to question how women were perceived by men, and particularly challenged the view that precluded their treatment as persons in public life. Who were these women and why did they fight for certain legal rights for the female sex?

Women and the Vote

Already by the turn of the century, a number of young women had gone abroad in search of higher education, mostly to Britain, Central Canada or to the United States. They generally entered those areas of training open to their sex: nursing, teaching, social work, and secretarial work. No doubt, at the schools and colleges where they received their education, they came across women who did not fit the

dominant model of mother/wife. The vote had already been won for women in many parts of the United States by this time, and the movement to win it in Britain was well under way. In both of these countries, furthermore, women were moving into non-traditional fields such as law and medicine and were even avoiding marriage in order to practice their profession.[18] The upper class St. John's women probably felt themselves to be behind the times. They came back to the city and discovered that in most of the occupations in which they might have wanted work, females were consistently paid less than men. They also looked at their mothers lives, mostly upper class society women often sitting idle and bored and totally dependent on their husbands. They wanted more than an arranged marriage and kids; they wanted economic independence and a place in society outside of women's clubs. Between 1900 - 1925 they did make important gains. In the first part of the decade of the 1900's, Edith Weeks became the first woman doctor on the Island; in the same period Louise Saunders became the first woman lawyer. Alice Wareham became principal of Bishop's College. Julia Earle, in 1916, became the engrossing clerk for the House of Assembly; and in the same year Mary Southcott opened and operated a private hospital in the city.[19]

In the post-WWI period, a Ladies Reading Room Group and Current Events Club was established by a group of leading ladies of St. John's, pioneered by Mrs. J. Mitchell, organized specifically around the issue of women's suffrage.[20] Magazines and newspapers concerning women's struggle for the vote elsewhere were passed around and discussed. Lectures on the subject were given periodically. Petitions were circu-

lated around the city. By 1920 the municipal vote had been won, seen by these women as the initial step to full enfranchisement. Thus shortly after this victory, the "Women's Franchise League" was formed, again organized by the better-educated, wealthier city women, but this time reaching out to working class and outport women as well. They placed articles in the local papers (of course, considering the high illiteracy rate of women at this time one wonders how insightful such actions indeed were [21]). The suffragettes then circulated a petition in 1920 and again in 1921 throughout the city and in many outports and larger towns, asking women to give their personal signatures in support of the cause. Throughout the entire struggle for the vote, many of the prominent men in the city and a large number in Parliament (including the Prime Minister, Richard Squires, and also his wife) thought a bill for female enfranchisement a waste of time and energy. Due in part to the fact that all members of the Government were men who, by and large, believed without question that 'politics was a man's world while women's place was in the home to "rock and cradle" and remain both unseen and unheard',[22] it took five long years of struggle before the vote was finally granted in 1925 to all women on the Island over twenty-five years of age.

In retrospect, the central question which we need to ask is what precisely did the average working class or outport woman gain from the right to vote or from being able to enter professions such as medicine or law? What use was the vote to a poor woman who could never hope to have anything to say about who ran in elections? She

had no way to get together the $480.00 or have possession of $2500 in property to qualify to run as a member of the House of Assembly, as the wealthy St. John's women were able to do after 1925. These rights were for women who could afford to hire maids and servants to clean up after them and watch their kids. In challenging the patriarchal ideology of women's economic dependence on men and their exclusion from politics, the upper class women were really thinking only of themselves, ultimately condemning poor women to the very form of oppression they were out to change. Because of their class affiliation and their faith in liberal reforms, the suffragettes were unable to develop a feminist politics that recognized the hidden oppression of women as reproducers and rearers of children. Newfoundland males continued to be seen as the breadwinners, and the private sphere of the family was still assigned to women. Even upper class women were seen for the most part as mothers and wives, though they now had a chance to be better educated and go to the polls at election time. The double sexual standard of Newfoundland society was not changed in any fundamental way, nor did the average woman find relief from endless child bearing and rearing, bad housing, too little food to serve the family, and -- for the few who could find wage work -- another day's work at home after an eight hour shift of serving others. Real liberation for these women would have had to include the right to control their own bodies, that is, to separate sexuality from procreation. Even though elsewhere during the 1920's, a birth control movement was well underway[23], in Newfoundland women's fertility was not a public issue. Restrictive sexual standards and

women's economic dependency on men kept birth control at most a hidden problem of the individual woman and of the midwife with her folk knowledge about such matters.

The Hungry Thirties

With the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930's, things became so bad on the Island that nearly one-third of the population was drawing relief -- a mere 6 cents a day. More than 60 per cent of the male labour force earned less than $500 per year. Families were still quite large and medical care all but absent in many areas.[24] In 1934, the number of deaths of women traceable to pregnancy and childbirth problems was nearly 6 per 1,000 births. Infant mortality in the same year was nearly 115 per 1,000 live births.[25] People had no money for adequate food even if such food was in fact accessible. The families who suffered most were often from the working class in the capital city and the resource towns. In St. John's, crowds of poor people rioted in the downtown streets, demanding food for families and the right to earn a decent wage.[26]

The Newfoundland government, unable to meet its debts and facing a legitimation crisis as the overall standard of living continued to decline, was once again forced to depend upon Britain. Thus, in 1933, Responsible Government was suspended and a Commission by Government from Westminister arranged by the Mother Country.

Some relief did finally come with the Second World War. Newfound-

land males enlisted in the British army and navy, easing the unemployment problem somewhat. Also, due to its strategic position in the Atlantic, the Island was chosen by the American and Canadian military as a location for Air Bases and land operations. The Commission Government jumped at the opportunity, seeing these bases as the answer to the problems of the poor and unemployed of the general population. One of the areas chosen was Stephenville, a rural community with a population of 250 in 1941. The Base which was constructed near the village in that year saw 30,000 troops pass through it, to be served and cared for by hundreds of single women from the Island who found work there.[27] Another similar Air Base was built just outside of St. John's, and another at Argentia (also on the East Coast of the Island), with a fourth being established in Labrador. During the construction phase of these military operations, and for a short time after the War, many Newfoundland males, and some single women as well, found jobs. Yet, for the women who entered the work force at this time, the kind of work available was hardly different from the work their counterparts found during the earlier period of industrialization, that is, domestic work, clearing tables, washing the linen and clothes of the 'Yanks' and the Canadian soldiers, cooking the food for the Newfoundland males who lived in the barracks on these bases, and so on. Without birth control and the protection of fathers and community, hundreds of these girls were left pregnant and forced to return to their parents in order to avoid destitution. For married women, the question of working for a wage full-time made little sense, considering their problems of continuous pregnancy, the

absence of daycare , and the disappearance of traditional options, for example, to grow a few vegetables or to have a cow.

The prosperity brought by the War to the Island was in fact short lived,for at least the majority of the people. War veterans returned looking for work. As U. S. and Canadian military requirements changed, the strategic role such towns as Stephenville served during the war soon declined. Gradually the Bases closed down completely. Empty buildings and vacated airports were turned over to the Newfoundland government. The rural economic base of these towns had by this time been destroyed. With their service role also phased out, thousands of people left without work and no opportunity to return to their former subsistence lifestyle. While urban development had occurred and people had been introduced to all the services of the modern consumer society, no economic structure existed to support them. Something had to be done so that the labour force could be reproduced. In these military towns, and in the capital city as well, all sorts of visible indications of the inability of large portions of the working class to keep afloat had emerged. The illegitimate birth rate after the War had jumped to nearly 34 per cent, which is almost 10 per cent higher than it had been in 1930.[28] Somehow single mothers had to be looked after. Most of their families were in dire straits as well,and thus unable to keep them and their children. The number of widowed women had also increased due to the war. And many of the men who returned from overseas were crippled and hence needed compensation of some sort. The Newfoundland population looked to the Mother Country and found little help. Britain too was

facing similar domestic problems and wanted to be relieved of its 'caring' role. One attractive way out was to join forces with Canada.

Newfoundland Women and the Welfare State

Social and Economic Conditions

When Newfoundland entered Confederation with Canada in 1949, it received all the trappings of the Welfare State.[29] The new Liberal Government led by Premier Joey Smallwood promised the Baby Bonus to mothers and three jobs to every man. A 'develop or perish' policy was adopted, with the various kinds of social services provided by the Canadian State used to justify its attempts to hold down wages and, as I shall argue below, continue to treat women as dependents of men within the patriarchal family.

Poverty was supposed to disappear as soon as Newfoundland developed into a modern, affluent society. Both the federal and provincial governments promoted this myth through the ideology of social welfare and an economic strategy to industrialize the Island and to resettle the mass of the rural population into 'growth centers'. Neither state pretended to treat women equally. Instead, the promise of 'full employment' was given only to men. Women were firmly located in the home, as far as those in political power were concerned, reproducing the labour force and taking care of husbands and children (now even with welfare 'gifts'), while the men did their shift at the office or on construction sites.

Thus after 1950, Newfoundland, more than ever before, became a hinterland for giant capitalist investment. At first, the Smallwood government attempted to reach its goal of full employment through import substitution.[30] A series of small local manufacturing schemes were started in the designated growth centers: a cement plant, a machinery and tannery operation, rubber, textile, and pressboard industries, and a battery plant. By mid-1953, four other attempts were on the way (furs, gloves, boots and shoes, and ceramics). But by 1957, five of these and similar plants were closed, eight others had not yet made a profit, and only the cement plant emerged as solvent in the end. Smallwood's initial efforts to "take the boys out of the boats" and put them in year-round well-paying jobs in the new industries had been disastrous. By 1959 the Island was in the depths of an economic recession, the loggers were on strike, and unemployment reached nearly 20 per cent. That winter nearly half the labour force was on welfare. People had little choice but to return to their outport home, if at all possible, and start anew.

The men went back fishing and the women expected to pack everything up once again and return with their men to a subsistence lifestyle. Many did just this, and between 1958 and 1963 over 8,000 families migrated back to an outport society, where they hoped they would still be able to provide enough for their families to live on. But what they did find were run-down houses, lack of money to purchase needed fishing gear, and inadequate services. There was only the anticipation of catching enough fish in the summer months in order to draw unemployment insurance. If this did not materialize,

welfare -- or the 'dole', as it became called -- had to be relied on, if families were to have enough to eat. The logical implication of Smallwood's resettlement programs had been that once an industrial proletariat was created in central areas, economic progress would shortly follow. Convinced that the main problem had been the development strategy itself, the government focused attention on the Island's remaining natural resources, especially in Labrador.

With the aid of outside capital and financial backing from the federal government, a number of large-scale industrial enterprises were attempted in the early 1960's, along with yet another attempt to resettle the people to the sites of these developments. An oil refinery was started at Come-by-Chance; an iron-ore project initiated at Knob Lake; a large hydro-electric project constructed at Churchill Falls; a linerboard mill established at Stephenville; and a longliner fishery built up. State capital was used to expand the economic infrastructure, to subsidize many of the developments, and to educate the people for the jobs that were expected to materialize. By 1972, the results were clear. Newfoundland had a per capita debt double the Canadian average, and the unemployment problem had not been solved. Smallwood'a development strategies had helped to create: 1. A large number of short-term jobs for males, mainly in the construction industry; 2. A whole array of small-scale business enterprises in the various growth centers (as well as some locally owned fish plants in a few outport communities); and 3. A new middle class of government employees -- social workers, bureaucrats, state advisors, and so forth. How did Newfoundland women fit into this picture?

From the previous discussion about the Welfare State, it is clear that although women were fundamental to its legitimation, they received little direct benefit from it as a group. Some middle class women did of course find jobs as professionals in state-financed programs, but for the majority of Newfoundland women this was not the case. Instead, those women from the working class who did find some paid work in the male public world were forced to accept service-related jobs in St. John's or in the various growth centers around the Island. They had no unions to fight for better working conditions, maternity benefits, or wages. Nor did they have a way to eliminate sexual harassment on the job. According to the politicians, these women should not have had anything to complain about, since it provided so many services for the modern woman: shopping malls, fast food chains, etc. Yet the 'working mother' continued as mother, wife and domestic servant, as well as a wage earner in the market and thus had to shoulder a domestic oppression condoned by the State.

The Politics of Reproduction

Until 1969 contraception, including abortion, was illegal in Canada. For a number of reasons, which I shall discuss below, this law was liberalized at the turn of the decade. Contraception information was distributed across the country, the 'Pill' became accessible and therapeutic abortion permitted in any hospital with four physicians willing to perform the procedure. On the Island, the Planned Parent-

hood Association was formed in 1972 (sponsored by the Canadian Public Health Association). The Canadian State and the Newfoundland government, now under the leadership of Frank Moores, for the first time ever were showing concern about the need for families to have the opportunity to plan their pregnancies and limit their size. In essence, the goals of the State at this point were 1. To make sure that all Newfoundland families had accessibility to information about reproduction and family planning; 2. To develop family planning services on the community level; 3. To also provide counselling services in the area of human sexuality (previously considered the private domain of the family itself); and 4. To promote the development of family life and sex education for youth.[31] Health professionals -- physicians, nurses, and pharmacists -- joined together to provide these birth control services to the Newfoundland population, while simultaneously preserving and even strengthening the family. Before examining some reasons why these liberal reforms mentioned here occurred it is important to stress that this was a form of state-directed reproductive control which in fact took the household, and not the individual woman within it, as its focus for concern. Hence, by sponsoring such organizations as Planned Parenthood, the State was achieving a number of things: family size was controlled,[32] resulting in lower welfare payments; the bourgeois form of the patriarchal family (that is, consisting of husband, wife and their 2.1 children) was upheld; a large portion of the educated middle class were employed as social workers, public health personnel and so forth; and finally, pharmaceutical companies and medical professionals were pleased.

Another important reason why the State decided on the plan of action discussed above was to neutralize the Women's Movement, which emerged in many parts of the country in the late 1960's. The 1970 report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women made 167 recommendations to the Federal Government to change the subordinate position of women. By 1972 the Newfoundland Status of Women's Council (NSWC) had been formed, a constitution drawn up, consciousness-raising sessions were being held in women's homes, and an application was sent to Ottawa for funding to build a women's center in St. John's. By the following year The Women's Place was opened. On the West Coast of the Island, another women's center was opened in Corner Brook shortly thereafter. Many of the women involved at the centers came from outside the Island. Others were native-born Newfoundlanders but had lived elsewhere during the 1960's. Many of these women were acutely aware of sexual exploitation on many levels -- inside as well as outside the family. Some had been involved in student demonstrations while at university and had become somewhat disillusioned with the Left itself. They felt an urgent need for an autonomous women's movement focusing on the specific problems of working class women, in particular on the right to control their own fertility, on equal job opportunities with men, and on equal pay for equal work.

It is an indication of the strength of middle-class pressure group politics in Canada that the federal and provincial governments sought to meet some of these demands of Newfoundland feminists by bringing about legal changes in legislation and also by providing funding for political activities -- research focused on women's problems, community work projects and

forth. In St. John's, a state-sponsored day care center opened, a rape crisis group was formed, changes were made in provincial legislation concerning equal pay for equal work, a research project was begun to eliminate instances of sex discrimination in school textbooks, and, finally, a center for battered women was funded. This was more than an attempt to buy women off. It showed real concern on the part of the State to accommodate the demands of feminists in the face of impending recession and high unemployment around the Island. But, though the Women's Movement had a serious impact at this time, it would be erroneous to conclude that the State was morally concerned about women's oppression. For the grants to women's groups came with specific governments requirements, in particular, that formal bureaucratic rules be followed, that a rigid structure and plan of action be used and that the women who were being helped (victims of rape, working class mothers needing birth control, battered women, welfare mothers, jobless teenagers) not have anything to say about how things were run. All this allowed the state to respond to women's groups while not really making structural changes in the economy. The end result was that liberal feminists were satisfied with the reforms made by the State, while the women making socialist as well as feminists demands were increasingly alienated from the Center. Working class women suffered greatly from this split among feminists. This becomes especially clear when we examine the situation of women outside of St. John's during the 1970's.

In 1972 the new conservative government on the Island under the leadership of Frank Moores not only had to deal with a women's movement

and the problem of population control, but was also faced with finding employment for a large section of the Newfoundland population. Many, like in previous periods of unemployment, migrated to mainland Canada in search of work. Loans were made available to working class high school graduates to further their education at university, trade school or the community colleges around the Province. And as was the case in the early 1960's, many families were encouraged to migrate back to the outports and once again try and fend for themselves. Men were given loans for boats and fishing equipment. State sponsored work projects were encouraged for those not involved in the fishery. (For the most part, these projects employed only males and the few outport women who did manage to get in on any of them had to fight hard for this right.)[33] The grants given out for community projects such as wharf repairs, road construction, boat slips, harbour repairs and community centers were quite consistent with the usual approach of the State in dealing with the unemployment problem in Newfoundland, that is, to create temporary unskilled or semi-skilled jobs for local males while the women stay home and look after the home and children. But the outport family desperately needed some economic contribution from women if it was to survive at all on these 'make-work' schemes and the declining fishery. Thus the government also encouraged the craft industry in many of the outports. Women were expected to do piece work inside their homes, fitted around their housework and child rearing (quite similar in fact to the putting-out system in England in the 18th century). What happened in this regard was that women's domestic skills such as spinning, weaving, knitting,

and so forth, became routinized and fitted to a specific pattern so as to meet the expectations of the middle class tourist market. In exchange for this factory-type labour, most women received payment far below the minimum wage[34] and, furthermore, lost any control they once had over the products of their labour. In some outport communities, women were encouraged to complement this form of craft work with seasonal fish plant work. In both of these work options, rural women continued to perform the major reproductive labour involved in running the home and in looking after the children. They still were performing a double burden of labour while officially their male relatives were seen as the 'breadwinners'. For the women's movement to reach these women, it had to somehow help them deal with the contradictory situation they were forced to live with as rural women.

Current Political Conflicts: The 'Right-to-Life' and Women

By 1977 it was clear that this would not happen. The recession was now country-wide and deepening. Many Newfoundlanders were returning to the Province due to plant shutdowns in central Canada. The State was forced to cut back its welfare budget, limit its spending for make-work projects and tighten its unemployment insurance regulations. Daycare centers and other women's projects were not refunded. Increasingly social services were centralized and the chronically unemployed, in particular welfare mothers, were resettled to the growth centers. Government reprints were circulated blaming the poor for

their poverty, while social workers were told to go into homes and show people how to 'plan their budgets'. To make matters worse, a strong conservative movement began to strenghten, focusing on the issue of abortion. Under the slogan 'The Right-to-Life', the Catholic and Anglican churches, organizations such as the Canadian Legion, the Knights of Columbus, fundamentalist denominations, and even the West Coast Labour representative, mobilized a political force attacking women for taking jobs from men and deserting their families. By 1979, even the Planned Parenthood organizations were under attack. The hospital on the West Coast of the Province refused to give abortions and in St. John's the General Hospital was forced to limit abortions to three a week. Women over sixteen, those in a "serious relationship", those married or even those 'pretty' are now turned away.

As I briefly mentioned in chapter one, it was my involvement with a collective of women concerned about such issues which prompted me to go outside the capital city and so some research on Newfoundland women.[35] I chose Stephenville for a number of reasons: 1. I knew many of the older women and believed that their oral accounts of life in Stephenville prior to WWII would be valuable in trying to understand women's position in pre-industrial times; 2. I also knew a number of younger women who had grown up with me in the area and had since married and had families; 3. I was aware that the town was one of the main areas in the province where welfare mothers had been recently ghettoized; and 4. I had decided by this point that in order to understand the problems of other Newfoundland women I

had to also reexamine my own past,in part by renewing relations with my mother and female kin,and to take a closer look at my male relatives to see precisely how deeply sexism was embedded within my own family. In the following two chapters I shall attempt to piece together the lives of this community of women.

Part Two

Introduction: Why Stephenville as a Case Study?

I intend to show that the growth of industrial towns in Newfoundland has been telescoped into a relatively short period of history, only forty years in the case of Stephenville. Although the town is presently one of the largest urban areas of the Island, the base for a number of industrial projects, as well as a designated service center for the surrounding communities, all these modern conditions of industrial capitalism were non-existent prior to World War II.

By giving attention to Stephenville's history, it is possible to highlight the unfolding of distinct stages of the sort of capitalist development promoted by the Newfoundland state since the colony was first settled. In the following two chapters, I attempt to reconstruct the transformation of this area from a rural fishing and farming community to a town characterized by a rigid sexual division of labour through which women are largely excluded from wage-labour and from salaried positions.[1] While the Welfare State, which emerged in Newfoundland after it joined Canada in 1949, has given women some minimal economic security, many of the advantages of rural living enjoyed by women in Stephenville prior to Confederation are no longer available as options. This would hardly be problematic if, in fact, certain gains women made elsewhere in the late 1960's and early 1970's (such as birth control and abortion, equal job and educational opportunities, protection from rape and battering, day care facilities

and so forth) were also accessible to Stephenville working class women. This, however, is not the case. In the following chapters I attempt to point out why this is so.

Chapter Three: Women in Rural Stephenville, 1900 - 1940

The Setting

At the turn of the twentieth century, Stephenville was still relatively isolated from the outside world. The settlers who first came to this relatively fertile plain in 1845 were French-speaking exiles from the number of small islands owned by Nova Scotia. They came to the French Shore of Newfoundland to escape impending punishment from the Nova Scotia government, largely because they could not afford to pay taxes levied on their families. The year following their arrival on the Island, a male child was born to one of the leading families. They called their new settlement Stephenville after the child, Stephen Gallant, whose own son later became the sole merchant of the village. Once learning the general practice of the Newfoundland government concerning ownership of land, the settlers paid their annual $2 per square mile and erected houses, barns, sheds and so forth. Many had brought household things from their former homes. Others made what they could not afford to purchase at the merchant's store in the nearby commercial centre of St. Georges. By the time the first generation had become adults, the settlement was well established with a population of over 600 persons.[2] Yet the extensiveness of the fishing, farming, and gathering activities necessary for

survival meant that these labouring families were forced to spend most of their time in working at something or other. The only community functions were Church on Sundays, weddings, funerals, the annual garden party and the Fall harvest. Otherwise, apart from a rare square dance at the one-room school, people stayed close to their households.

> I was born ten years before the new century came in - not yesterday, hey? Mother had ten children in all, but only five of us made it. We had a lovely house back off the pond, around two miles from the Church and the merchant's store. In 1900 there wasn't much very big around here. No doctor, just the old midwife. She was a nice woman, I remember. The road was really nothing but a cow path, and unless you were a man or boy you didn't get to see what the other side of the Bay was like.
>
> (Rural housewife, born 1890)

The Economic and Social Base

In 1900, shortly before the French Shore was officially made a proper part of the Island, most of the village people lived on small farms about a half mile from each other. The older women remember that there were about ten family farms clustered around a large pond, commonly known to the local residents as 'Back-the-Pond'. From the end of the pond two narrow roads forked towards the sea: the 'Back Road' to the right, where a small one-room school was erected; the other to the left, which eventually came out to the 'Front Road', where the church and the merchant store were built. On the Back Road between ten to twelve family farms were in operation at this time and along the stretch of land towards the Front Road more small farms could be

found. Altogether there were around one hundred houses inhabited on about twenty-five or so blocks of land, anywhere from one hundred-fifty to two hundred acres. Most of the farms had all of their land cleared and in use, one section set aside for vegetable gardens and fruit trees, the rest used for hay fields and pasture. [3]

There was usually a main house of three or more stories where the grandfather, his wife and non-married kin resided. Often one or more grandchildren lived there as well. Moreover, a newly married son and his young wife might live with his parents while his own house was being constructed, perhaps for one or two years. Surrounding the main house there was generally a large barn about forty feet square, various sheds and storage buildings, often a small saw mill, an outdoor toilet ("outhouse") and farm equipment such as a plow, sled, wagon, hoes, and so forth. Most farms had at least one horse and often an oxen for plowing, two or more cows, around twenty head of sheep, a pig, hens, and one or more sheep dogs. Clustered around the grandfather's house were the sons and their families. Families were large. The Stephenville women remember that it was common to see twelve to fifteen children from one couple.[4] Of course, many died young in child-birth or from contagious diseases which periodically spread through the area;[5] nevertheless, there were often as many as five to six sons and their families living in close proximity to their father. All families were French-speaking and all were Catholics, except one family near the merchant store. The common bonds of language, religion and extended family organized around the older patriarch generally meant that all agnatically related males worked together, building each others' houses and storage buildings in 'frolics', that is, by everyone getting to-

gether and pooling labour and resources. The family land was cleared of brush the same way and the hay mowed in the late summer in a similar fashion. Ultimogeniture prevailed: the central house and barn, as well as equipment and animals was usually passed down to the youngest son at the death of the patriarch.

Apart fom agricultural pursuits, most Stephenville males also engaged to some extent in inshore fishing. The waters of the village Bay were, unfortunately, not very abundant in cod, which in most outport communities was then the mainstay of the economy. Instead, the men fished salmon and herring. Both species were caught in relatively short periods of time: salmon generally in the early Spring after the ice break-up, and the herring usually in the Fall, before the ice came into the Bay for the Winter. [6] Some men also caught lobster in traps in the Spring, but for the most part the lobster fishery was also poor in this area. The added problem of high westerly winds meant that in some years many families lost their gear and even boats. Lobster pots and salmon and herring nets more than once ended up strung along the rocky shore, and many fishing sheds were washed away during such storms. Gear and boats were expensive and time consuming to replace. Ultimately it meant that these farmer-fishermen spent much of their time directly or indirectly involved in the fishery, with little return for their labour. Yet, if they wanted to get necessary household staples from the merchant, such as flour, molasses, tea, sugar, coal, farming equipment and parts (tires, wheels, bolts), kerosene, gasoline, crude and lubricating oils, household hardware, school things for the kids and so forth, they had to bring either fish

or hard cash to him.

> The merchant argued that the climate and soil was no good around Stephenville anyway, except for growing things for home-use and that, furthermore, any man who tried to farm full-time was doomed to fail from the start.
> (Rural housewife, born 1910)

No matter how many farm products could be produced and no matter how high their quality was, the local merchant and, in turn, the larger merchants he dealt with in the town of St. George's, simply refused to exchange these products for necessary commodities. Thus, the men could not afford to farm full-time and, instead, were forced to fish from the nearby Bay. When the fishing or the weather were bad, the men had little choice but find wage-work elsewhere - in mainland Canada, working in the coals of Cape Breton perhaps, or as labourers as far away as the 'Boston States'.[7] Some did find work as labourers locally as well: at a saw mill which cut ties for the railroad, clearing land for the government or for the few rich English farmers who owned and operated farms about forty miles from the village, or fishing at the Cape and at the Bar [8] near St. George's for fish merchants. A few worked as miners at the nearby quarry at Aguathuna, and others went to Sandy Point near the town of St. George's, where a merchant operated a herring-packing company, hiring males for ten cents a day to build wooden barrels and pack herring for shipment to the Boston States.

> The merchant, old A.V. Gallant, had our hands tied. He owned the only store that was here then and bartered everything he thought he could make a buck from and that the women didn't make themselves. He gave back hard cash to no man,

> except when some was needed to pay the priest his dues or pay for your pew in the church at the end of the year. When the men came up with a boat of fresh salmon or herring old A. V. would make them take it all up in freight or tobacco or liquor. You couldn't get a dollar if you cried. That damn merchant was a real gypper, if you ask me. He used to weigh the fish always himself, and let me tell you this much: the scales were always tipped in his favor. The men had no education, just ignorant, common folks. Often times for a whole barrel of herring my old man would be lucky to get fifty cents worth of grub back ... Half of the men went in the hole from fishing. In order to bring in anything at all they had to follow the work. They were half the time gone. Often we would never see them for months on end, especially when the lumberwoods opened up. As I see it, the men were forced to be 'Jacks-of-all-Trades',doing a bit of this and a bit of that to help keep their families above water. The only one who got ahead was the old merchant, not 'cause he worked any harder but 'cause he was the most dishonest. Apart from stealing from the poorer folk, the only way you got rich was if a miracle happened, and nothing of that sort happened in my life time.
>
> (A former midwife, born 1889)

From the above discussion we can see that many of the men who were part-time farmers and part-time fishermen were also forced to become labourers. They saw themselves as the breadwinners of their families and thus searched out any employment they could find that could be exchanged at the merchant store for certain staples and perhaps a little tobacco and a flask or two of 'the strong stuff' for the cold winter months. After the Fall harvest, they sometimes never returned home until Christmas, especially when the paper town of Corner Brook was built in the early 1920's. Shortly after the New Year, they would be gone again - the old man, married sons and boys as young as thirteen years of age - trapping,hunting moose and rabbit, or, if possible, back to the lumberwoods until Spring. The single males, in particular, did not stay around much at all, [9] going off to England during the First World War, to the nearby paper town, to the Northern Peninsula

cutting pulp, and so forth. Wages were low,[10] labour difficult and tools few. Often, during heavy snowfalls and storms, the men were forced to remain inside the camps for days on end. Many gambled, promising money not yet earned to their fellow gamblers. Taking all this into consideration, it is not surprising that many of the men came out of the lumber camp in the Spring with 'nothing but the shirts on their back'. Then they would perhaps help out to prepare the fields for planting and cut a little wood and start the cycle once more - either fish or to go off to work for someone else, if any work was available at all. Meanwhile, back at the farm, in the households owned and organized along patriarchal lines, the women of Stephenville spent their lives, often not sure where their male kin were at any point in time and fearing all the while that they would return with no fish and no money for the merchant. This fear of being in 'the red' pressured them to work doubly hard themselves, inside and outside their homes. Indeed, as we shall see below, their domestic labour often meant the difference between having enough to eat and warm clothes to wear and total destitution.

> You were born to work and tend on the men and you lived with it. Work was your story and so you bit your lip, tied your shoe laces and got on with it. We women had what it took to make a good frame. Sometimes I wonder, as I sit here getting old, how I conquered it all.
>
> (Mother of ten children, born 1898)

Domestic Labour

The Newfoundland Census of 1901 recorded that only one Stephenville

woman was gainfully occupied, that being the school teacher who came to the village from the East Coast of the Island and who boarded with one of the local families. [11] Her salary was around twenty dollars a month, supposedly paid by the government - but more often the people themselves got together and paid her whatever they could afford in exchange for teaching their children at the one-room school they had built in the late 1800's. No women were otherwise 'occupied', except the midwife who rarely received money for her service. About 1906 one woman was finally hired by the government of the Colony to work as apprentice to the priest in order to learn to run the post office. (This woman and the former midwife describe their life experiences in a later section).

Rarely was a Stephenville woman permitted to leave her community in search of migrant labour. The older women remember only two such cases before 1925, both women from households that were in dire straits and could no longer afford to keep their eldest daughters when younger sisters were old enough to replace them in the fields and inside the house. After this period and until the Depression a few more single girls were allowed to go to Corner Brook and work as domestics. But they were few indeed. All other women were seen as 'homemakers', that is, women doing housework in their own home, without salary or wage, and having no other employment. [12] This societal definition of Stephenville women included all single women keeping house for fathers or other male kin, for example,paternal aunts who did not marry (spinsters), single mothers living within their fathers' household, re-adopted daughters who were widowed, and so forth -

in addition, of course, to the married women. About two-thirds of the village women were married and living with their husbands, either within the man's father's house or in their own dwelling nearby. There were eight widowed women and all others - about twenty-five per cent of the women - were unmarried and generally still lived within their father's house. [13] As we shall see later in this chapter, this typical household pattern changed significantly during the Depression of the 1930's. But prior to the Depression most women who were not married worked for their fathers and mothers in their house of birth or at their uncle's house nearby. Moreover, until around 1940 divorce and separation were unknown. [14] Yet, though not all Stephenville women were able to marry (for reasons I discuss in the following section concerning sexuality and marriage), work - both inside the household and on the family farm - was the common experience of all. Freedom for females usually ended at as early an age as eight or nine. Most never went beyond their second book in school and even by the time of the beginning of the Second World War nearly half the women could not read or write. As one woman put it, 'by the time you were up to your mother's apron pocket, you were ready for hard work.' The daughters were taken from school and put to work on the discretion of their mothers and other female relatives living at home, usually depending on whether more labour was needed. This was especially so when the boys and men were away 'at the fish' or on some wage job. Most things were learned through watching the adult women at work - whether the chore be making bread, cutting fire wood, shearing sheep, spinning, carding wool, preserving fruits and vegetables and so forth. Most women remember making their

first batch of bread at age eight or nine, with their mothers watching them out of the corner of their eye while changing the baby's diaper or cooking the evening meal.

> You were like an apprentice or little helper to your mother. You lived and you learned. Mother said it was all good practice for when you got married and had babies of your own. I remember that I couldn't reach the kitchen sink unless I stood on a chair when I first did the supper dishes. Especially during the heavy planting season when mother and my aunts and grandma were out from dawn to dark working the ground, me and my other sisters used to run things in the house. We made butter by hand, cooked all the meals, baked biscuits and molasses buns for the children, hauled water from the pond, and washed the clothes on the scrubbing board out back. The young and old women worked together. The same thing happened to every woman. Everyone worked themselves to the bone.
>
> (Spinster, born 1910)

Stephenville women were not isolated housewives living in private family units with their biological children. It was true that the merchant's wife was free from hard labour in the fields and even inside her home because she could get what she needed from her husband's store and hire a young girl to do her Spring cleaning and so forth. But the majority of women had no choice in the matter, and unless everyone together helped out at the various tasks that subsistence agriculture involved, the extended family went without food, clothing and emotional support as well. Generally, if at all possible, the men or boys who were working around the village would try and get back home to till the soil by oxen and plow in the early Spring. Then the women took over, planting seeds, weeding, fixing up their strawberry patches, pruning fruit trees, doctoring the new calves, lambs and heifers, putting the animals out to pasture, gathering drift wood with

the children at the shore, thus essentially, keeping the whole farm going by themselves until hay time when the men again came around to help out. In addition, the women and children gathered wild fruits and berries -- raspberries, blueberries, bakeapples and so forth, which were bottled or canned in the evening after the outside work was done.

Apart from this form of domestic labour in the fields and gardens, the women were also expected to do their share in keeping the School scrubbed and dusted, as well as the Church at the Front Road. Each family had a specified time to do these tasks, usually about four or five times a year. It was expected that for the Fall Harvest and the Garden Party of the year, each extended family would contribute to the Church their best agricultural products and possibly a lamb, eggs, butter, preserves and so forth. All this was seen as a duty to God and the Church which went towards the upkeep of the priest and his household, along with the Church dues, pew fees, and the ten dollars each couple had to pay for their marriage.

Inside the household, there was a constant flow of persons coming and going; some went to fish, or to the lumber camp, others to the woods to hunt moose or snare rabbit; a new daughter-in-law and her baby stayed while her own home was under construction or a grandchild who needed a place to sleep because of cramped quarters at home, and the like. It was after the kids were in bed, the crowd of men fed and the dishes washed for the fourth or fifth time that day, that the women took out their looms and spinning wheels to begin their other activities, such as making clothing or quilts, long after everybody else's day was done. The traditional household, then, apart from the important function of maintaining the labour force, was also the center of craft

production for home-use. Nearly all the girls from ten or so up could weave, spin yarn, knit and darn nearly anything they could think of making. Especially in the winter months when the men and boys were moose hunting or in the lumberwoods, the extended family of women would congregate together at the main house and have their spinning and matting bees or 'frolics'.

> We made it all. We's soften up old brinbags and sew up diapers for the child's behind. I recall that I was no more than twelve when I was at the loom. Stephenville had some marvelous spinners. One or two would be at the wheel, another few at looms, some more carding and knitting. We also had a sewing machine with the pedal on the floor. It came from Halifax, I believe. We sewed dresses, all the men's shirts and flannels and even quilts. We would rip out a worn-out pair of trousers for a pattern. It was rough but warm, and served the purpose well. You couldn't buy stuff like that anyhow, 'cause the merchant didn't carry it - and besides, who could afford fancy duds? The only thing we bought from a trader who came around Stephenville once in a blue moon were suits of clothes for the men and an odd pair of shoes for the youngsters. It was really too bad that we couldn't sell some of the things. We did lovely crochet and needle work and knitted sweaters like you never see the like today. The only time the merchant would trade your homemade goods for some staple or other was when your family was in the red, say when the fishing was bad or when the Depression came. So what we didn't use ourselves we gave away, mostly to the Church for the altar or to the priest for his rectory.
>
> (Widow woman, born 1910)

The labouring women of Stephenville were hard workers, performing an extremely wide, and usually ardous, array of chores. We have seen that they were the main producers of much of the food consumed and nearly all of the other family necessities as well. The use value of the things made in this way cannot be overemphasized. These women were hardly the 'weak things' described by upper class St. John's society at this time as 'natural' women. Nevertheless, the popular myth has it that prior to the time Stephenville 'took-off' or 'developed' with

the onset of WWII, all labouring men and women were partners -- with husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and even grandpa and grandma working hand-in-hand to keep everything together. Hence it is further assumed, that though the men were the real workers - that is, the breadwinners - of the family, their women were equals, ? doing their own share at home and around the farm.

As in all cultures women had to traditionally serve on men. Stephenville is in fact just one clear example of this situation the world over. It was not mere chance that above all else the most immediate task that these women were expected to do was to be always ready and willing to serve men. There was no way that they were exempt from this duty, seen as the fundamental part of their duties as a wife and daughter, no less important that bearing children. In her last moments before she gave up her own name to take that of her husband she had to vow to 'love, cherish and obey' her husband until 'death do us part'. There is this ideology of partnership here which does not stand up to reality. Women's own memories show something different. Even when a woman was up to her elbows in the dough pan making her daily batch of bread (perhaps with the baby crying blue murder for its milk), when the men came in from 'work' she was immediately expected to drop everything and rush to their beck and call. It hardly mattered whether she was wife, daughter or another female relative. The more servants to do the tending and to order about in your house the better. Men, it was believed (and it was preached over the altar every other Sunday) did not serve on anyone, not

even themselves.

> My father was awful strict with the girls. I cried my heart out more than once having to stay home from a wedding or garden party to look after the house and the little ones. Here in Stephenville not too darn many women were allowed to go anywhere farther than Church on Sundays. You couldn't go out to work even if you could find a job that brought in a killing. Father used to say, 'my dear lassy, I can give you work enough here to last you your lifetime.' Don't you worry, we had no time to run about. The women got the last of everything - food, clothes, sleep, everything you can think of. How many times did I fight back the tears ... You'd be starved by the time you got around to finally sitting at the supper table after tending on the bunch of them and not a blooming bit of meat was left on the plate.
>
> (Housewife, born 1903)

The question we are left with is why did women do this 'dirty work'? Why did they not just get up and leave so they could avoid this constant tending on men? Or, why at least did they not fight back somehow, perhaps face the men head on and insist that as hard workers they deserved an equal share of the food as well as time off to put their feet up? I have already hinted at some reasons why this was not possible for women, why they continued to 'run themselves ragget'. Now I will look at the reproductive role of these rural women to further shed light on this puzzle.

Sexuality and Marriage

Fundamental to the beliefs of the Stephenville French-Catholic community was that women should be 'protected' by a man - either a father, husband, a male relative or else the local priest (as was the case for any nun who entered into spiritual marriage in the Church.) Marriage, consecrated by the Church and God, was upheld as the highest

goal for any woman, short of entering the Convent. Since no labouring families prior to WWII had enough money to think about sending a daughter away to St. John's, even this option was closed to Stephenville women. Under some circumstances, marriage can be seen and understood as a loving exchange between husband and wife. But in Stephenville, judging from what the women say about their own personal experiences, there was no such thing as a joyful egalitarian marriage. Instead, an ideology of feminine passionlessness prevailed. In essence, 'good women' were understood to be asexual and virtuous, who suffered through the sex act without moving a muscle. Enjoying sex was a vice. It was just another form of labour expected of married females, along with domestic work, in exchange for economic support from men. In most cases, then, we can safely assume that if and when a woman found a man to join with him and set up house, they did so not for love but for 'mercenary' reasons.

Underneath all this were misogynist assumptions about how women should produce children, about female sexuality, and about the reproduction of the labour force on a day-to-day basis. In spite of the very powerful social belief that motherhood was an integral part of female existence, any woman who begot a child outside of marriage was nevertheless ostracized. She was a 'bad' woman, only to be forgiven after marriage to a Catholic boy who gave the 'bastard' child a 'good' name. In a society in which motherhood within the institution of partiarchal marriage was for most women the only realistic alternative to remaining trapped in a lifetime service to father and male kin, we can imagine how powerful this ideology of virtuous motherhood was.

> Women were told that 'once you find some man to take you to be his wife, you made your bed and now you lay in it.' Well, let me tell you this much, the women from here didn't have any soft beds to choose from. As a girl you were never allowed out of your parents sight. Sex and when you had your period, meant you were dirty and evil. We were all the time kept ignorant believing just what the priest and our old man said. We weren't even allowed to have our ankles showing and had to cover our heads for respect, like the Virgin Mary. You had to stay locked away when you was bleeding or expecting. But there were things going on that weren't so very good. Like incest, for one thing. More than one young girl got nabbed that way. I think the men and the priest didn't want the women to talk nor have a chance to escape it all 'cause they'd be left high and dry with no women to do their dirty work.
>
> (Housewife, born 1900)

If a woman cannot plan when and how often she will have children, she has, in actual fact, little control over her life. Women in rural Stephenville during this period had virtually no way to disassociate pregnancy from sexuality. Unexpected pregnancy was a constant worry for both married as well as non-married women. From the point of view of the community, if a woman was single and pregnant, she had to be socially condemned and to be made a disgrace of before the altar on every Sunday before her illegitimate child was born. Everybody knew her and knew about her 'evil ways'. If her lover was a Catholic boy and was willing to marry her (and her father was willing to let her go with him to his own community) then there was a chance for her to get to heaven, but only if she served her husband well and bore a large family, as many 'as the Lord ordained'. On the other hand, if her lover was a non-Catholic, perhaps a fellow she met through her brothers or at the Fall Harvest for a brief period of time, then - even if she wanted to marry him - it was virtually impossible. Mixed

marriages were unheard of at this point in time. Thus, the pregnant woman was trapped for life. By the time she reached twenty-five and was not yet married, she might as well 'hang up her hat', especially if she was already a biological mother. At best she would be seen as a stranger, with streaks of evilness lurking within. When old and gray and still serving male kin, she might be simply called a 'spinster', or an old maid.

Stephenville women were caught in a vicious circle of contradictions. Due to the fact that marriage was economically crucial to a female if she was to gain social status as a woman, and also because it was so difficult to ever meet a fellow because she was tied to the house, she was forced to try her best to seek out a likeable partner - at a time when there was no effective birth control. Nor was abortion as a medically safe procedure for terminating an unexpected pregnancy available. This situation ultimately put most single women in very vulnerable positions in relation to the other sex.

> Sometimes my brothers would come back home with a bunch of lumberjacks they met in the woods and have a lot to drink and brag about. When a fellow comes out of the lumberwoods after living in bunk houses with perhaps five hundred to a thousand men and blackarding and gambling their spare time away, you can well imagine the state their minds and body was in when we laid eyes on them. All they wanted to do is drink and party and have someone to run after them. And, imagine, they were about the only fellows you had to choose from for a husband. A girl had to be real careful, 'cause once she got in trouble, her life was done for.
>
> (Spinster, born 1910)

One can just imagine the trauma of a young girl in finding herself pregnant at sixteen, with an extremely strict father to deal with

and the priest to face when she started to show. There was community pressure for the father of the child to marry the young girl, but if he chose to pay her a monthly fee of ten dollars instead, there was no further pressure applied.

> Fellows used to say "if you don't give in to me I'll leave you 'cause there's lots more of your kind dying to grab hold to a husband around here." These fellows were just out for themselves and a bit of fun. Well, it wasn't much to laugh about being left in trouble with a bad name and a bastard child on the way. Sometimes the fellow would sincerely promise to marry you if you let him get close and then, after he had his bit, he'd clear out to the woods or God knows where. They were always trying to corner you.
>
> (Housewife, born 1903)

Some women caught in such circumstances would try drastic and occassionally fatal measures.

> Yes, I sometimes heard tell of some girls taking stomach salts or jumping from the loft and things like that. Poor things, they didn't have it very easy. I heard talk of one who took the scissors to herself. It's no wonder, 'cause back in those times you got punished some bad for your misdeed. You had to go up to the front of the altar at Sunday mass and do penance before the entire congregation. You were an utter disgrace and your poor child after all that had to suffer. For without a real father, it had to go without being baptized, and the government would make note in the books that it was not normal, and for the rest of its days it was labelled. For sure, this wasn't right. I think that the Church and most of the old men were too strict with the womenfolk.
>
> Midwife, born 1889)

Migrant Labour

For a Stephenville girl who managed to get away from the distressing situation described above by taking wage work in Corner Brook

after 1924 and until the Depression, new contradictions had to be faced. Married women were not known to 'go out to work'. A migrant girl in the paper town, unless she had an older sister there (quite unlikely since most families were lucky to do without even one daughter's labour and could hardly pay the expensive train ticket for two) had to make it alone. Without the support system of mother, female kin, and the local midwife, she was in a similar situation as a single woman marrying into her husband's family, that is, amidst strangers and usually put down because she was from Stephenville. Added to this predicament, she had to face the extra burden of living and labouring in a middle class household. For at least marriage gave her a chance to achieve social status and dignity as a respectable mother. But as a migrant girl in a foreign town without an education and kin support, a girl took what was available for her kind: most often private service, at two to four dollars a month, hotel work or restaurant serving, work as bar maid or waitress and, if in destitution, prostitution. Women had only their domestic skills which they had acquired on their family farm while growing-up, skills that were vital to survival back home. But in the town their labour didn't bring in very much. It was the lowest paid of all work. While her brothers were getting on the average $2.50 a day for a cord of wood cut (though not taking home all this after one subtracts sixty cents a day for board, the alcohol, gambling, travel, and fifty cents a month for a doctor's fee), the sister who managed to escape her father's 'nest', received the same amount for an entire month. Basically she could not survive as an independent woman. Marriage was her only way out. She

essentially was torn between two worlds, both of which meant subordination and poverty, still rooted in a society constructed on class inequality and held in place by the old force of male authority. These girls, like their counterparts kept grounded back in Stephenville, had no birth control and usually no knowledge of even how they could get pregnant.

> Now, me, I had my first child when I was seventeen. I wasn't married, you know. My little child, she only lived a month and two days. It was probably the best for both of us. But she was so sweet. Now I wanted to marry that fellow. I met him at the train station on my way to Corner Brook and took him home to meet father after I found out the news of my expecting. I was scared to death, 'cause he was a black Protestant. Father went wild. Said he was going to kill him and after he took off, I got the strap for my sin. It was a mortal sin, my dear, the blackest one of all. There was no going back to the paper town to act as a maid again. Even after the little girl died of measles, he kept me back saying I was going to come to no good.
>
> (Single mother, born 1916)

For those women who married - about two-thirds of the female population before the Depression - further paradoxes had to be faced. Although they could at least put aside their childlike dependency on their fathers and also enjoy having children without social disgrace, the insensitivity of husbands and male kin was often astonishing. Nearly every married woman had grown up in a nearby community or in and around Corner Brook and was brought to her husband's home at marriage. In the eyes of the new family, and especially of the non-married sons, she was evaluated according to certain characteristics: the size of her breasts,the shape of her thighs, the color of her hair, her fairness, her shyness and ease at blushing at dirty jokes, and so

forth. For the older folk and the local priest, she measured up by her hard labour over the stove and in the fields, her promptness at serving her husband, and her brood of hardy children. If, for example, she was not pregnant within the first year of marriage, everyone thought she was really 'sick' or not pleasing her husband. And they would ask her, point blank, what was the matter with her. That a woman might, for example, not be getting proper diet necessary for full fertility was never considered. Her personal health was far less important a matter than having a son to pass the house and land on to, and a crowd more to help out at the fishing or go hunting with. That women were overburdened, with some even driving themselves to an early grave by repeated pregnancies, was supposedly not a man's concern. We must remember that in Stephenville during this period prior to the 1940's it was virtually impossible to get the service of a doctor.[15] One doctor, Adams, came periodically to look people over in case of an epidemic or if requested by the merchant's wife. The closest other doctor was in Corner Brook where the Company owned a hospital. But the distance was over seventy miles by train, the fare high, and, with no medicare, more money had to be paid to the medical staff there. Consequently, few women left home and usually put up with whatever the midwife could not find remedies for. Of course, the dependency of these rural women on male doctors would perhaps have been a mixed blessing, not least because it would have undermined the guidance and intimacy offered to them by village midwives, but the fact nevertheless remains that maternal and infant mortality was extremely high, especially with the onset of the Depression.[16]

> We usen't to bother with the company doctor. I could never get through the telegraph when there was real trouble brooding anyway. I first learned to doctor women by going about with my aunt who was widowed. You know, I saw a lot of sickness in my time and often only had my prayers as my guide. Yet, still and all, even though I didn't have fancy instruments for plucking babies from their mothers nor drugs for when women felt low, I sometimes think that my homemade remedies for things like yellow jaundice and measles was real good medicine. I would go and get some caraway seeds or some roots and steep them into a brew. For my mothers that were lying-in I would use yellow root as a drink to get rid of afterbirth. Sometimes I also used boiled juniper or senna tea. My only real law was to confine the mothers for ten days to the bed. Poor souls, it was their only true holiday, if you don't mind to call it that.
>
> (Midwife, born 1889)

This midwife told her new mothers of the few birth control methods she in turn had learned about from her aunt, but few of them were significantly successful. A few had even heard of the rhythm method, but found it nearly impossible to get their husbands to cooperate. Husbands wanted their wives pregnant and confined to the kitchen and gardens so they didn't have to worry about their wife deserting them while they were away at some migrant job. Besides this, the women were lacking the proper knowledge about their menstrual cycles. Abstention became their only real option. With husbands away in the lumberwoods, overseas during the Second World War, or off to Canada or the 'Boston States', women could avoid sex and thus pregnancy to some degree. It was hardly a warm setting for the idealized harmonious family life the bourgeois ideology of motherhood promoted. One woman explained why she felt no love for her husband:

> He was a stranger to me and the kids. He came home once a year, long enough to put me in trouble again and then was gone again. I had ten kids that way,all lumberjack babies. They never knew him as anyone but 'that man'. Now he just sits or mopes around the house getting under my feet until it's time for him to drink with the other men in the same boat.
>
> (Housewife, born 1901)

Marriage and family were different, yet intricately related institutions of sexual oppression. With few options to control pregnancy, while at the same time forced to deal with the strict moral attitudes of the Church and their dependency on the merchant, biological and generational reproduction of the labour force was almost always the burden of the women themselves. Most older women noted without hesitation that their husbands and sons had nothing to do with the housework during their pregnancies, nor after the children were born. My male informants assumed unanimously that domestic work, particularly the frequent child-bearing and rearing of offspring - in addition, of course, to the 'right' to be served upon - was women's work. In a rural society such as Stephenville during this period, the triangular relationship between sexuality, politics and women's dependency on men was nearly impossible for women to break out of as long as access to avenues of change - via wagework, reliable birth control, socialization of childcare and so on - were not within reach.

> I worked in the gardens, kept a few head of cattle, dried the fish when it came in ... I think if I had a dollar for every bun of bread I made in that old stove there I'd be a rich woman today.
>
> (Housewife, born 1911)

Women's Private Culture

The tensions generated by such life-situations must have been hard to bear at times. Yet, somehow, rural women did cope, many even regretting now the loss of some of the options they had before their community was urbanized. While this should not lead to a simple glorification of the 'good old days' of Newfoundland outport life (this has been already done excessively by folklorists and anthropologists)[17], it is nevertheless extremely important that we take note of the hidden culture among rural women which in many concrete ways gave them comfort in bearing their common burdens.

These women had a distinct way of looking at the world which was woven from working together with kin and female friends in their village. Motherhood, domestic work, farm chores and dependency on each other, helped them to form flexible, extended networks of social relations -- a means, to some extent, through which they were able to fight against the oppressive forces in their lives as labouring women. While most men saw the family as separate from the world of work, a sort of haven to which they came back from time to time, their wives, daughters, and other female relatives did not draw this distinction. Instead, women viewed the family and work as a continuous part of production, reproduction, and consumption, as a part of the household economy within which they exchanged things: goods, which they made after the kids were in bed; food products that they gathered in the summer months; and children when sickness or childbirth occurred. These women had their

spinning, matting, and weaving frolics. They would get together at each other's houses and spin a certain woman's yarn. Or they would perhaps all do a block or so on a quilt for a newly married woman. During evenings, sitting around in someone's kitchen away from the men and the kids for awhile, they had a chance to talk about their problems, to comfort each other, or to give advice to a young mother.

> At our matting bees we used to gripe about everything from the old priest to the bloody merchant. I remember things being said, like yarning about how the merchant would try and gyp the common people. Once I recall telling the women about him trying to get away with putting up the price on colored ribbon - five cents a yard just around the time our kids were making their First Communion. We all got so mad that time that we went to the store the next day and told him clean-clever off. Another time I recall my sister telling us all about her husband George. Whenever he took off his pants and hung them on the back of their bed, she used to say, he'd make her pregnant again. She was always poking fun at him. I can't say that I blamed her either, knowing well that he was half the time drunk and running around on her.
>
> (Widowed woman, born 1898)

As mentioned above, an important time at which labouring women from Stephenville supported one another was at childbirth. The local midwife was usually a widow woman who, without opportunity to get government or paid full-time work, found a means to support herself and her children by assisting in deliveries. One midwife known to everyone in the community as 'Auntie Elizabeth' had an old medical book she often resorted to to help find cures. Her girls would take over for her when she was on call. She had her own babies when her husband was alive and thus had first-hand experience with the pains and pleasures involved in childbirth. Her folk knowledge was always available, and

though she offically charged a fee of ten dollars for her services during the 'lying-in' period, often she was remumerated with a pound of wool or a piece of material. Farm products, such as butter, eggs or vegetables were also used instead of cash. And many midwives gave their time and nursing freely. They plucked teeth, mended broken limbs, nursed colds and so on. During the ten days or so that mothers were confined to bed at the birth of their children, midwives - perhaps with the aid of a helper and female relatives - also did the washing up and cleaning and took care of the other children.

From all this we can, I think, conclude that in both the productive and reproductive areas of these women's lives, the options were full of contradictions. Enjoyment as well as frustration characterized the many kinds of work expected of their sex. Little pleasures, like seeing the first plants break the soil in the early summer (even when one's back was aching) or being able to give their daughters a quilt made by their own hard work for her wedding,were concrete satisfactions. There was also the possibility of seeking out a neighbouring woman or a relative for a chat, to cuddle the children who floated in and out of everyone's houses, and the chance to talk to the older folks. We should note that many of these things were not options available to the merchant's wife, for example, nor were they there for the generation of Stephenville women who reached adulthood after 1940.

In the final section of this chapter, I attempt to briefly look at the situation of Stephenville women during the years between 1930 - the Great Depression - and 1941, when their village was taken over

by the American military for war operations. During this time one can perhaps speak of Stephenville women as a reserve army of reproductive labour, to be drawn on during economic crisis. The Newfoundland government and the Company at Corner Brook, severely cutting back their own share of responsibility for the reproduction of the labour force, left it up to Stephenville women back home on the farm to do the basic necessities vital to family subsistence and communtiy maintenance. Thus husbands and sons alike came home in 'droves' as the Dirty Thirties set in. For the women this demanded that the kettle always be on to boil, that fresh bread be always baked, and that five or more square meals be served up to the unemployed in the run of a day. Moreover, it demanded an awful lot of patience on the part of these women to do their housework and tend to their outdoor chores with in the words of one of them,'a bunch of helpless males under your feet.'

The Depression and the Burdens of Reproductive Work

Economic and Social Conditions

The Stephenville male population had always been known to expand and contract depending on the season of the year, on how far away the men had 'to follow the work' and, of course, on how often such wage labour was available. Throughout the period from around 1921 to the late 1920's both married and single men had increasingly given up salmon and herring fishing for a living and decided to be full-time

labourers. This was not always possible, for the woods operations, even when the nearby paper town of Corner Brook was booming, needed lumberjacks only during certain months. Nevertheless, whatever else the men did when not in the lumberwoods, they usually were not fishing. Many were still involved in hay making and cutting firewood during these 'slack' months. Others went moose hunting or snaring rabbits. Generally, though, the things they did do when not in the lumberwoods were understood to be odd jobs, secondary to their profession as lumberjacks.

Hence, considering the financial and psychological dependency of Stephenville males of this form of wage labour, one can just imagine their desperate state when woods work was curtailed after 1931. In the area where these men worked, cutting no less than 50,000 cords of wood in 1931, no cutting took place in the following year. Unable to find work, these Stephenville fellows were now deprived of all hope of earning a livelihood for themselves and their families.[18] Most had long since given up fishing and sold their gear and boats. No doubt they were not the only ones. With a large part of the rest of the men from Newfoundland depending on the fisheries, whose returns were far below normal due to economic crisis, it was impossible for most breadwinners to bring home any cash at all. Thus, Stephenville men were not alone in going to the welfare officer to get the 'dole', a mere six cents a day per person at this period. That was one dollar and eighty cents a month to buy staples from the merchant's store.[19] In urban places such as St. John's and Corner Brook, this was an impossibly low figure. In these areas, things got so bad, in fact, that as the Depression worsened, riots broke out and people were unwilling

to be sent home without food to feed their children. The government had been unable to even pay the interest on its loans. Added to all this was the problem of immigration. Significant numbers of Newfoundlanders were returning home, as were the lumberjacks, unable to pay board and find work outside their home communities. The rate of in-migration was so large throughout the 1930's that, despite the higher infant, maternal and general death rates of the population, the census figures for the years under discussion here showed an increase in population. [20]

When the Commission Government was finally set up in 1933, the problems stemming from poverty and unemployment were so acute in many areas of the Colony that the health of the people was undermined. Epidemics, especially tuberculosis,[21] measles, whooping cough and other contagious diseases were known throughout both city and outport. Stephenville was not spared either.

Yet, for reasons which I shall now discuss, the families from Stephenville were relatively better off than families elsewhere. Although they did not have a doctor to call up when a child was sick or some old person had come down with a bad case of pneumonia, the death rate in their village during the Depression was considerably lower than in St. John's or in any of the other urban areas at the time. Even the Welfare Officer noted the difference and outrightly refused to hand over the dole to many of the married and single men, because they apparently had enough 'food on their tables at home'. There was an element of truth in this statement. Though by no means a reason to withhold the meager handout, it was true, according to my female in-

formants, that things were not as bad in Stephenville as in the paper town.

> For one thing was sure, the people here were not ill-fed nor ill-clothed. I stayed on in the mill town until the Depression was hitting home. Then I came back home to help my mother out. The boys and men were back from the lumber camps twiddling their thumbs. Even big families came back on their mothers and womenfolk 'cause it was nearly impossible to avoid starving to death in the bigger places. At least here we could plant our food and gather enough berries for everybody. Then there were hens laying lovely eggs for breakfast and lots of milk from the cows. No, we didn't get through the hard times on salt fish alone. Mind you, we worked like dogs with all those fellows about and so many meals to serve up, but still we got the most of them over the worst of it.
>
> (Migrant woman, born 1916)

The Family Household and the Sexual Division of Labour

For Stephenville males during the Depression, social status via their traditional means of work, that is, work in the lumberwoods or in the fishery, was no longer obtainable. If they would at least have been able to continue to receive social assistence from the government as heads of households, perhaps things for them would have been a little less degrading. But apart from the farm to provide subsistance to a large e and apart from their women providing clothing and even selling some things (mitts and caps, underwear woven on the loom, eggs, strawberries, and so forth), they only had each other for moral support. Many of them made their own liquor. While previously Saturday nights or the slack season were the times men set aside for parties, as the Depression worsened and the chance of returning to work diminished, many males spent

their waking hours in each others' homes talking about the days in the lumberwoods with a nip of brew to tie them over. Around them the women worked just as hard, if not harder, than before the Depression set in. Even when a man had nothing else to do with his time, it was still socially unacceptable for him to help with 'women's work' -- that is, child rearing, domestic work, working at the loom or spinning wheel, garden labour, cooking and washing dishes and so forth.

> No, that fellow was like a little school boy when it came to doing things for himself. Even if he could have tended to his needs and left me to do my work it wouldn't have been as bad. But he was so helpless that I never once in all my days saw him get his own cup of tea and slice of bread. For God's sake, it might have given the whole bunch of them a way to forget their troubles for a while if they would have lifted a finger around the house and garden. But, no, he and the boys would sit there with a bunch more from around here and brag about how many cords of wood they could cut or about the biggest moose they shot and drink and drink and drink. If a woman spoke as much as a cross word to them she was liable to get a good crack back real quick. They couldn't hold their liquor at all, some of them. For a while I thought I wouldn't be able to stand it any longer, but I wouldn't leave my kids with a bunch of men. All my days I was nothing but an ordinary housewife and a slave. Every last one of us was in the same boat.
>
> (Rural housewife, born 1900)

What I am emphasizing here is that the Newfoundland family was not built on consensus between husbands and wives. The sexual division of labour, even before the 1930's, was structured in such a way that men came out on top. Women's reproductive burdens, from child bearing and the socializing of the kids to the domestic duties involved in the running of the household, were not family decisions. Men

lightly pushed aside these matters as 'women's concerns' while at the same time expecting gastronomic, sexual and emotional satisfaction when they felt the urge. Most marital situations then, were hardly what we might call equal parterships, but rather consisted of the subordination of one sex by the other. With more and more family members returning home due to lay-offs and economic hardships elsewhere, these Stephenville women had more than their share of troubles.

> The women weren't treated fair. We had them fellows spoiled rotten, if you ask me. We worked just as hard as any men in our lives: felting and tarring roofs, carrying pail after pail of water from Back-the-Pond, bringing home a sack of flour two miles on our back over muddy cow paths. We had strong frames and wrinkled hands, let me tell you, my dear. I worked as hard as any woman around here, no more. We liked our children and the fresh air. But still in all, I know that none of us were treated right. There was no real need for my mother to have worked herself into an early grave, poor soul. I think a lot of it stemmed from our priest, 'cause he would let the men get away with blue murder.
>
> (housewife, born 1899)

Again we might ask the question why these rural women continued to serve their men, especially at a time when the usual reason for tending on them was no longer the case. One would have thought that the contradiction between family ideology and the real sexual division of labour discussed above could no longer be used to keep women in subservient positions in their community.

There is some evidence that the traditional family was indeed in troubl during this period in Stephenville. For one thing, with no money to bring to the merchant at all, except perhaps the dole stamp, the little money women made from bartering homemade goods and fruits and vegeta-

bles was often a cause of conflict among family members. For men it was perhaps their only chance to get a few nails to repair a barn or start a new house and possibly an opportunity to get a plug of tobacco if some could be got. For women, on the other hand, it meant a little something special for the Sunday meal or for a treat for the youngsters. The husband couldn't rightfully say he had earned the money and should thus be allowed to do with it as he pleased and, moreover, tell his wife how things should be spent. A serious contradiction was threatening to break up the supposedly harmonious family. What, in my view, was happening in Stephenville at this point in time, was that divisions within families, due to poor male morale and continuing female oppression, at a time when everyone was poor, could have led to the undermining of the important ideological foundation of the family. Women could have stood up to the men. But neither the merchant nor the priest, both dependent to a large extent on the labouring families for their own personal gain, were willing to allow this to happen.

The Church as an Institution of Oppression

The priest in Stephenville had always been quite strict with women. For him, the female sex was the 'means of reproduction' as well as the source of family, Church and community maintenance. Thus when Pope Pius XII came forward on New Year's Eve of 1930 to issue an encyclical on the importance of Christian marriage and the sinfulness of female sexual relations outside of this institution, the priest more than ever before saw his duty as: 1. Insisting that wives and

daughters continue to serve their menfolk; 2. Women continue to raise their children; 3. Married women continue to keep the population rate up, especially since the death rate was on the rise and; 4. Single women stay labouring for their families and do their duty to the Church now that most outside supports (wages from males) had vanished. Certainly, there was an economic component in all this. The population and sexual policies of the Catholic Church were flexible and amazingly repressive. Yet they were limited to some extent as well.

In 1934 the population of Stephenville was at an all-time high of 1926 persons.[22] Moreover, all were Catholic. Thus, the priest did not have to worry so much about population decline as he had to worry about community and church upkeep. Heads of families had neither money to pay dues nor the annual church pews. Throughout these bleak years, the majority of the labouring families could often not earn enough to meet their own wants, let alone have any money for church collections or social functions. Furthermore, few men had the ready cash to pay the ten dollar fee for marriage, nor fathers the opportunity to give their daughter a proper wedding. Above all, neither single males nor females had much chance to meet other young people but had to stay close to home to survive. Considering this, the priest could not gain economically from a local marriage.

> There was no one in Stephenville for a girl to marry. You take it, before the War came, things were so bad that a girl couldn't get married unless she ended up marrying her first or second

> cousin. They were all really blood relations of the closest kind. Fathers used to bar their daughters home after dark, afraid they were going to mix their blood with a close kin. But what were we all to do? Everyone was a streak of relations right through the village. The fellows got away with a good time while the girls, if they got pregnant, were in for it. The priest refused to marry even third cousins. It was high time for something to happen.
>
> (Rural housewife, born 1913)

What eventually did happen is: First, with the onset of World War II and Britain's war need for 'husky Newfoundland lumberjacks to wield axes and saws for the Mother Country', both married and single men alike went overseas to cut timber in England. Back home in Stephenville, with a dwindling population and little chance of an economic boom (it was not until 1941 that Stephenville was designated by the Americans as a landing base for transatlantic flights), the priest began to permit close relative marriages. There were only two hundred and fifty persons remaining in the village after 1939.[23] Many were old and sick. Some young girls packed their bags and went to Corner Brook where the mill was gearing up again due to the war demand for paper. The women remember that the future looked awfully bleak at this point in time.

> On the last the priest had to give in. Many of the fathers had gone overseas or back to the woods. Some of the fellows had been having babies left and right outside of marriage anyway. They wanted a little bit of security while overseas, someone back home waiting for them. The priest gave in some and married a few in that case. Some of them, no sooner had they got married, but they were gone to work in England. Back here in Stephenville there was a real tangle about who belonged to who. It was an awful mixup. Yes, I say it was time for something to happen when the Americans came. Not that they were much better, mind you. The women ended up with the dirty end of the stick all the same.
>
> (Rural housewife, born 1899)

The main argument of this chapter is that the domestic labour of rural Stephenville women was vital to the maintenance and reproduction of the extended family. 'Women's work', plus the wage labour of males was necessary for the society to reproduce itself. Yet, contrary to what most theorists generally assume about the relations between the sexes prior to industrial and urban development, I have attempted to show here that women not only did more than fifty per cent during certain times, but that they never had a break from it all, that even after the day's labour, they had to turn around and tend on the men and care for the children. In the following chapter I shall examine the ways Stephenville families changed in response to unexpected external forces. As a result of the American and British war needs, women's domestic labour underwent significant change. Further developments occurred with Confederation in 1949 and the emergence of the Welfare State. As we shall now see, though women's productive role narrowed -- with consumer goods replacing much that Stephenville women formerly did by hand -- the central labour, that is, the production of the labour force itself, remained unchanged.

Chapter Four: Women in Stephenville, 1941 - 1980

The Changing Setting

In 1941 the United States government selected the area around 'Back-the-Pond' as the site for an airforce base. The Americans needed Stephenville to serve as a stopover and refueling point for trans-Atlantic flights, since it was ideally located between the United States and Europe, and also because the area was virtually free of fog year-round.[1]

When this relatively huge project was initiated,many of the men from the village had already once again found migrant jobs, after the years of unemployment throughout the 1930's. Some had signed up as lumberjacks overseas. Others had gone back to the Newfoundland lumberwoods. Even a few single women from the village had migrated: to Corner Brook, to work in service, now that the paper town was again providing employment after the slow years of the Depression.

Married women, however, continued, as it had always been the case, to stay home on the farm with the older folks and the children. Many of the single girls were left behind as well to keep things going while the men were away "following the work". Isolation from the outside world thus remained an essential characteristic of their existence, and most women took for granted that, once again, members of their sex did not go 'out to work'. Their station in life was to work but not to bring in a wage or have money of their own. All their labour consequently centered around the household, the children and the men.

The announcement of the American's arrival took these women and their families completely by surprise:

> I figured, things were going to go back to normal again after the Depression. But they came here and forced us out, just like that. The first time we heard anything about the 'change' was one day when this government fellow came to the house. The whole crowd of us had been out picking berries on the bog all day and when we came home he was there, knocking like mad on the door. You should have seen him, my dear. All slicked-up like he was going to a garden party or something. All the rest, except for Pop, were away at the wood. He asked to speak to the man of the house, so we knew straight off that something serious had come. He told us that, just like that, we were supposed to pack up and move. Pop was some mad; fit to be tied, he was. It wasn't that we didn't have lots of problems already with the kids and trying to make ends meet. Pop argued with him till he was blue in the face, but what could we do? The government was always deaf when it came to poor people saying how they felt. Looking back on it now, what I say is that if they had made things any better it would have been fine. But I can't say me or my family got a lot out of it.
>
> (Housewife, born 1910)

Almost overnight the people of the village lost their farms, property, and rural way of life. Most families had for three generations been living off the land and from the sea, with the men occasionally working in the woods and bringing in a wage. Stephenville women had performed the necessary labour involved in reproducing the labour force on a daily and generational basis for over eighty years. Now, with the War and the coming of the Americans, things were about to change in ways that were completely foreign to their usual way of looking at the world. As the women point out themselves, the resulting changes in their lives were a mixed blessing.

> They took everything in two lots. It was some sad, my dear. I used to live in the most beautiful spot behind the pond. There used to be this lake with lovely sea trout and just right for swimming on hot days. There was something about the fresh air and homegrown stuff that was really good for the bones. Anyway, after the Base came and we had to push off, it wasn't the same anymore. We still worked like horses in the house and had just as many kids, if not more than our mothers. But there was no time to go at the spinning wheel or get a crowd of women over to card your wool. They bulldozed most of the houses, 'cause we didn't even know where we wanted them moved. God only knows how much got left by the wayside. The last family was the Gabreils'. The old man put up some stink, but they uplifted him all the same. He died right away after that, leaving his woman with a whole brood. Ten I think there was of them. I can tell you this much, the government didn't do anything to help out that poor widow -- just turned the other cheek. The poor soul found a place near the church after that. She lived her days on ten dollars every few months 'till her oldest girl got big enough to stay home so that she could go housekeeping for the Americans.
>
> (Housewife, born 1904)

Most of the others from Back-the-Pond resettled themselves in much the same way as this widow, packing their belongings, children and their memories and finding a piece of land (perhaps near the Church or School) and starting all over again. The other areas of Stephenville also underwent considerable change, not the least because of the influx of hundreds of labourers, American servicemen, and single women from all over the Colony to serve in the mess halls.

The New Economic Base: Phase One

When the 'Yanks' came to Stephenville, they promised to stay there for "at least 99 years". The land they occupied was leased from the Mother Country, then under Prime Minister Churchill, "freely and without

considerations", that is, free from all rent, taxes, and so forth, other than compensation for confiscated property.[2] This agreement between the governments was quite in keeping with the usual way land and resource rights had always been granted by the British and Newfoundland states to industrial enterprises. So the Newfoundland Commission of Government was more than pleased with this general turn of events, no doubt thinking about the large number of construction jobs. Perhaps it also had in mind the 'multiplier effect', that is, all those anticipated secondary jobs resulting from direct employment on the new Base. Whatever its underlying motives, the project was seen by the government as the most important development to ever come to Newfoundland.[3]

The older Stephenville women remember that their fathers and husbands received around a thousand dollars or so for their entire farms and their various buildings. "A pretty raw deal", as one woman put it. The women, because they did not own property or buildings, got nothing at all out of the sale. They were merely told by government and husbands to get ready for the move, "because the Americans want all civilians on the other side of the river". This the women did and in less than a year their homes were transformed into a construction site where two large mess halls, a PX, warehouses, shops, barracks, office facilities, and eventually the naval-air station were constructed. A guarded bridge, locally known as the 'Booth', was set up over the small river that henceforth separated the Base from the settler families. On the Base itself, living quarters consisted of three barracks for the American servicemen, and three others for the Newfoundland males who had

migrated to the area for construction work. For each group of barracks there was a separate mess hall. The Newfoundland men were then kept quite separate from the Americans after the work shift was over, supposedly because the native males had 'different' customs and habits that were difficult for the average American worker to take. The Commission of Government even allowed the American government consistently to pay the Newfoundland labourer far less than his American counterpart; the native males were presumably not used to large amounts of cash.[4] Therefore, a minimum rate of forty cents an hour for a labourer was seen as 'real good money'. To be sure, this indeed was more than most Newfoundlanders had ever earned in their lives, but it nevertheless constituted a clear case of discrimination. Gradually the Newfoundland Federation of Labour became vocal over this issue of wage parity.[5] The men formed unions and fought for benefits such as pensions, higher wages, better working conditions, and so forth. Though still having a lot to learn from the typical unionized working class male in Canada,[6] the local men were getting organized, learning trades, and becoming aware of class inequalities. Thus, by the time the construction phase was over, many of the Stephenville men (who had previously left the lumberwoods for wage work on the Base) had developed a new level of consciousness. Though they still had to follow the work from construction site to construction site, at least they now had unions and were thus in a better bargaining position all-round. Migrant labour they had always been used to, but 'labour rights' were something a lumberjack had known nothing about before the War.

Who fed all these proletarian Newfoundland males, washed their

clothing, made their bunkbeds every morning and swept up after them? Who took care of their American counterparts in the other three barracks where "special" treatment was required? The bedding was changed every few days and not merely once a month; the floor was polished and shined and not just swept clear of the grime dragged in by muddy boots; and the meals were laid out 'just so', in order that the American GIs would feel 'real comfortable'. And, finally, who took care of the day labourer who went home across the bridge every evening after the eight hour shift, expecting to find fresh bread, a hardy meal, and a place to put up his tired feet?

Wage Labour and Domestic Labour: Continuity or Change?

As discussed in detail in chapter three, wage labour had never been a realistic alternative for Stephenville women. In general, this was true for most Newfoundland women up to World War II. In all the small outports which dotted the coastline north and south of Stephenville, labouring women had been restricted in much the same way, expected to labour in the gardens, rear the children and tend to the various needs of the men, and often tending to the fish as well. When the call for single women to work in the mess halls was issued throughout the village and surrounding areas, this seemed like a once-in-a lifetime opportunity to most young women. For one thing, the wages they were offering a girl -- about eight dollars a week -- had previously

been unheard of. Even domestic work (when it was available) was in no way comparable with this new job opportunity. For domestic service had never paid more than four to six dollars a month. Moreover, working privately in service to some Corner Brook woman carried with it the added disadvantage that a girl was forced to live with her employer and, hence, had no control over her workday. Nor did she have any voice in determining the range of her duties. Now things were different to some extent. For example, the work week was defined -- Monday to Saturday, with every second weekend free. Also, work hours were known to a girl before she began a job. Finally, living accomodations were better to some extent, now that all the mess halls' workers (except for the local village girls) were together under one roof. Of course, the Matron of the dormitory was pretty strict and hard to take at times, but considering the other option of domestic work, the mess hall job definitely had many advantages.

The job market for single women, and even married women who could somehow arrange <u>private</u> daycare, was relatively good during the war years. The Stephenville women remember that the Americans were, in fact, crying out for women to take waitress work and cleaning jobs. Yet, as I shal to show later, the rather complex status of these women in the labour force (both from Stephenville itself and from surrounding outports) cannot be analysed by merely counting how many single and married women found work. It is important to realize here that the labour market was still rigidly segregated along sex lines: Women were never promoted, rarely received pay increases, or were given an opportunity to

learn trades, to unionize, and so forth. As already noted,through the Newfoundland Federation of Labour the average Newfoundland male working as a labourer on the Base during this period was able to avail of many of these options. Moreover, women's wages were still far below those of their male relatives. Under the dual conditions of low wages and restrictive living conditions under the control of matrons, it was virtually impossible for these women to survive financially outside of marriage. This becomes particularly clear when we realize the added problems labouring women had to contend with, such as sexual harassment, rape, lack of effective birth control and safe abortion, and a loss of many of their former female supports as well. In their own way the women remember these contradictions.

> They came from all over this part of the coast. Women from the Northern Peninsula even came down here looking for a chance to earn a buck more than working domestic in the paper town. Some worked like myself for a while, in the mess hall serving the GIs and Newfoundland boys. Some other nnn-married girls went to work as barmaids in the NCO Club or the tavern. Some more ended up minding and keeping house for the bigshot Americans, like the officers and majors. They had their families brought all the way from the States. And the best looking girls got special pay for working in the offices, bookkeeping and typing. As you might guess, we never even knew what a typewriter looked like before the War, so there was no worrying, the best jobs were not for us. The real truth of the matter was that most of the Newfoundland girls from around here, not being able to afford fancy clothes and make-up and that stuff, and with strong Catholic upbringings besides, were never able to get a hell of a lot more than work at domestic chores. When all you ever did in your everyday life was have kids and look out to them and do your garden and housework, then it's not surprising that everybody figured that's all you were made for.
>
> (Mess hall worker, born 1916)

Despite the relatively higher wages and the formal freedom, after many of the rural women from the village and surrounding communities had escaped from the restrictions of their father's houses, the new economic opportunities which became available during the early 1940's were not exactly 'revolutionary'. In fact one might argue that these women served as a reserve army of labour, drawn on during the war years when many males were overseas, and the American government as well as the Mother Country needed military bases and women to serve the men who built and maintained these bases.

Single women working on the Base experienced sex-segregation on the job market and a lack of opportunity to live independently. For married Stephenville women whose children were in school, or who went to work during the night as cleaning ladies or laundresses, for example, the general outcome was the double shift . The gap between women's work in the home (increasingly seen as women's 'private sphere') and the wider public world of wage labour in rural Stephenville, at least since 1900, had become increasingly rigid. But now women, and in particular married women, became to an even greater degree economically dependent on males,while at the same time being forced to make ends meet by taking part-time or piece work for very low wages and under extremely poor conditions.[7] This was generally the case for most widowed and separated women, and both groups of women were becoming larger.[8] The other side of this relegation of women to the private domain of housework and childcare was that these activities became idealized as the primary occupations of married women. In rural Stephenville most women had considered themselves, in addition to mothers and wives,

also as weavers and spinners, gardeners and berry pickers, midwives and medicine women, and so forth. Now,however, they increasingly saw themselves as "just housewives". Mothers, whether actually married or not, and whether doing paid labour or not, had to bear the brunt of childcaring and housework within isolated households. It was not mere coincidence, then, that domestic labour in the home no longer was accorded the recognition of real work. Relatively few women in the village had the necessary land, tools, family network, and time away from children and work inside the house to perform the important productive activities they had formerly taken for granted. In addition, many of their domestic skills (which had been fundamental to the survival of the extended family in rural Stephenville) diminished in importance as cheaper consumer goods became more readily available.

> Perhaps the worst time for me was when the Base was in full swing during the War. When I was sixteen I left home at the Cape and went to Spruce Brook to work for my uncle. I was after getting pregnant and the old man said he couldn't afford to keep me any longer. I stayed on there for five years, never so much as getting a bloody cent for my work. Then I heard tell of the Base in Stephenville and so I packed it all in and went to work in the Mess Hall. I never had seen so many fellows in all my born days. You should have seen some of the other girls. Poor things, so young and still wet behind the ears. They didn't know fellows lied so much, telling them that they was going to marry them and take them back to the States, or some place or other in Newfoundland, if they was native fellows. Being Catholic, and the priest outrightly refusing to marry you to an American or a Protestant, didn't help much either. How many of them went home to their mothers with a little one on the way! God only knows how many of them got led astray. Me, I met a half decent fellow from Stephenville who was first a lumberjack and then went on construction. Once you started having your family, there was no hear tell of a married woman with young babies going out to work fulltime.
>
> (Mess Hall worker, born 1916)

Stephenville women had never expected a lot of help from husbands or other male kin when their society was rural. But at least they had the option to seek out support and a helping hand from female relatives in the same situation as themselves. Now, with single women drawn into the labour force and their female kin scattered about after resettlement in 1941, their daily labour as wives and mothers became more monotonous and far more isolating.

> It was a mother's job to look after the babies and keep the food on the table, there's no getting around that. And you had to pretty well do it all on your own, 'cause your relatives were so far away and you couldn't get a serving girl, no matter how hard you tried. Can you believe it, my dear, but I had all my children, the ten of them, home, here in this very house without a woman apart from the midwife, to help me out? Everyone in the family was on some kind of schedule: my husband started at seven in the morning; the youngsters in school had to be sent off by nine; and then the younger ones and the new baby would start in. The Lord must have been guiding me somehow. And those Americans, from what I heard tell, were a hard lot. They only were interested in using the people for workers, and the women for a good time and then they wouldn't look at you after. They were all the time 'buttering up' the girls with cheap cigarettes and alcohol. There was lots of chances to be mothers but not a hell of a lot of men around interested in marrying a local girl. Mind you, being a married woman had its trials as well.
>
> (Housewife, born 1916)

In retrospect, then, for perhaps the first time in their lives, some of the Stephenville women and their counterparts in surrounding outport communities had a chance to earn a wage. This paid labour was generally a mere extension of their daily labour within the household but a little money was,nevertheless, better than no money at all. Still it is rather obvious that this new opportunity for wage work did not come about because of a sudden social awareness of women's former inequal

status on the market. Instead, jobs were created for women because cheap labour was needed during the War for the menial tasks involved in maintaining a transient group of single men. And because women's wages were so low in comparison to that of men, Stephenville women had hardly any ways to avoid dependency in marriage.

Sexuality and Marriage

The American presence did little to change the age-old matrix of practices linking marriage, the family, sexuality and procreation. Most marriage arrangements in rural Stephenville had never been what one might call love partnerships. As I have argued in chapter three, the village women married because they wanted to escape their dependency on male kin, and the only option open to them was marriage. The notion of 'romantic love', then, was all but unheard of. So was the understanding that sexuality could somehow be disassociated from motherhood.

When the Base was built during the War, however, the practices of the good Catholic girls who found work at the mess halls and clubs, were gradually seen as 'corny' and 'old-fashioned'. The age-old ideology of female virginity and asexual motherhood was now called into question. Instead of going to Church every Sunday and every other evening for Prayers, male workers promised girls a good time "with no strings attached".

At this point in time both the American and Newfoundland men living in their separate barracks were transient workers. The last thing on

their minds was to establish stable family households. But they were lonely, and probably sick to death of working, eating and sleeping in the same living quarters as other men just like themselves. After their shift was over and the evening meal eaten, there was little else to do but gamble, drink, and try to find a female companion. This peripheral workforce, divided along ethnic lines, competed for the local women, but refused to deal with the consequences of their actions. One female informant put it like this:

> The civilian fellows weren't a hell of a lot better than the GIs when it came down to it, my dear. What we had was the Yanks pulling on one arm and the local fellows pulling on the other, fighting hand and fist over who owned the local women. They weren't so keen to fight over the hundreds of little ones that came out of it all.
>
> (Housewife, born 1925)

As this quotation reveals, the seamy side of the greater freedom of choice for men was the emergence of new social and sexual problems for women. Although rural Stephenville women had known illegitimacy, desertion and spinsterhood, we must remember that the women unable to enter into a suitable marriage at least had some protection within their families and community. However, after WWII, single motherhood, it can be argued, became institutionalized. The American government certainly did not want its servicemen marrying local girls and settling down in Newfoundland. Moreover, many of the American workers were already married back home in the United States. But somehow the men had to be entertained. Cheap cigarettes and liquor were partly the answer. The chance for the average guy to have a woman for a night or the length of his stay in the Colony was another way of satisfying the men.

Thus, condoms were handed out and the men were instructed to "watch out for themselves". The civilian workers, as well, were often given this method of birth control so that they could satisfy sexual needs without worrying about consequences.

The Census of 1945 shows that the illegitimacy rate, nevertheless, jumped from a little over 27 percent at the end of the Depression to a high of 53 percent during the War. And while the marriage rate increased in many parts of the Island during this period, in the Stephenville area it was not much higher than in previous years and throughout the 1930's.[9] What happened was that the feminization of poverty was, in fact, becoming accepted as the normal state of affairs. Many of the local people were quite upset with what was happening to their female relatives and to the other migrant women who had come in search of work. As yet there were no welfare payments for single women, except for the meager ten dollars every two months allotted to widows with no other support. The situation of these single women with illegitimate children, often unable to point to the child's father, was an extremely complicated one -- for fathers of the single mothers, for the local priest, and for the Newfoundland and American governments as well.

Yet no consideration was given to the idea that some single mothers might want to go back to work; might want to remain sexually active but not mother again; and might not want to be dependents of men or the State. Thus, rights such as daycare, effective birth control and abortion, as well as equal pay for equal work, were not even side issues at this point. With the War coming to a close, with veterans returning

home looking for work, and with the employment-generating construction phase at the Base over, reproductive freedom for women would have been disastrous. Instead, the American government between WWII and Confederation in 1949 allotted special welfare benefits to those mothers who "got taken for a ride", as one woman described it. Most girls who ended up pregnant were, in fact, pressured to return home to their outport communities or, as in the case of Stephenville single mothers, to live in with their families. Few women were needed in the mess halls after 1945, so even if those women who did have a chance to have their children looked after, were not able to find full-time work. Some found temporary work as baby-sitters and come-by-day servants. Generally, though, both single and married women were once again no longer needed as cheap labourers. It was much easier for the state to provide these women with some minimum welfare benefits, for example a 'Baby Bonus' or a 'Mother's Allowance', than to provide jobs, day-care, and to satisfy other needs of specific importance to labouring women's lives.

Growth and Development: Phase Two

In 1949, Joey Smallwood led Newfoundland into Confederation with Canada, basing his political campaign on two interrelated issues: full employment (for males) and the Baby Bonus (for mothers). It was somehow assumed that if both could be realized, Newfoundlanders would henceforth live in one of the most advanced societies in the Western world.[10]

A year later, the American government decided that, in contrast to the other bases it had established during the war, the Harmon Airforce Base at Stephenville would be developed and used as a tanker center for aerial refuelling. It was therefore assumed that the expansion of the existing facilities on the Base and in the village itself meant that the Americans were going to 'stay for good this time'. Hence the need for two groups of wage labourers: a stratum of temporary construction workers, similar to the group of Newfoundlanders hired during the War and a more regularly employed stratum. This two-tier system necessitated once again that women be hired to service the construction workers and, furthermore, that permanent workers be able to marry, settle down in Stephenville, build houses, and feel part of a family and community after their day's work. Thus the need for housewives and mothers to maintain husbands and sons commuting to the Base to earn a wage.

According to the older Stephenville women, within a few years it was impossible to recognize the place. All signs of rural life were completely erased, replaced on the Base by rows of duplex family units to house the Americans, and in the village by cheaper apartment buildings constructed by local merchants. Stephenville became the fastest growing town on the Island. By 1960 it had a population of nearly 12,000. The Catholic Church had done well, with a large school, recreational facilities, a new church, and various organizations -- the Legion, Knights of Columbus, St. Anne's Guild, and so forth -- to spread the Catholic message. Other denominations also became established.

An Anglican Church was constructed and a public school built to educate the 'non-Catholic' children. On the Base a well-equipped private hospital for the American families was constructed during the 1950's, while a small cottage hospital was built in the area for the civilians. Private clubs, banquet halls and other middle class amenities were set up on the Harmon Complex, while in the service town public taverns, beer halls, pool rooms and dancing clubs eventually sprang up. Shops and banks were opened. And, finally, in more and more houses electricity was installed, as well as a modern water and drainage system (and various taxes, of course, levied in order to maintain these advantages of town living).

The Working Class Housewife

Other expectations of the local people, however, remained unrealized. Most importantly perhaps was that of the permanent jobs, since most had gone to male workers from elsewhere who had settled in Stephenville with their families during the 1950's. Hence, local males who had worked briefly and sporadically on the Base and at construction work in their community, once again had to 'follow the movement of capital' -- to mainland Canada, to Labrador or wherever else they could find migrant labour. Moreover, the mess halls were now closed and the few service jobs in the town were taken up by the better skilled women and men from outside the province.

> My husband tried his hand at it all. He worked in the lumber-woods, tried fishing lobsters, and learned a trade on the Base. But he never had much of a chance to stay around. He worked with the Americans for a few years but permanent jobs were as scarce as hen's teeth for local fellows. Our bungalow was a good three miles away from any relatives. I was alone with the kids three parts of the time. The only time I really saw other people was when I went to Church or grocery shopping. Some days I recall not going outside the door except to hang the clothes or put out the garbage. I'd be up by six or so in the morning to warm the baby's bottle. Then I'd get the youngsters up for school. I had seven in there all at once. If I had a dollar for every bun of bread I made in my time, I'd be well off to-day. I went through a hundred pound bag of flour every week, and that's not one word of a lie. Sometimes I had to use the whole Baby Bonus to buy the week's groceries and let the kids go to school with hand-me-downs. We had it rough enough.
>
> (Housewife, born 1911)

Women's domestic duties had indeed changed by 1960. Consumer goods, neatly packed on grocery store shelves and in the shopping centers had replaced the homegrown vegetables and fresh milk 'straight from the cow'. Expensive restaurants, take-outs, catering services, and so forth were available to deliver prepared food, fresh laundry, and housekeeping services on request. At the modern hospital on the Base middle class women had the option to take prenatal classes, and they were able to plan the size of their families. And to the 'respectable' businessmen, shop owners, and service personnel, many of the options mentioned here were also available. Association with the Americans gave them a status nearly equal to that of the clergyman, the priest or the officers. Unfortunately, for the isolated housewife,[11] for whom the control of her fertility was "sinful" and who was responsible for preventing her daughters "evil ways", the comforts of modern liv-

ing contributed to making her feel like an outsider even in her own community. While she no longer had a garden out back and a chance to get away from the house long enough to gather berries and driftwood for her stove, she still had her share of domestic labour, but now she was alone, or at most with her oldest daughter helping out after school in the evenings. There were, of course, no communal kitchens serving food to her youngsters, or daycare centers to give her a break from the kids, and restaurant, laundry, and similar services were out of her reach in any case. Instead, she bore a large family, went without monthly prenatal checkups, and served three meals a day. In-between, she performed the various other reproductive labours necessary to educate her children and gain the status of 'good' working class housewife.

Women as 'Wards of the State'

For single women -- widows and women deserted, separated or divorced -- it was nearly impossible to survive on the government social assistance. Some found work as part-time waitresses, housekeepers, and barmaids. Others supplemented their welfare payments with prostitution. For all of them it was a daily struggle to keep their homes operating, their children clothed and fed and, finally, to deal with the psychological consequences accompanying their battle for survival.

> My marriage was a complete and utter diaster. I had three little ones before he took off to Toronto. I shouldn't have married him, but I hadn't a sweet clue at the time. My husband was a born alcoholic, I'm convinced of it. His head was a little strange. When he lived here with me and the kids, you couldn't get him to change a diaper. He said it was "women's work". When he'd take to the bottle, he'd hit on the kids or myself -- whoever crossed his path. I guess he was half the time unemployed and bored out of his mind. After he left, we had to go on welfare for a while. I got about one hundred dollars for everything then: kids, apartment, food, heat. I never bought a stitch of clothes during those times. I later got a job as housekeeper when the kids were in school. God, I hated the woman who hired me. She was so brazen. She used to run her fingers, all painted up with polish on them, over the end tables to see if I got all the dust. She treated me like an 'old bag' because I had a family with no husband and no education. If it wasn't for lazy people like her, then women would not have to sell themselves. What I had to do wasn't much better, the way I look at it.
>
> (Separated mother; born 1925)

Most Stephenville widows, even when the town was 'booming', had to face similar financial problems as other women without men. If they received a widow's pension from the State, their family was expected to live on about half of what they had previously received when their husbands were alive and working. Most of them had been married to men from Stephenville and surrounding areas who had been periodically unemployed and, moreover, when working for a wage, never stayed with one employer long enough to have a pension. The widows themselves, whose role as 'housewives' had always been seen as their station in life, also rarely worked long enough on the Base to earn a pension from employment. Their education level was low and their job options few and sporadic.

> I was a war bride. I was left with seven to feed and clothe. I couldn't go out to work until the Base was swinging, for the simple

> fact that women in my situation were not needed outside their homes. Besides, it would have cost me more than I could have made to pay a serving girl. In 1960 I became a "working woman". Before that I got a welfare cheque that allowed me to put a can or two of soup on the supper table. Not much more. I was all alone with a bunch of half-starving kids. As soon as my oldest turned sixteen, the government cut away half of my allowance. So I had to find something. I first started as a sort of cleaning woman on the Base. I had to make 34 beds every day, shine and polish the floors, clean the blinds, and what have you. I used to get $68 every two weeks for my work with the Americans. It was like gold when you used to be living off nothing. Then I'd come home and do my own work.
>
> (Widow, born 1916)

By mid-1960, Stephenville's role as a 'cash center' had declined in importance. As a result, the Americans and the middle class professionals, who had resettled there throughout the 1950's and early 1960's, moved away. The United States military requirements had changed. The manned bomber was about to be phased out and, hence, the Base was no longer necessary to the U.S. military. Consequently, in late December of 1966, the Harmon Air Base was closed and offically turned over to the provincial and federal governments. The population dropped to less than half of what it had been during the boom years. Those who rode the crest of the wave moved on to other places like Stephenville where there was still money to be made. Forty percent of the population which remained was of school age. The basic resources of the town -- the sea, land and surrounding forests -- had long been exploited by outside companies. Only 5 percent of the men still fished. Only 2 percent engaged in lumbering. Those who had been involved in maintenance and service at the Base now were grouped with the others (including women) who were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 43

percent in 1966.[12] For females the rate was almost 100 percent. As a result, nearly half the families were forced to go on relief. And, perhaps ironically, the main occupation of those still employed was that of social worker, the evasive State representative delegated to assist the people living near the poverty line.

The Americans had come and gone. They had left their vacated buildings on the Base. Shops and schools were now empty, and there were many single mothers trying to bring up children without help from either fathers or the American state. Other women returned a year or so later, after realizing that the GI they had married in Stephenville had another family back in the U.S. Some returned for other reasons -- poverty, abuse, loneliness, isolation. Stephenville was now both a haven and a trap for poor women: stranded with children, having little schooling, many were living alone in small apartments where the Welfare Department kept a close eye on them. Stephenville was more than ever a man's town. The rule against cohabitation was strictly enforced.[13] Hence nobody was allowed to live co-operatively with a friend, relative, or person in the same situation as themselves, no matter what their sex or job status. If a woman lived with her parents or if she boarded, she received a hundred dollars at most for herself and a child to pay rent, food, clothing, school books, and so on. If a single mother managed to convince the social worker that she 'deserved' an apartment, she received a little more to cover heating expenses. But the money came with strings attached: once a son turned seventeen, she lost most of her benefits; if she accepted part-time or piece work she had to subtract all her earnings from her cheque; if she

had sick children or was unwell herself, the family just had to bear with it; and, finally, if any male -- relative, friend, lover -- stayed with her any length of time, support for her and her children was completely cut off.

> My first apartment the Welfare gave me and my three little ones cost me almost every cent they handed out. We were cramped into a one-bedroom place where you could almost see through the walls, no word of a lie. I worked at the Red Wood Lounge for a year after that. I had to punch ten to twelve days, all straight time. If I didn't, or complained to the Manpower Office, the buddy who employed me said he'd just fire me and hire some other girl in the same boat as I was. After this things got real bad around Stephenville. I didn't even have a chance to work part-time. It was a ghost town, if I've ever seen one. So we had to go back on the welfare. The most we suffered from was the bad food, and not enough of it. I couldn't think about fresh vegetables and anything but canned milk for the youngsters. And the poor little things, they had to play right out in the main road. The whole bunch of us were in the same boat: half the time pregnant, Welfare people spying on you, and kids everywhere you looked.
>
> (Welfare mother, born 1946)

All these women -- housewives, separated, widowed, and divorced women, and women never married -- still did not enter the category of wage-earner. They became, instead, social problems -- women 'left over' after the Americans pulled out of Stephenville -- and some eventually became a part of the social worker's case load ; others were hidden away in private households while fathers and husbands went to earn their keep. Poverty was their story, domestic labour their domain. Motherhood was still compulsory and remained women's major avenue to social status.

Industrial Growth in Stephenville: Phase Three

In 1967, the provincial government (still under the leadership of Smallwood), after its initial failures at small-scale industrial development and resettlement, decided to try a different economic development strategy. As already discussed in chapter two, the emphasis was to be on large-scale industrial development with state subsidization of outside capital. The other side of the industrial strategy was to centralize the population into service-growth centers where comprehensive facilities and consumer needs could be provided more cheaply and readily.[14]

One such growth center chosen was Stephenville. It was estimated by government economists that existing facilities -- vacated housing, shops, churches, schools and so forth -- could support a population of 25,000.[15] Labour-intensive industries which would hire male labourers, tradesmen and foremen were to be encouraged. An Adult Education Center was to be opened and each man given a chance to up-grade himself, learn a trade, and prepare himself for full employment in the town. The long-term plan was to make Stephenville the major growth center of the West Coast of the Island, a city with all the amenities that had been promised during the early 1960's but had then failed to materialize.

Social and Economic Development

Things first got under way in the latter part of 1967. Smallwood

came to the town and established the Harmon Corporation, henceforth a government body with the job of administering the 8,000 acres that had once been settler farms and, more recently, the American Air Base. The 400 buildings and household dwellings, as well as the well-equipped hospital, were to be kept up and used to attract new industries.

Within the next four years a number of companies did just that: they moved to the growth center, received their subsidization payments from the Smallwood government, and hired the local and resettled males who had recently up-graded themselves at the new Adult Center. Each in turn promised to be under production in short order. Here is a brief history of some of these industries:[16]

1. The Atlantic Brewing Company Ltd. arrived first, in late 1967. It employed forty-five males and a few secretaries for two years. The beer didn't go over very well with the locals. It closed down before the new decade began, with a deficit of $3 million;

2. A fishmeal reduction pilot plant, begun by International Fisheries and Fishmeal Ltd., was expected to revolutionize the fish meal market as well as the processes for manufacturing high protein food for the local people. Herring was to be its main fish used in the experiments. Males were hired with vocational training in handling fish. However, partly because of fish quotas and partly because of management problems, the pilot project never really got off the ground;

3. H.W. Parsons, a fairly well-off Newfoundlander, returned from Toronto in the late 1960's, and came to Stephenville to start the New-

foundland Iron Works. His company was the only supplier of steel on the Island, and had a payroll of nearly $80,000 annually. However, the number of men who eventually found jobs with this company was minimal. Less than a hundred men were hired on.

4. When, by 1970, diversification had become Smallwood's most important industrial development strategy, Atlantic Design Homes, a subsidary of a successful Corner Brook company (Lundrigan's Ltd.) was founded. The first pre-fabricated homes ever built on the Island were on stream within a short period. The homes, however, did not sell well. Some women claimed that the cold winter draft which blew in from the Bay came in through the baseboards. Whatever the real reasons, Lundrigan and Company soon pulled out as well;

5. Then Sea Mining Corporation Ltd. came into town. Operated by Frederick J. Gormley, it was supposed to be Canada's first sea water chemicals plant, and cost $3 million to install. Few local males were actually hired, since sufficiently educated manpower was apparently unavailable;

6. Finally,and most significantly, a $130 million Linerboard Mill was established,expecting to utilize the timber reserves of Labrador (those around Stephenville had long been exploited by the paper mill in Corner Brook). The company was Javelin Paper Corporation Ltd. whose president was John C. Doyle, a Newfoundland politician. Construction began early in 1971. Over five hundred males -- labourers, tradesmen, millwrights, and so on -- were hired on. Most were also promised a permanent job. Everyone was led to believe that the breadwinners

from Stephenville would never again be migrant workers. Canada Manpower became heavily involved in this massive project. On-the-job training programs were started. The Newfoundland government also assisted, guaranteeing a bank loan to Doyle of $53 million. According to a local newspaper, and in spite of all previous failures of industrial development, this time Stephenville was going to become "a Twentieth-century technological heaven". The project, once again, failed (but more on this will be said later).

The Social Consequences of Industrial Growth

Settling into Stephenville

The Centralization Scheme established under The Resettlement Act, 1965[17] was essentially a combined effort of the Federal and Newfoundland governments to: First, solve the high unemployment problem of the province; second, to take the people to where social services were (instead of opting for the more costly strategy of providing such services on the community level); and third, to provide a mass education program to prepare the Newfoundland people for work in an industrial society.

It was with these goals in mind that numerous west coast communities 'accepted'[18] the $1,000 which the government offered them (plus the $200 for each family member), packed up their belongings, and moved to Stephenville. In much the same way, former Stephenville inhabitants, who,after the Base closed,had migrated elsewhere to work,

came back in the early 1970's. Apart from workers and their families, the town also needed a group of educators, social workers, medical professionals and local politicans to carry out the tasks mentioned above. By 1971, the population had swelled to nearly 8,000.

However, the Government had not anticipated that resettled families would be so difficult to manage. For one thing, it did not manage to keep professionals in the town for longer than a year or two. The town council, as well, encountered serious difficulties: there was no overall town plan, and facilities such as schools, hospital beds, clinics, shops, entertainment facilities, and so forth, were inadequate or insufficient. The resettled families were large. Nearly half the population was, in 1972, school age. High schools were cramped and, at the same time, unable to compete with the Adult Education Center, which offered teenagers a quick avenue through high school, a chance for a trade, and eventually the hoped-for job. In regard to housing, the vacated apartments administered by the Harmon Corporation and the government were quickly filled. There was an average of 5.5 persons[19] in each household and increasingly more families had to live with relatives. Over half the people were forced to rent apartments, whereas in their former communities thay had almost always owned their own home and garden. This might not have been problematic if, in fact, the promised jobs had materialized but, instead, the unemployment rate had risen by 1973. Everyone was still waiting for the Linerboard Mill to open, since there had been labour strikes by construction workers demanding higher wages, better working conditions, vacation pay, and other fringe benefits. Further delays occurred resulting from mech-

anical or management problems, and from difficulties in securing a market for the linerboard products.

In attempting to deal with the housing shortage, yet at the same time keeping its own financial involvement at a minimum, the Government built row housing to accommodate the poor -- the large resettled outport families, single mothers and their children, and students at the Adult Center. Within a year or so a number of large apartment units, able to house as many as 118 families each, were constructed by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Ltd.

Strategically located in the town, the buildings soon became known as 'Welfare Apartments'. The children had no place to play and little else to entertain themselves with, so they hung around on the streets. Women had no gardens. Few people even knew their next door neighbour.

Wage Labour for Women

Finally, in 1974, the Labrador Linerboard Mill did open. During the same period, a new shopping mall was also opened. The Manpower Department hired the necessary male labour force to operate and maintain the new mill, while at the same time offering a handful of service jobs to women as cashiers and cleaners in the new mall. Women, it was assumed, could not do the work of tradesmen. Hence, they were expected to accept the disparity between their cashier's wage and that of the average electrician. Thus, while the tradesmen in the town

received between $10 to $15 per hour, had a union to protect them, had further fringe benefits such as pensions, vacation pay, sick leave and strike pay, the average working woman was lucky to receive the minimum wage, had no benefits, no maternity leave, no free daycare and no job security. In fact, on the average, the employment income of Stephenville women during this period was just half of that of a male wage earner.[20]

> I was sixteen when I left school. Everybody was quitting left and right. All you had to do was wait around a year and go upgrading. One year is all it took to receive this thing called GED (General Equivalency Diploma). I realize now that it was a sick way to get your grades. But it doesn't matter much because around here, no matter what you get, there's no jobs for women. When the mall opened, all kinds of women came crawling out of the woodwork, heading for the Manpower Office to get a job. A few got in, mostly part-time. The rest of us were left out in the cold, left to go on welfare.
>
> (Unemployed student, born 1952)

Apart from service employment, a few working class women were able to find domestic work -- as cleaning women, babysitters, housekeepers and laundresses. There were at this time a number of two-career families ; usually a husband who was employed in a managerial position at the mill or who was a professional (a doctor, teacher, social worker or bank manager) and a wife who perhaps was involved in Social Services or who was a nurse, a teacher or shop operator. In Stephenville, where public daycare was not even available for the middle class, pre-school children had to be taken care of privately and domestic help had to be secured. Such private domestic work is probably the most ardous form of paid work available to women: the worst paid, the hardest to

define, and one of the few remaining jobs for which no minimum wage must be paid. However, if Stephenville women were to survive at all, they had to take what they could get.

> The work was hard, hard enough, let me tell you. I worked as a housekeeper 'till 1977, six years in all. I never got a $100 from any of them: first there was a teacher couple with three tots;then, a doctor/nurse team with four; and just before I was laid off for good, I worked for a social worker whose husband had a big job at the mill. I did absolutely everything in the run of a day -- changing diapers, the meals, dishes, there was bread to bake, scrubbing to do. I was run ragged. I had three in high school, and no man. He was somewhere in Canada. We never hear from him. I know and you know that a father is supposed to help out even when the home breaks up. But the Welfare didn't try too hard to find the fellow I married. Now I can't find a job even if I paid someone to give me one.
>
> (Deserted mother, born 1945)

With the job market sex-segregated and often without even the option of a badly paying job, young and older women alike enrolled at the Adult Education Center for further education and perhaps to learn a trade as well. Many saw this as their only remaining opportunity to avoid life-long dependency on the State.

Stephenville Women and Adult Education

When the Adult Education Center first opened in the late 1960's, its main task was to bring the educational level of Stephenville males to a grade eleven standing. After this initial schooling, the men were expected to go on to learn a trade at the local trade school. If a student had been working during the previous year, he was permitted to

draw unemployment benefits. If not, the Government often paid enough money to maintain his family and himself while he attended school. In 1972 there were nearly three times as many males enrolled at the Center than women. The female students either paid their own expenses or had been working during the previous year. However, considering the discussion above concerning the depressed job market, very few women were in fact in the position to draw unemployment benefits. Furthermore, in light of the low wages women generally received, most women could not survive on unemployment benefits, even if they were in a position to claim them. Finally, there were no special benefits for single mothers.-

Apart from the problems mentioned here, the only trades open to Stephenville women were: Beauty Culture, secretarial courses, arts and crafts. (Apparently, only 3 percent of female graduates from these courses have ever found jobs after schooling..)[21]

Other social problems also resulted from women's attempts to upgrade themselves during this period. They had to deal with sexual harassment while attending classes. The rate of veneral disease was high. Doctors at the clinics and hospital were overworked and often unsympathetic to women's problems. Many students were not even aware that birth control and abortion were covered under the Canadian MCP Plan. Moreover, government organizations such as Planned Parenthood failed to reach them, perhaps in part because of the organization's strong emphasis on 'family planning' and, to a lesser extent, also on women's personal need to contracept. In the final analysis, a large

proportion of the women who did follow this route to educate themselves in the hope of supporting themselves independently were forced to bear children and often to rear them on their own.

> Most of the fellows who were at the Center to upgrade themselves had worked somewhere or other. They wanted to keep occupied while drawing their U.I.C. They saw the place as a slack way to draw their 'pogey' and not have to worry about being pestered by the government. I, for one, never had a chance to work in my life. I came from a broken home and when I went back to better myself, all they gave me was a measly ten dollars a week. Chicken feed. You couldn't study there if you tried. Always some guy picking at you, touching where he shouldn't, trying to coax you to sleep with him. The language was something shocking. Everybody assumed that as soon as you went to upgrading school, you were sleeping around with every Tom, Dick and Harry. It was a hard place.
>
> (Student, born 1950)

Economic Crisis

In July of 1977 the Labrador Linerboard Mill closed. With a sharp drop in market prices for the product and the high cost involved in shipping timber from Labrador, the mill apparently was unable to make any profit, and the government withdrew its tremendous subsidies. (It later became public knowledge that Doyle, the president of the company, never repaid the Newfoundland government the $53 million loan that Smallwood had issued in 1971.) The men who had expected permanent employment remained in town for a while, hoping that a new buyer would continue operating. When this did not occur, the tradesmen followed their usual route, and migrated to mainland Canada for work. Those who remained were given short-term employment on government projects

(previously discussed in chapter two).

For most of the Stephenville women, these two routes of employment were unavailable options. According to government strategy, in times of economic recession Stephenville women had to accept the fact that jobs for women would not be created. Hence, women were expected not to ask for equal job opportunities in any work schemes, nor to desert their children and migrate to other places and find work.[22]

The Conditions of Domestic Labour, 1979 - 1980

In 1979, when I first talked to women in Stephenville, some called it a "Welfare Town". Nearly half the families on government assistance were headed by single mothers living in the apartment blocks of lower-class housing built in the early 1970's. Some single mothers were as young as fourteen. Others were grandmothers. In addition, there were widows, divorced women and deserted women. Most of them still saw marriage as their only alternative, apart from welfare.[23]

There were also some labouring women in Stephenville who were both wives and mothers. Many could still remember what the place had been like before industrial growth and before the American presence. Other wives remembered their now deserted former community. Finally, some were young wives from other industrial towns on the Island. Whatever their origin, these married women had usually one thing in common: economic dependence on husbands. It was the husband who 'worked'. She

was expected to take care of the house and kids, and, moreover, to comfort him when he returned from his day of labour. If he was unemployed, a woman performed her usual domestic labour and, in addition, had to console her often depressed husband. Both groups of mothers -- married and single -- had their domestic labour in common. Their children (and, if married, their husbands as well) had to be tended upon. The labour force was thus maintained every day, in every generation.

In retrospect, then, we might say that the joys and burdens of mothering have changed little. Even today Stephenville women have limited choices and tend to depend on men or the State. Each new project initiated by the Department of Social Services has turned out to be just another form of relief. The women themselves see these projects as a way of dividing the poor and making them feel guilty for their impoverishment. One government project, for example, placed single mothers in a grocery chainstore in the Mall for training as cashiers. Ten women were hired for ten weeks. The company involved in the project received free labour, paid for by the government. The women received minimum wage. After the ten-week period was over (just long enough to draw short-term unemployment benefits at the lowest rate possible) the women were sent home. Daycare allowances were curtailed. Another similar project for single mothers employed chambermaids in the nursing home, again for a ten-week period. In this case not even daycare was subsidized. In fact, as some of the women involved in the project pointed out, they would have been better off economically had they not taken the short-

term job. A more recent Social Services pilot project was a twenty-week project (the lengthened time being the result, one might assume, of recent U.I.C. changes). Two single mothers were hired as "Financial Assistance Officers". Officially, their purpose for employment was to deal with local welfare recipients and their complaints: concerning inadequate housing, poor heating systems, a sick child, a pregnant daughter, an alcoholic husband spending the welfare cheque at a local beerhall, and so on. Formerly, this job had been performed by more highly paid social workers, but with cutbacks in Social Services, the government decided that, by giving a single mother a few dollars more than what she would get on welfare, the same job could be done -- much more cheaply, of course. Some other single women dependent on the State for subsistence see these projects in yet another light:

> It's a real good way to turn women against women and the poor on each other's backs. One of my friends here was hired on in the Welfare Office. She was their scapegoat and nothing else, forced to do their dirty work for next to nothing. All so that they won't get headaches from people complaining about their poverty. Well, the way I see it, and the way I tell it to my kids and anyone else who asks me, we got a damn good reason to complain to the government.
>
> (Welfare mother, born 1950)

Perhaps one of the most insidious projects is one which attempted to reinforce the cohabitation rule mentioned earlier in this chapter.

> The Welfare has just gone and hired two women like me to do their dirty work again, all for an extra $10 a month. They have to come into our shabby homes and spy on us. They are supposed to tell the women here that they are "Budget Planners". God Almighty! If

> all I needed was a budget planner, my worries would be long over. Tell me, how much planning can you honestly do on a few hundred dollars and three boys to look after? The whole thing is so damn stupid. Every last woman here knows very well that they come into our homes to see who's here . If there's a trace of a male around at all, my dear, you're in hot water with the Welfare. If they would look around a bit, they'd soon see that not very many fellows are going to give a woman in my situation anything in the way of money. Besides, half of them are as poor as rats themselves.
>
> (Divorced mother, born 1945)

Sexuality and Marriage in Stephenville Today

Unlike rural Stephenville women, contemporary Stephenville women have some control of their fertility. The Canadian Medicare Plan makes the "Pill", tubal ligations and hysterectomies options for working class women. The all-male medical team at Stephenville hospital rarely refuses to sterilize a mother after her third child. In fact, they encourage her to get the procedure done. Hysterectomies have a long history in Stephenville and are, along with tubal ligations, the usual option of women and 'suggested' by the two local surgeons.[24]

Some options available in the mid-1970's, however, have now been made less accessible. For example, the Planned Parenthood representative for the West Coast, who was located in Stephenville from 1974 to 1979, has lost her funding for 1980. Supposedly, the doctors at the hospital can meet all female needs in regard to family planning, birth control, sex education for children, and so forth. The schools in the area have also stepped in for the State and made "Family Planning" and "Marriage Counselling" an integral part of the school curriculum. A

further problem (debated among politicans, the priests and ministers, the town council and local doctors), concerns teenage sexuality and birth control. Therapeutic abortion, formerly an option in the general hospital in nearby Corner Brook, has been seen as an attack on the "Unborn", as well as causing "immorality" among non-married women. Pressure has been applied -- by Church, politicians, social workers, teachers, and voluntary organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, the Saint Anne's Guilds, the Legion, the Kingsmen and Rotary Clubs -- and, as a result, abortion is no longer available. (It would now cost a woman around three hundred dollars and two days in Montreal or Ottawa to get an abortion there).

The situation for labouring women in Stephenville today where, on the one hand they have few options for subsistence and social status outside of motherhood, and where, on the other, they are accused of "breaking up the family", nevertheless, has a positive side as well; discussion is taking place, focusing on issues previously hidden from public view: First, on the very notion of the male breadwinner as family provider ; second, on the relationship between sexuality and precreation; third, on the notion that the working class family is based on harmony and consensus ; fourth, on the Welfare State as morally concerned about the poor; fifth, on the common belief that certain institutions - for example, the Church, the medical profession, the educational system, the political system and the law-work to help the majority of people; and, finally, on the assumption that women and politics do not go together.

In my conversations with Stephenville women I have found that some of these assumptions mentioned here are being called into question. In their own personal lives, many of my informants have taken steps to break away from the common expectations assumed 'natural' by their community. They refuse to be battered any longer and sometimes file for separation or divorce. They now teach their own daughters the 'ropes' and discuss with them the hidden side of female sexuality which seldom gets exposure in the "Family Life Program" in their High School. Some married women, and women living in family arrangements outside of this institution, have succeeded in getting their men to take an equal part in child rearing and, moreover, to realize both the monotony and the pleasures of domestic labour.

Of course, many Stephenville women are still isolated and lonely, forced to mother in order to survive economically and psychologically. However, in my conversations with these women, I have found them to be quite critical of the State and its patriarchal structures. They are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that they are not the only community of women left out in the cold. Through various channels -- television, newspapers, their children, women's groups around the Island, and, perhaps most importantly, in each other's kitchens -- Stephenville women are figuring out who their allies are and how they can change their present situation. Most of them feel they have gained more than they have lost.

> Don't forget, my dear, that it wasn't so very long ago that a woman in Stephenville wouldn't be caught dead with a pair of

> long pants on in public. And, what's else, she wouldn't be allowed to step inside the Church door if she didn't have her head covered up. Before this, if you were married, no matter if your fellow beat you black and blue, you had to stay with him. It was your religious duty as a wife. Now you can at least get out of a family mess. More and more women are saying what's on their mind, letting it come to the surface more. And some men are listening. Just the other day I saw a young father with his baby in a carriage. It warmed me up inside. And my own fellow, who never lifted a finger around the house before this, has even taken to getting his own cup of tea. It's almost as good as a miracle. If he could change, I say that there's hope yet.
>
> (Housewife, born 1916)

Nevertheless, despite this optimistic note, the prospects look rather bleak. For these labouring women, though their lives have been drastically changed by urban and industrial development, their particular reproductive problems have not been solved in any significant way. For many people who thought the struggle for reproductive freedom in Newfoundland had been won in the 1970's, the everyday reality of labouring women in this case study stands in contradiction to this common assumption. The majority of Stephenville women today are still defined as childbearers and childrearers and not as autonomous human beings. It is difficult to focus attention on change in other areas of women's subordination until the struggle for reproductive self-determination -- for contraceptive rights, for child care, for natural childbirth, and against forced sterilization -- has been won for all women.

Conclusion

In the previous two chapters I have attempted to describe a detailed and specific situation of the interaction of childbearing and women's oppression and, in addition, the adverse effects of rapid urbanization and industrialization on labouring women's lives. In particular, I have focused on the changes in women's productive and reproductive activities both inside and outside the family. I have attempted to show that the specific type of capitalist development which has taken place in Stephenville after 1940 occurred, in part, through the increasing exploitation of working class women.[1] The lack of attention to this issue has historically involved an unquestioning acceptance of the patriarchal family.[2] I have come to the conclusion that the hardships and other consequences resulting from the increased employment of Stephenville women, particularly since they are accompanied by a continuing and nearly exclusive responsibility of most women for their families, directly challenges dependency theory when used to understand the conjunction of class and sexual relations in Newfoundland society. I was left with no reason to believe either that the Newfoundland indigenous elite or the working class males are indeed willing to give women equal opportunity within their families and in the economy. Moreover, the realities of the double shift of housework and wage labour, in addition to labouring women's ghettoization in the economy, demonstrates, I believe, the inadequate understanding of working class

women's lives, which is frequently characteristic of middle class feminists.

As a result of my work in this study, I not only developed my own feminist consciousness,[3] but also changed my understanding of women's oppression, both its nature and the feminist strategy necessary to change it. In particular, I have come to realize the fundamental necessity of women's reproductive self-determination as an initial step towards emancipation.

The reason I first became interested in the reproductive concerns of women in Newfoundland is both personal and political. In my year of course work in graduate school, amidst the growing debate over the abortion question, a very close female friend and fellow graduate student underwent an extremely degrading experience at the local hospital while seeking the termination of an unplanned pregnancy. The experience was so traumatic for her, in fact, that she did not finish her course work and eventually returned to her home community after she finally received an abortion. Because she did not have the money to fly to mainland Canada for a quick, safe termination at an abortion clinic, she, instead, had to go through a two-week debasing experience at the local general hospital in the capital city. She was seen as a woman-sex-object by the medical professionals on the therapeutic abortion committee who viewed her case, by the Right-to-Life followers who accused her of being a "child murderer", and even by our own male fellow students.

This personal instance of the problems of a woman without the

right to decide when and if she was to bear a child affected my understanding of women's oppression profoundly. I increasingly felt the urge, indeed the need, to research the problems of Newfoundland women, in particular to understand the reasons for the emergence of the politics of reproduction in the media, in the political arena, among religious groups, and among middle class feminists as well. With the help of my only female professor,[4] I initially set out to "study" the various groups involved in the debate over abortion rights. I read various textbooks on how best to carry out participant observation.[5] I faithfully attended meetings held by the Conservative Right, by politicians, and by the various women's groups organized around this question of reproductive rights. Notes were taken on what was said at each meeting. I followed the debate in the daily newspapers. I was careful not to become too emotionally involved in the discussion taking place, to remain on the side lines so as not to miss important obscure details.

In each group, whether it was the Right-to-Life lobby group or, on the other side, the middle class women's organizations,I was viewed with suspicion and utmost caution. I was honest when questioned who I was, stating that I was a feminist researcher from outside the capital city trying to better understand women's reproductive problems. I was especially disturbed by the reaction of the middle class feminists to my presence. They seemed rather shocked that a woman from the other side of the Island could really be a feminist. Moreover, the fact that I was from Stephenville, a community they all considered extremely backward (because of the problems of high unemployment and

the predominance of the Catholic Church in the area), was even more disturbing to them.

Gradually I found it more and more difficult to stay on the sidelines taking notes while important issues were under discussion. I began to become increasingly emotionally involved in what was being said at the women's meetings especially, since it was among these women that I had originally hoped to find sympathetic understanding of labouring women's specific problems and some worthwhile strategy by which to help them. I was given the cold shoulder time and time again when I tried to discuss economic exploitation as well as sexual oppression. Moreover, whenever I introduced the specific problems of rural and outport women in group discussions, I was told that these women could only be helped <u>after</u> the problems of St. John's women were dealt with.

I became increasingly critical of this form of feminism. In recalling my family experiences -- of my mother who bore eleven children in eleven years, of my female kin who never had the option to work for a wage, to control their fertility, to further their education, and to avoid serving on children and male relatives -- I came to the conclusion that I needed to reexamine my past, to rediscover my roots, both with my female and male kin, as well as the other people in Stephenville who I had left behind nearly a decade ago.

In retrospect, if I had chosen to do field research on women in another Newfoundland community and not my hometown, I would have perhaps written a more scientific and 'objective' piece of work. Never-

theless, I doubt if the study would have had the focus that this case study of Stephenville women has taken. Nor would I have had the opportunity to reexamine my own family politics, to renew relations with my female kin and, finally, to discuss (and argue about) patriarchy with my father. Therefore, the voluntary decision to research Stephenville women was a specific personal and political feminist project.

In my search for a feminist theory by which to understand the everyday problems of being a labouring woman in this Newfoundland community, I have found that dependency theorists and middle class feminists fail to really grasp what these women are up against. Certainly, neither theoretical approach offers a worthwhile solution to labouring women's reproductive problems. The fact remains that given the social setting which Stephenville women have faced from the beginning of the century until now, it is quite rational for them to cling to their role as mothers. Mothering remains, essentially, their most important claim to social status, since their double labour burdens give these women little opportunity for equal participation in work, social affairs, and in politics. This, of course, had been equally true for their mothers when Stephenville was still a rural community. However, urbanization and industrial development have had the consequence that the social status of motherhood has become increasingly devalued as many former productive activities for which women were once responsible have become socialized after 1940. The economic and social changes which have occurred have left many working class women either captive wives, dependent on males or single parents dependent

on the Welfare State.

In summary, the crucial problem is that women's reproductive role in this Newfoundland community had been desocialized. On both a daily and generational basis Stephenville women are still the child raisers and, quite often, the tenders of males. The solution to this situation remains their opportunity to control their own reproductive lives. It is probably safe to generalize from the case study presented here and suggest that sexual inequality is a reality as well for most working class women in Newfoundland and elsewhere. The relegation of women to the private domain of housework and childcare, of course, remains a burden only in a society (such as ours) which deprives most women of other alternatives. I hope that this study has at least helped to point to the urgent need of women's health care -- in the area of female sexuality, of contraception and abortion, of childbirth and, for older women, concerning menopause. By focusing on the specific problems surrounding reproduction in historical perspective, I have attempted to show why this is so and why today in communities such as Stephenville, motherhood is not a rewarding experience for most labouring women. This is not to say that motherhood is by definition oppressive, nor, on the other hand, that all women need to mother in order to achieve personal fulfillment in life. Rather, my point is that all women, regardless of their class, should have the option to choose to be mothers.

Appendix

Case Histories of Seven Stephenville Women

APPENDIX

In this section I have included brief excerpts of the life histories of seven Stephenville women. These particular life histories were chosen from those of the thirty-odd women I interviewed during my field research not because these women were exceptional in any way, but rather because of their ages and typical life experiences as labouring women in this specific Newfoundland community. My main reason for including these seven life stories was to permit the reader a closer look at individual women and their detailed personal problems as mothers, daughters and wives.

Adeline: Age 93. Took care of the post office in Stephenville for over twenty years. In 1960 the Town Council in Stephenville confiscated her house and land because she could not afford to pay the property taxes. She now resides in an Old Age Home near the town.

I was 14 years old when I stopped going to school. It was the same time that I started 'comin' around', you know when a girl starts changing. I recall my mother saying that the best years of any woman's life were before the change. Those were hard times, to be sure, 'cause father got killed overseas that year. It's no lie that mother worked herself to death ... Since I was the oldest of the seven, I had to do the things like any grown-up. Mother said I had a healthy frame. She also said things like, 'you'll have it awful hard, my dear; you'll get to know hard work ... sometimes I wonder to myself how you're going to conquer it'. I recall collecting caplin from the shore and drying them. Also managed to sell a few extra gallons of berries from time to time... got 50¢ for a chunk of fresh butter. All the earnings went to the house account at the store and then we still were always short. For a while mother got at the priest's house, they cut mothers $10 off ... that government didn't give a damn about poor people. I was some lucky to get a job with Father Brown. I worked there for 2 years. He was the boss and said he was going to teach me how to run the post office. At first I thought I wasn't smart enough, but before I knew it I could do it all by myself. He still got $40 a year from the government and I got only $4 as his helper. Mind you, I also had to help in the kitchen. With my pay I used to maybe get a pair of boots, you know those boots they used to wear with the laces in them -- cost $1.25. The rest went to the house. Then the telegraph came and we moved the post office into my father's house. Now in three months I learned telegraphy. At first it was a bit hard 'cause I had never seen the instruments... Then I took charge... I was kind of nervous at first, but got the hang of it before long. The government started me

off on my own with $10 a month. People thought I was going to be rich, yes indeed! I always stayed on at the old house. Later the office was moved into the old school where I used to go as a young girl. I also had the garden work. I had no commodities, my dear. I didn't even have any shelves. I had to put my parcels on the floor. Sometimes I worked day and night ... I'd sleep awhile ... I was often to tired to eat. People said it was a rotten shame I was only getting $10 a month. When the Americans came in 1941, they got the government to bring back the telegraph. During the War things picked up. The highest I ever got was $72.50 a month. Not long after the Americans came I got sick with the flu; boy did I have some work on my hands. The government sent out a young fellow from Burgeo. They said I wasn't strong enough, so they right away put him in charge of everything. He wasn't 20 yet. I had to work under him, but all the same he didn't know anything like I did. I felt like throwing it all in, but we had to live somehow. Do you know that that fellow got $100 right away and I was working for $72.50? I wasn't treated fair at all and the people used to think the world of me, they said so all the time. Nobody liked him. Oh my, but he was crude, always black-arding ... a rough kind. I suppose I shouldn't say that, but he was evil. He wanted to get me out of it. Once $50 was missing. Never before that had the books been wrong. The government said I had to pay or leave. Nobody liked it, said it was a dirty thing to do to me. I went and paid it, my dear, and worked just one more year so I could get my pension. I said I had enough of their foolishness. I was going home, I said, I couldn't stand it anymore. When you're a woman like me without a man to speak for you, they say you can't handle your own affairs. I know for a fact they didn't treat me right. Courage, I suppose, done it all, that's how I made it.

Mary-Ellen: Age 91. Had three children of her own and reared up a grandson as well. Her husband died during the Depression. She estimates that she delivered over 500 babies during

her'career' as a midwife.

We just didn't have the things to work with back then as there is today. Women used brinbags, that they softened up as best they could, around the child's bottom. We usen't to bother with the company doctor. I could never get him when there was real trouble anyway, 'cause he had some territory to do rounds in. It was only if some 'big-shot' like the merchant's wife needed him. Now that was a different story. I first learned to doctor the women by going about with my mother. She was still smart, but getting blind when she gave up and I took over when Leo died. If there was need of something for the new child, I would go and get some weeds and steep them into a brew -- caraway seeds or something like that. If a child had the cramps, yellow roots were used. (They grew under the ground, tiny and round). And sour-duck seeds for anybody with the fever. When the French came in their Man-O-War ships when I wasn't very old, they'd go crazy picking such herbs. People used to come to me. There was a lot of measles and yellow jaundice. I used to give them a brew made from sheep dung. Yes, and it did draw out the fever. When we were at the hay, I would pick out seeds and dry them. Of course, I always went around to the women at expecting time. After childbirth, I used to give the mothers boiled juniper and perhaps senna tea. You know, I saw a lot of sickness in my time and often I had only my prayers to help me out. Yet even though better medicines and instruments and things doctors have would have been a blessing sometimes, we had something back before the Americans came that got outlawed. The women I nursed were all close together: they trusted a woman like me much more than a stranger, a man doctor. Whenever one of my mothers were due, we all gave her clothes for the new-born that our own little ones had grown out of. We'd have a "bee" to make quilts and diapers and knitties out of a piece of flannel. I always made my mothers stay in bed for ten days -- it was my only real law. Some used to get 'balky' with me and wanted to get up sooner to tend on their men or see to the

kids, but I said, "No way". There was always other women from around coming in and looking out to the things needing done. No one starved, let me tell you, when a woman was "lying-in". I told my mothers not to breastfeed when they were getting up in years. I learned that a woman's milk got bad then. My own mother had lost a little girl that way. After Corner Brook got to be a big place and the hospital was built, more and more women were going there. A public nurse, I think she was from England, used to come around these parts in the 1940's and tell the women to go to the hospital to have their babies. A little later they said that the government in St. John's was outlawing us if we didn't go there and take 3 months training at the Grace Maternity Hospital. Well, I figured that I knew enough already about delivering babies 'cause I had already brought over 500 into the world. Can you believe that, my dear? Besides, where was I going to live in the city? I knew the government only wanted us out of it, but let me tell you a secret, my dear. It was a long time before they could do without midwives -- many women hated the hospitals and wanted to stay with their children in their own homes. Now the doctors are operating for this and that. Everyone seems to have their womb gone. I don't know, we were good for women in many ways.

Joan: Age 64. Worked as a domestic servant in Corner Brook before she married in 1945. She still has a garden, gathers berries, and knits much of her family's woolen things. She relates her reproductive history.

I had my children right in a row, every year. Well, I had thirteen in all. Now, there was two more that died before birth. We was married just nine months and fourteen days when the oldest was born and she was only ten months old when the next came. You was pregnant all the time and if you wasn't everybody thought you was sick.

I tried once to breastfeed, but the little devil, he was always at me, wouldn't leave me alone. I had to look out to my other babies. I had the midwife for all of them except the last two, then I went to the hospital. Most of the women were going then. I used to be so beat out from doing my work and taking care of the kids all day that, I remember, warming the milk for the baby in the saucepan over the lamp and falling asleep. I was so tired. After the stove was out, that was it. Me, I don't think it was good for us. And, I mean to say, everyone was pregnant except, of course, if you were higher up and knew how to use something. By the time we got around forty years of age we were all worn out inside. The doctor told me it was time for me to get my operation after I reached forty. He said I was good for three or four more. When I came out of the hospital the doctor ordered me to stay in bed for ten days. Well, we had just moved up to Cold Brook, and the baby was less than one year old and the oldest girl was only ten. Now, jeepers wips, the road was some bad and I had to climb two flights of stairs. The doctor told me I had to go get another operation to get the rest out. I ended up taking half the stitches out myself. That was the way it was with a good many of the women from here. Those darn doctors had us at their mercy; they made a mint of money off us 'cause it used to cost $400 just for one operation alone. And there was a waiting list a mile long, I suppose, some of the women from here having to wait as high as two years to get their wombs out. Thinking back on it now, I believe it was shocking, making us wait like that, making us get permission from the priest and needing our husbands' signature and, then, having to stand by for a bed in the hospital. But there was no way for us around it all. Our hands were tied. And you take it, today it's not a hell of a lot better. The stories I have heard about most of those doctors would make anyone want to stay clear away from the place. There's one doctor who, the word has it, sees as high as a hundred people a day sometimes. He herds them in like cattle. He can't have anymore than a minute with each one. And as for women who got to have him as their baby doctor, heavens help them, I say.

There's no unearthly reason why in the last little while so many women have to get sections and take all kinds of drugs just to have a baby. And one other thing I would like to say is that one of those days we are going to hear over the news that all those young women, half of them not even 25 years old, are going to have something or other from getting their tubes tied. I'm not sorry that I have it all over with, let me tell you. Still today older women like myself have problems. Sure, just the other day on my way home from Church I ran into one of my neighbours who I hadn't seen for quite a spell. She was kind of pale looking and told me the doctor had her on some little yellow pills for her nerves. Half the women my age are taking these pills which I think are good for nothing but heart-attacks. We would be a lot better off if we had a job to work at instead of sitting in the rocking chair in front of the T.V. with our knitting all day, now that our kids are all gone.

Bertha: Age 65. Worked for a wage for two years prior to her marriage in 1944. Since then she has reared up ten children, and has been a housewife for 37 years of her life.

I was sixteen when I left my father's house and went to Stephenville. I was after getting pregnant and was allowed to get away from home if I stayed with my brother. After having the baby, I started out working at the cabins, doing general cleaning and then as a waitress for not a cent. The Base was just about ready to gear up. I worked there, at the cabins for nearly five years, never so much as getting a higher wage. When I met my husband, he was still working in the woods, but shortly after that, he got a job with the Americans driving heavy equipment and ended up learning some kind of trade out of it. If there's one thing I remember well it is that we weren't very well off. We had to stay with his mother for two whole years. We had the

first two before we had some place of our own to go to. Mind you, it wasn't much. There was two tiny rooms, that's all, about the size of half the kitchen here. Oh yes, I had my children all in a row. Just like everybody else around here in Stephenville. I had ten in all that lived, besides, of course, the two I lost as stillbirths. You were practically pregnant all the time. You were darn lucky to have a spell of a couple of months in-between. I had the midwife by for all of them, excepting the last one when I had to go into the hospital 'cause I almost died. I was all torn up inside, the doctor said. But it was almost a full two years before we scraped together the $400 for my operation. I was so beat out from it all, 'cause even after the operation even when you lose half your organs, you couldn't stop. My work was never done and I didn't even have any of my female relatives around like my mother had when I was a young girl. And it was cold in that bungalow we had. I recall putting a glass of water by one of the children's beds and the next morning you had a glass of ice, so solid, like a rock it was. We had no chance after the Base came around here to grow fresh things with all those bigshots coming in and making up rules that outlawed having chickens or even a milk cow. And who could afford to buy frozen vegetables? It just didn't make any sense to me, but what could a poor woman like myself do with such odds against you all the time. There was never any such thing as a married woman going out to work, unless your kids were getting up in age and there was a lot of work to be got in the town. The only time it was good for work was when the Base was swinging and, for a little while, when the Mill started in the early years of the 1970's. Anyway, how could a mother like myself, with only grade four and no one to look out to her kids, ever be anything besides a housewife. The way I remember it, and it's not much different today, every woman was pregnant, even those that weren't married half the time. I think the men wanted it that way to keep us; as the old saying goes: "pregnant and barefoot in the kitchen". Well, as for me, that's about all I ever did, I must say. But I couldn't turn down the mouth that fed

me, now, could I? My mother used to tell me to watch out 'cause I was burning my candle on two ends. I nearly went under after my operation. I guess I didn't stay off my feet long enough or something. Now I have those veins in my legs. From having so many kids too quickly, I expect. What I look forward to more than ever these days is getting my old age persion, can you believe it? Just so as to have a little cash all of my own. Last year I was really getting in the dumps, now that all my kids are gone and my husband passed away. I wish, sometimes, I could work. I would love that. But here in Stephenville, for heaven's sake, not even the young healthy girls can find some work, let alone an aging woman like myself.

Anne: Age 38. Deserted by her husband. Mother of three children. Had a job as domestic for two years in the early 1970's, but has since had to go on welfare.

I got married when I was 17. I had just got my grade 11 and my father said to me, "All right, my dear lady. I can't support you no more, so out you go or else go into the convent or something or other". And mom, she wouldn't say a thing against my father. I guess she was scared to death of him. He had an awful temper when things didn't go his way. Well, I was kind of glad to be free of him, to tell the truth. I heard over the radio that they needed an aid at Stephenville hospital and so -- off I went. You could live in the hospital dorms, so that solved the headache of getting a place to sleep. I was pretty lonely, though, and I guess when I met George, who was a taxi driver at the time, I didn't take my time but just rushed into marriage. Now that I think back on it, I don't think I would have gotten married if I didn't find myself pregnant so soon. I just didn't know the ropes. My father used to say we were black-arding if anyone in the family as much as mentioned a private part of their body. I was scared to death.

What could I do but get married? We went secretly to the Justice of the Peace so my old man would not prevent us, at least 'till the baby was born. As it ended up, he made us marry over in the Catholic Church. I was so embarassed about it all. Then I got pregnant twice more before my husband and I really started to get on each other's nerves. We never loved each other, to tell the truth. Not since the day we was married did I trust him when he went out drinking with the boys. I had it pretty darn hard, especially when he'd take to beating on me for some reason or other. I couldn't go outside the door on the last when he'd accuse me of 'bagging around', me, of all people who never had a spare moment to think, let alone look sideways at another man. I recall the time just before he took off out of these parts altogether. I was just about at the end of my rope with his drinking and my having to scrape to get by. It was a cold winter day and the girls had just come in the door from school. And there I was, with my dress all raggedy from trying to get away from him. I felt some bad in front of the kids like that. But, he had tried to kill me, to choke me with a piece of twine. I managed to get away and ran next door without even my slippers on in the dead of winter. Lucky for me, I knew the woman and she let me in and barred him out. After that, he just pulled out of here and, I say, good riddance. I haven't heard tell of him since. We don't even talk about it anymore and just try and make do on the bit we have. At least we have peace and quiet in the evenings so the kids can study their lessons. Some of my family say I'm too harsh these days. But, it is not a pleasant life here. We all know it. Sometimes the women across the way come by for tea and we talk about our problems. I let my daughter listen in too. I want her to learn from my mistakes. We all know that the only way we are surviving right now is the money from Welfare for the kids. Women don't count in their books.

Vivian: Age 24. Housewife and mother of three small children. Resettled from Central Newfoundland in the early 1970's.

Presently lives with her family in a lower class housing unit on the Base.

I got married here in Stephenville. I met my husband here at the time when I was working as a saleslady at A. L. Green's when the mall first started up around 1973. He wasn't Catholic but the priest agreed as long as I signed that the kids would be reared up Catholic. I didn't find the Mall a bad place to work, though you couldn't do very much on $2.50 an hour. It was impossible for a single girl to pay for her own place on that amount. And besides, my father wouldn't hear tell of an unmarried girl living by herself. Well, that's all in the past now. It's almost 5 years ago now that I got pregnant on my oldest. My health wasn't the best, 'cause I always had problems with my periods and such. Since then, I have not worked, outside of my housework and the kids. I guess I'm pretty well stuck here 'till they are grown-up. My husband would rather I stay with them; he says it's my real place in life. Well, considering my options, he's probably right, 'cause a married woman with experience on cash has no go in getting a job around Stephenville. The thing is, it looks like my husband might get laid-off again and we already had to go on welfare once before. If I could even get the minimum wage, or even something part-time, it would help towards the bills, perhaps even pay most of the rent and some towards the food ... The first place we lived after we were married was in those old apartments out on the highway. They're called the Burton's Apartments. They were cold; they were freezing so much that we had to take the baby in with us just to keep him warm. That was where the worst off families lived. We got out of there as soon as we could and moved into Silver's Apartments, which wasn't a hell of a lot better but at least it was off the road. Actually, it was like living in hell, so darn dirty and full of rats. There was no place to even hang out your clothes. When the wind blew, your curtains would come up into your place. One thing was sure: we never had to worry about air conditioning. I still don't have any conveniences,

if you want to know the truth. I take my clothes to the laundry when the car is working, but now its on the blink, so I do most stuff by hand. I've had a lot of sickness in the past four years in my family. I guess that, plus being all alone in the house with the kids and worrying, was the cause of my nerves going on me last year. I just couldn't take it all anymore. I never see a soul most of the time. And when my husband comes home, he usually flops on the couch from exhaustion. He doesn't really see my problems, I don't think. My sister Dorothy is the only person I ever really confided in and she is in Alberta with her husband. So, I keep everything to myself. I did try telling the doctor but he put me off and said it was all in my head. I think what I really need is a job of some sorts, even if its only on cash or waitressing. But I only got as high as grade eight in school. Sometimes I wish I could have waited a little longer before I had my family but, being reared up a Catholic, you don't get to know about anything before its too late. When I met my husband, I thought if he pulled out before he came it would be alright. Well, I was dead wrong. I never heard tell of getting an abortion until the priest started lecturing us over the altar about it. I feel mixed things about it, really. One thing I refused to believe is that we shouldn't be allowed to use birth control. I don't think the priest has any business telling us how many kids we can have. He's not the one who's got to have them or feed them after. I sure hope things get a little brighter around here. Seems like I've already suffered my share, and I'm only 24 yet.

Janet: Age 18. Father is an alcoholic. Parents are separated. She has been battered as a child. Presently she is trying to finish her high school education at the Community College in the town.

I was always one to be to myself; I didn't want to communicate much with other people. And I'm still like that today. There was always

so much unhappiness in our house when I was young that I'd rather that no one knew about my problems. I figured it was not their business, to put it bluntly. I was always afraid they were going to discover when my father was drinking he would beat on us. I thought they would take us away and put us someplace in St. John's or something. So I kept quiet. Whenever my father started drinking, he'd lose his temper and get rowdy ... I went to school to the nuns and, let me tell you, they had their favorites, there's no denying the fact. If you couldn't afford to dress up or pay to get in this and that, then they would turn up their noses to you, the way I saw it, anyhow. When I started Junior High, it was still the same. They made us girls wear skirts. Pants were out of the question. They spent half the day lecturing us on how to dress and behave as proper Catholic young ladies. Then, they would turn their backs on us when we really needed their help. If you happened to get pregnant, for instance, then 'out you got to go'. You all of a sudden became a disgrace to their school. The way I see the nuns and the priest is that they are only out for show, that's about all. Take, for example, the problems we girls have with young fellows always trying to rise up our skirts and feel us, half the time you being on your period and all. I'll tell you about one time when I was in grade seven. One of the fellows in grade ten (he was a real bully) actually pushed me down on the cloakroom floor at lunch time and tried to tear off my clothes. There was a couple of other fellows with him and they wouldn't do a darn thing to get him off. The bell saved me 'cause then everyone came in for the afternoon classes. I told the teacher and she said so much as it was my fault. That I had teased him. Boy, was I wild. After that, I said the hell with it. No one really gave a hoot if I quit anyways and it was just impossible to study at home with the kind of father I had. Around the same time one girl who was in the same class as me got raped outside the Lions Club during a high school dance. Do you know what? They had the gall to say that she invited it by being out past ten o'clock at night. Another girl I knew in grade 11 also got pregnant and her boyfriend took off to Alberta when he found out. She never told no one

else except him and me, not even her own mother. She wore a tight girdle and told everyone it was the junk food that made her put on weight. What a shock her poor mother had when the time came to go to the hospital. She had some hard time of it and ended up getting a section. It was just around that time that my mother ran away. I saw it coming for years and I really don't blame her one bit to this day. I remember mom helping me out with my homework sometimes, and, before you know it, the peace would be broken by the old man coming and butting in to start a racket. I'm sure he's a confirmed alcoholic. He drinks all our money, he always did. Mom told me that when we were babies she had to get diapers for us by selling her dresses. When the old man went on a bender, you might as well say he was good for two weeks of it. Those were the times when the cupboards went bare. Then mom would have to go to the Welfare for food money. God, the fellows in here are some brazen, just as childish as when I was in High School. The only way you can learn decently is to hide away in the library somewhere. Those guys are forever trying to put the makes on you and there's no limit to the vulgar language they come up with. Their mentality is that us girls are there for them to use, that's about the limit of it. And if you happen to mention anything such as birth control or abortion, for example, well you're the laughing stock of them all then. It's just too darn bad they can't get pregnant, I say. We just turn our ears off to most of them. It comes with experience.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. For a general discussion of this point see Ellen Malos, ed., The Politics of Housework (London: Allison & Busby Ltd., 1980). Also see Bonnie Fox, ed., Hidden in The Household: Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1980).

2. See, for an examination of this problem, Veronica Beechey, "Some Notes on Female Wage Labour", Capital and Class no. 3 (Autumn) 1977. Also see E. Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development (New York: Allen & Unwin, 1970).

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. My knowledge of socialist feminism as a theory to understand the specific problems of labouring women was quite limited until after I had completed my research on Stephenville women. Prior to entering the field I had read literature on the issue of motherhood and reproduction, of course, but my theoretical understanding of women's oppression and, in particular, my knowledge of a specific framework through which to comprehend the personal experiences of Newfoundland labouring women was weak. Instead, my course work at the graduate level concerning social and economic development had focused mainly on the dependency model of development, based on the work of dependency theorists such as André Gunder Frank (see, for example, his article, "Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America" (Monthly Review, 1967), and Samir Amin, see his article, "Accummulation on a World Scale" (Monthly Review, 1974). This theoretical approach to understanding the form of capitalism in Newfoundland left me with little means by which to conceptualize about outport and working class women on the Island. I especially found this theoretical approach problematic in attempting to deal with sex relations in the traditional patriarchal outport family and the reproductive role of Newfoundland women in nonindustrial periods of the Island's history. Thus, I was torn between my limited theoretical understanding of women's oppression and my secondary knowledge.

2. Through the reading of women's history, for example, Mary Stenton, The English Woman in History (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957); Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, eds., The Rights and Wrongs of Women (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1876); R. Rapp, E. Ross and R. Britenthal, "Examining Family History", Feminist Studies 5, no. 1 (Spring 1979) pp. 174-201; Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (London: Virago, 1977); and Sheila Rowbotham, Woman's Consciousness, Men's World (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973). Moreover, my personal experiences as a woman growing up in a labouring family in a Newfoundland community caused me to question the validity of dependency theory when applied to my own society. I examine this problem in more detail below.

3. See, for example, Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews, Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, no. 6. St. John's, 1967; Cato Wadel, Marginal Adaptations and Modernization in Newfoundland. Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, St. John's, 1969; Ottar Brox, A Sociology of Economic Dualism. Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, 1972; and John Szwed, Private Cultures and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society, Institute of Social and Economic Research, St. John's, 1966.

4. See S. Antler, "Colonial exploitation and economic stagnation in nineteenth century Newfoundland" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Connecticut, 1975); David Alexander, "Development and Dependence in Newfoundland, 1880-1970", Acadiensis, IV (1974); James Overton, "Towards a Critical Analysis of Neo-Nationalism in Newfoundland", in Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada, Robert Byrm and James Sacouman, eds., (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979).

5. A few attempts to correct and broaden our understanding of women's reproductive and productive role in Newfoundland have been made. See Ellen Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishery Families". Paper presented at the conference, Research on Women: Current Projects and Future Directions, held at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Nov., 1976; Hilda Chaulk Murray, More Than 50 %: Women's Life in a Newfoundland Outport, 1900-1950 (St. John's: Breakwater Books Ltd., 1979; and Adrien Tanner, "Putting Out and Taking Out: The Social Formation of Non-Capitalist Enclaves", Paper presented at the conference, New Directions in Structural Analysis, 1978.

6. For example, there is a noticable absence of theoretical debate over such issues as the nature of childrearing, of the politics of housework, of the institution of the family and motherhood, of the politics of reproduction, and also of the role of the Newfoundland and Canadian state and women. The major theoretical developments concerning these issues have been made elsewhere recently by feminists involved in sociological and anthropological research, especially in Britain. See, for a general discussion of some of these issues: Ellen Malos, ed., The Politics of Housework (London: Allison and Busby Ltd., 1980); A. Kuhn and A.M. Wolpe, eds., Feminism and Materialism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Elizabeth Wilson, Women and the Welfare State (London: Tavistock, 1977); Peter Aaby, "Engels and Women" in Critique of Anthropology 9&10, vol. 3, 1977. For the most recent coverage of these issues see Michéle Barrett, Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis (London: Villers Publications Ltd., 1980).

7. The most thorough discussion of the origins and problems of this form of feminism that I am aware of is Zillah Eisentein's recent book, The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism (New York: Longman, 1981).

8. I am using "reproduction" in a much broader sense than most dependency theorists use it, that is, with three different levels of meaning: Social reproduction; reproduction of the labour force (on a daily and generational level); and biological reproduction. This broader definition of reproduction is also used by F. Edholm, O. Harris and K. Young, "Conceptualizing Women", Critique of Anthropology 9 & 10, vol. 3 (1977) pp. 101-130.

9. The form of family created by urban industrial growth, of course, depended considerably on the kind of city or town the working class lived in. In Newfoundland, in the paper and mining towns, for example, the sexual division of labour was particularly rigid, with males doing heavy physical labour and married women working inside their home doing housework, child bearing and rearing. In the commercial city of St. John's, female labour participation was considerably higher, though women still had to bear the burdens of domestic labour and child care, the other side of their double shift.

10. F. Engels, The Origins of The Family, Private Property and the State (New York: New World Paperbacks, 1972).

11. See Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe", The Family in History, ed., C. Rosenburg (New York, 1975) pp. 145-178. Also see Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden From History: Rediscovering Women in History from the 17th. Century to the Present (London: Pluto Press, 1973).

12. Alice Clark argues that the exclusion of women from medical guilds and also from formal training in the professions made women the victims of powerful forces beyond their control and deprived them of an important means of social status. See her book, The Working Life of Women in the 17th Century (London: Reissued by Frank Cass, 1968) pp. 359-263. Ann Oakley also makes this point clear in "Wisewoman and Medicine Men", The Rights and Wrongs of Women, eds., J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976). Oakley argues that "... witch-healers and midwives were practioners and experts of a female-controlled reproductive care system -- a system which had probably been in existence for a very long time. The force of the initial attack upon it was great; integral to the Church's hostility to lay healers was a misogyny which led easily into an alliance with sexism and capitalism. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a period when the position of women vis-à-vis men was in a state of flux ... Behind this attitude was a double standard. Whilst the poor had to endure their suffering, medical care for the upper classes was acceptable, and this was male medical care." Quoted, pp. 27-28. This was also the case for Newfoundland rural and outport women as well as for their communities, which were either resettled or urbanized, though the process is far more recent here on the Island. See Chapter three for my discussion of Stephenville midwives in this regard.

13. See K. Casey, "Reconstructing the Experience of Medieval Women", Liberating Women's History, ed., B. Carroll (Urbana: University of Illinos Press, 1976) pp. 240-241.

14. With the increase in productivity as a result of industrialization, which was accompanied by a gradual rise in the standard of living,

the onset of puberty for females went down. In Newfoundland this has also happened, though again relatively later than in most industrial class societies. A hundred years ago, most Newfoundland women were not fully fertile until age 19; today women are fertile at age 15, with first menstration at age 12-13. See Helen McKilligin's "Deliveries in teenagers at a Newfoundland general hospital", CMA Journal / May 2, 1978/Vol. 118.

15. Quoted in B. Carroll, ed., Liberating Women's History (Urbana: University of Illinos, 1976) p. 283.

16. Mary Wollenstonecraft, Vindications of the Rights of Women (New York: Norton, 1972).

17. See Hugh Puckett, Germany's Women Go Forward (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930).

18. This movement focused on reproductive rights is discussed in detail by Linda Gordon, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America (New York: Penguin Books, 1977) See especially chapter 9.

19. Ibid., chapters 10-14. See also Tim Mason, "Women in Nazi Germany, 1925-1940: Part II", History Workshop, Issue II (Autumn, 1976) and Elizabeth Wilson, Women and the Welfare State (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977).

20. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

21. Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1970); Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974) and Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality" in Woman, Culture, and Society, eds., M.Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

22. K. Millet, op.cit., p. 58.

23. Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution (New York: Bostom Books, 1971), p. 5.

24. Ibid., pp. 9-12.

25. Gerder Lerner, "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium", Feminist Studies 6, no. 1 (Spring, 1980) p. 50.

26. For an analysis of this see, for example, Sara Evans, Personal Politics, The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Knopf, 1979) and Redstockings, eds., Feminist Revolution (New Palyz, N.Y.: Redstockings, 1975).

27. S. Rowbotham, op.cit., n. 12, p. 147 and M. Barrett, no. 6,p. 147.

28. Adrienne Rich, Of Women Born (London: Virago, 1977) p. 36. Also see Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978) and Jessie Bernard, Women, Wives and Mothers: Values and Options (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1975).

29. Ann Oakley, Woman Confined: Towards a Sociology of Childbirth (New York: Schocken Books, 1980) p. 178.

30. M. Mandani, The Myth of Population Control: Family, Caste and Class in an Indian Village (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

31. See Anita Grossman, "Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218 in Germany", New German Critique, no. 14 (Spring 1978) and Tim Mason, "Women in Germany, 1925-1940", op.cit.

32. This further contradiction surrounding the birth control issue is discussed in detail by H. Rose and J. Hanmer, "Women's Liberation, Reproduction and the Technological Fix", Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change, S. Allen and D.L. Barker, eds., (London: Tavistock, 1976) pp. 199-223. Also see Vivien Walsh, "Contraception: The Growth of a Technology", Alice Through the Microscope, Brighton Women and Science Group, eds., (London: Virago, 1980).

33. As a focus of study, the history of Newfoundland women has received little attention, particularly in the area of reproduction. To date some folklore material has been collected and one important community study has recently been published, Hilda Chalk Murray, More than fifty percent: woman's life in a Newfoundland outport 1900-1950 (St. John's, Nfld.: Breakwater Books, 1979). The two important articles on the traditional role of Newfoundland outport women in the cod fishery (by Antler and Faris) focus mainly on women's non-wage productive role and hence do not give us a complete picture of the complex relationship between work and family. In the area of biological reproduction, Dona Davis has recently completed a valuable study of how menopause is handled in one traditional Newfoundland village. See: Ellen Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishing Families", Atlantis 2(2), 1977, p. 106-113; J. Faris, Cat Harbour: a Newfoundland Fishing Settlement (St. John's, Nfld.: Social and Economic Studies, 1972, no. 31); Dona Davis, "Women's experience of menopause in a Newfoundland fishing village" (Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio, Nov. 1979).

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. In the case of Newfoundland the capitalist relations of production generally occurred long before industrialization. In fact, the conditions under which settlement finally took place on the Island had more to do with a metropolitian capitalist country, namely, Britain, than with what was taking place in Newfoundland itself.

2. James Faris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement (St. John's, Nfld.: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, 1966), Ch. 4.

3. See Roberta Hamilton's discussion in, The Liberation of Women: A Study of Patriarchy and Capitalism (London: George & Unwin Ltd., 1978), ch. 3.

4. For an in-depth study of the inshore fishery and the relations of unequal exchange between merchants and fishermen, see, for example, S. Ryan, "The Newfoundland cod fishery in the nineteenth century", a paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, June, 1973, Kingston, Ontario, and S. Antler, "Colonialism as a Factor in the Stagnation of Nineteenth Century Newfoundland: Some Preliminary Notes", Atlantic Canada Economics Association (1973) vol. 2, pp. 75-105.

5. Of course, the fishermen were independent only in the sense that they owned their means of production and had some limited control over the hours they laboured. Yet they had no control over how their fish was graded nor over the economic return provided by the merchant. Furthermore, the fishermen's supposed independence demanded that their female kin take a major productive role in the curing of the fish as well as in meeting the family's subsistence needs in many other ways.

6. Quoted from Ellen Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishery Families". Paper presented at the conference, Research on Women: Current Projects and Future Directions, held at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Nov., 1976, p. 1.

7. See, as an example of this, John Berger, Pig Earth (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1979).

8. Ibid., p. 2-3. Antler shows how the traditional role of outport women who cured fish was especially well suited to fit into the non-wage labour activities expected in Newfoundland:

> Drying fish can be tedious and time consuming -- it is an extraordinarily difficult task for one person alone. It requires a committed, attentive eye and experience in predicting the weather ... the curing process also requires

> that persons be handy in case the weather changes and the fish must be turned or taken in. It does not require, however, a continual presence -- once the fish is spread it needs little attention -- and ... did not produce enough added income to support an entire family unit. In short, it was most well suited for household production.

9. The median age for the onset of puberty during this period was around 18 years. Some women who married did so as early as at sixteen, depending for the most part on whether their family needed their labour power in the household, fields, and at the fish flakes. On the average, though, most women married in their early twenties. From that point in time until menopause (at around 40 years) women spent their time either pregnant or breastfeeding. The need for a large family of sons and daughters to help out with the fishery and in other subsistence activities necessitated this. Considering the average life span of women at this time (around 50-55), a married woman spent most of her adult life bearing and rearing children.

10. Faris found this to be the case for Cat Harbour women. The women in this fishing community were seen as potentially polluting and evil by the males of their society. See J. Faris, op.cit., n. 1, p. 26.

11. David Alexander, "Development and Dependence in Newfoundland 1880-1970", Acadiensis, vol. 4, pp. 3-31.

12. Ottar Brox points out some reasons why the Norwegian fishery, for example, prospered, while the Newfoundland fishery went into decline throughout the first half of the 20th century. See Brox's discussion in Newfoundland Fishermen in the Age of Industry: A Sociology of Economic Dualism (St. John's, Nfld., Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, 1972).

13. Discussed in David Alexander's article, op.cit., n. 9, p. 27. For recent discussion of this problem see Adrian Tanner, "Putting Out and Taking Out: The Social Formation of Non-Capitalist Enclaves", paper presented at the conference, New Directions in Structural Analysis, 1978 and Peter Sinclair, "From Peasants to Corporations: The Development of Capitalist Agriculture In Canada's Maritime Provinces", paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society, Minneapolis, 10 April, 1981.

14. See chapter 1 for my discussion of the problems resulting from this theoretical approach when used to explain women's position in class societies.

15. Both of these mining towns have since closed down and the people forced to move elsewhere.

16. Yet this is not to say that the sexual division of labour in the family was altered significantly. For a theoretical discussion of this same process in other industrial societies, see Ann Oakley, Women's Work: The Housewife Past and Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

17. For a discussion of the specific problems of women forced to follow their husbands out of economic necessity, see Ann Martin Matthews, "The Newfoundland Migrant Wife: A Power Versus Powerlessness Theory of Adjustment". Paper presented at the conference, Research on Women: Current Projects and Future Directions, held at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Nov., 1976.

18. Thus the label "Lumberjack Babies". See chapter three for my discussion of this situation for Stephenville women.

19. By 1910 the U.S. had 1,000 female lawyers and more than 7,000 female doctors. As far back as in 1890 many American states gave women the vote. See E.D. Koontz, The Best Kept Secret of the Past 5,000 Years: Women are Ready for Leadership in Education (Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1972) pp.25.27.

20. Information from Rosemary Basha, "St. John's Women in the Labour Force (1900-1920)", Center for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1973.

21. See G. Rowe, "The Women's Suffrage Movement in Newfoundland", Center for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1973.

22. The female illiteracy rate in Newfoundland during this period was around twenty-five percent. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1921.

23. Rosemary Basha, op.cit., p. 20.

24. See Linda Gordon, Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), vol. 6, pp. 556-560.

25. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1934.

26. For information concerning the unrest, see J. H. Gorvin, Report on the Land Settlement in Newfoundland, St. John's, 1938.

27. See chapter four for more detail of the situation of Stephenville women.

28. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1945.

29. The Canadian system of social welfare, which Newfoundland adopted in 1949 when it joined confederation with Canada, rests somewhere between the British and American systems of social assistance.

Specifically, the Canadian federal government transfers to the provincial governments various social "benefits": family allowance (or Baby Bonus), allowances for single mothers, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, and for those who have no other means for subsistence, public assistance (or, "The Welfare"). Also in Canada by the late 1960's a federal medicare system was established which provided for each Canadian citizen free health care in various areas as: hospitalization, some drug coverage, annual check-ups, pre-natal care, and so forth. Finally, in 1969, birth control pills were also partly covered under the medicare plan and therapeutic abortion was made available at certain Canadian hospitals.

30. See Richard Gwyn, Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary (Toronto: McClelland and Steward Ltd., 1968) Ch. 14.

31. Helen McKilligan outlines these overall aims of the organization in "Deliveries in Teenagers at a Newfoundland General Hospital", Canadian Association Journal, vol. 118, pp. 1225-1254.

32. The Newfoundland birth rate dropped from 24 per 1,000 in 1972 to 18 per 1,000 in 1977. Information from Helen McKilligan, ibid.

33. In the community of Woody Point on the Northern Peninsula of the Island, women did in fact manage to have equal representation on a few of the projects. Why and how this was possible I discuss in n. 24, Ch. 4, pp. 159-160. For a detailed discussion of the social function of make-work schemes, especially concerning social control of the working class, see James Overton, "Unemployment, Social Unrest and Social Control: A Discussion of Make-Work Schemes", Center for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1977.

34. To quote from a still unpublished article about craft production in Newfoundland by Isabella St. John:

> Since the onus of the house and family care falls on women, their ability to take a job outside the home is limited. The difficulties of doing all the housework plus finding and paying babysitters are often too great. Compared to these difficulties, craft production at home, even at a dollar an hour, is a good deal. But compared to the provincial minimum wage of $3.50 per hour, or the $8 - $16 charged by tradesmen, it's a pretty bad deal. For these women it is a way of making money where there is no other way.

35. In trying to make sense of how the present economic recession and conservative groups have affected working class and rural women, I have been meeting with a small group of St. John's women. We have a dual purpose: first, to discuss why the formal women's organizations have consistently failed to meet the needs

of poor women; and second, to also discuss why the Left-organized labour, unemployment groups (eg. Newfoundland Association for Full-Employment), and Marxists associated with the university -- have failed to understand the particular problems women face concerning sexual exploitation and working the double-shift. Our small collective has also been working to put together a small pamphlet on what we see as some of the crucial areas needing attention: an historical understanding of women's productive and reproductive labour in Newfoundland; the situation of welfare women; women and state legislature; women and crafts; female workers in fish plants and an understanding of what specific rights as a Canadian citizen working class women are entitled to. For further detail on methodology see my conclusion.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. For a discussion of this on a theoretical level, see, for example, Veronica Beechey, "Some Notes on Female Labour in Capitalist Production", Capital and Class, 1977, pp. 45-46.

2. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1901.

3. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1901.

4. The birth rate is not recorded for specific communities. Only electoral districts listed such information. Yet, in spite of this shortcoming, it is worth noting that the district of St. George's, under which Stephenville was listed during this period, recorded the highest natural increase in population for the Colony -- 30.6 percent compared with 16 percent for the Island in general. This relatively high population growth rate continued throughout the Twentieth Century for this district.
Source: Annual Report of the Registrar of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, Newfoundland Government, St. John's, 1900.

5. Compared to most urban areas of the Colony, rural Stephenville had a relatively lower death rate. In 1901 in the district of St. George's, the death rate was 10.75 percent while in St. John's it was nearly doubled this figure at 21.89 percent.
Source: Annual Report of the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Newfoundland Government, 1900. I discuss the reasons for this later in this chapter.

6. For a breakdown of the male population of rural Stephenville in regard to gainful employment, see Census of Newfoundland, 1901.

7. Most of the women used the term 'Boston States' to refer to the North Eastern United States, to where, in the early 1900's, many male Newfoundlanders migrated for labour work in coal mines and factories.

8. These were fairly rich fishing grounds about twenty-five to thirty miles by water from the village. Often the fishermen never returned home for weeks, especially during the peak months of the season.

9. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1921.

10. The men averaged $2.00 - $3.00 a cord of wood cut. The output per man varied from a half cord to three cords a day, with the average being about a cord and a half. This was not take-home money, since 60 cents a day had to come out of a man's earnings for board in the bunkhouse, and another fifty cents a month for the doctor's fee. As we shall see below, this situation worsened in the late 1920's. By

1934, few men could find any employment as lumberjacks. Source of information: Richard Clark, Newfoundland 1934-1949: A Study of the Commission of Government and Confederation with Canada, Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Los Angles (June, 1951).

11. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1901.

12. Definition given in Census of Newfoundland, 1945, p. XIV.

13. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1901.

14. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1901.

15. Prior to 1940 there was one doctor for every 4,000 Newfoundlanders, and very few areas of the Colony had district health nurses until 1938. At this date, the Cottage Hospital System was set up by the Commission of Government. But even by 1940 there were still only forty district nurses for the entire Island and Labrador. Source: Richard Grant, op.cit., n. 10, p. 35.

16. In 1934, for example, the Infant Mortality Rate was 91.0 per 1,000 live births. The Maternity Death Rate was nearly 4.5 percent. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1934.

17. For an example of this see sources in n. 3, chapter one, p. 153. For a more critical look at the institution of the family and women's role in it, see R. Rapp, E. Ross and R. Britenthal, "Examining Family History", Feminist Studies 5, no. 1 (Spring) 1979. Also see, Kathleen Gough, "An Anthropologist Looks at Engels", in Nona Glazer-Malbin and Helen Youngelson Waehrer,eds., Women in a Man-Made World (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1972), pp. 107-118.

18. Information found in Richard Gwyn, Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968).

19. See J.H. Gorvin, Report on the Land Settlement in Newfoundland, Government of Newfoundland, St. John's , 1938.

20. Source: Annual Report of the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Newfoundland Government, St. John's, 1934.

21. Ibid., 1930-1940.

22. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1934.

23. Quoted from George Whiteley, "Newfoundland, North Atlantic Rampart", The National Geographic Magazine (Jan. - June, 1941) p. 129. The census also gives evidence for this high rate of emigration

(2,058 in 1940). There was no emigration for the eight years prior to the War. Instead, there was a steady inflow of Newfoundlanders back home that was nearly one-third the population growth each year throughout the 1930's.
Source: Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Newfoundland Government, Dec., 1945.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. See Richard Straus, "The Americans Come to Newfoundland", The Book of Newfoundland (St. John's: Newfoundland Publishers Ltd., 1967) pp. 555-560.

2. Ibid.

3. See Richard Gwyn, Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary (Toronto: McClelland and Steward Ltd., 1968).

4. Source: Peter Baltensperger, "Life in Stephenville", The Atlantic Advocate (Dec., 1970).

5. Richard Gwyn, op.cit., n. 3.

6. For example, while the average Newfoundland male labourer received 40 ¢ per hour, his Canadian counterpart received, on an average, $1.20 per hour. By contrast, the average Newfoundland woman serving in the Mess Halls received $8 per week, while her Canadian counterpart received 60 ¢ per hour. Source: Review of Man-Hours and Hourly Earnings: 1945-1958, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Labour Division, Canada (Oct., 1959).

7. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1945.

8. In comparison to the situation of labouring women during the Depression years, by 1945 a number of things had changed. For one thing, the death rate had decreased. Also, the birth rate showed a significant increase by 1945, from a "low" of 23 per 1,000 in 1934, to a high of 36.3 in 1945. Moreover, the marriage rate, at least in the area under study, had not risen significantly since the Depression years. In fact, the illegitimacy rate had nearly doubled in the ten year period. Thus we can assume that the number of single mothers increased during the war. The reasons why this might be so are discussed in another section of this chapter. In addition, due to the fatal casualties from the War, the number of widowed women also had increased by 1945. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1945.

9. Source: Census of Newfoundland, 1945.

10. See Richard Gwyn, op.cit., n. 3.

11. For a general discussion of this elsewhere see, for example, Hannah Gavron, The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966). Also see Jessie Bernard, Women, Wives and Mothers: Values and Options (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1975).

12. Source: "Stephenville and the Port au Port Peninsula: a preliminary statement on the problems and possibilities of the newly designated A.R.D.A. study region", Newfoundland Department of Economic Development, A.R.D.A., St. John's, Newfoundland, 1964.

13. For a discussion of this rule in other Welfare States see Elizabeth Wilson, Women and the Welfare State (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), pp. 80-1, 153. For a more theoretical discussion of the cohabitation rule, see Michéle Barrett, Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis (London: Villers Publications Ltd., 1980) Ch. 7, pp. 227-247.

14. For a detailed discussion of this specific program and some of its effects on the resettled communities, see Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews, Communities in Decline (The Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland,1968).

15. Source: "Harmon Stephenville Development Plan: Phase I", Acres Research and Planning Ltd. (Toronto: The Arcade Building, 1971).

16. See Peter Baltensperger, op.cit., n. 4.

17. The profound social and economic consequences of this event have been detailed by Iverson and Matthews, op.cit., n. 14, pp. 151-153.

18. In actual fact, many communities were coerced to resettle. Electricity, telephones, schools, churches, mail services, and so forth were either removed outright or cut back on to such a degree that families had to resettle.

19. Source: Census Statistics for Newfoundland Communities, 1961,1971.

20. Ibid.

21. This information was given to me by a female instructor at the Center who is presently trying to initiate changes in the school curriculum which will allow women to enroll in trades courses in non-traditional fields. But the contemporary situation is still quite bleak, as she notes:

> So far few women have taken advantage of this opportunity, largely because they are smart enough to know that they will probably never get hired on as a truck driver, for example, or as an electrician. Added to all this is the fact that it's pretty rough trying to take a trade in a classroom with a bunch of these fellows from around here.

22. For an examination of similar problems facing working class women elsewhere, see Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham, eds., Dutiful Daughters (London: Allen Lane,Penguin, 1977) and Margery Spring Rice, Working-Class Wives: Their Health and Conditions (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1939).

23. An unofficial statistic given to me by a sympathetic social worker in Stephenville demonstrates that 47 percent of all families on long-term social assistance were in fact women-headed families. For a discussion of the "feminization of poverty" in the U.S. see Isabel

Sawhill, "Discrimination and Poverty Among Women Who Head Families", in Women and the Workplace, ed., Martha Blaxall and Barbara Regan (Chicago Press: University of Chicago, 1975).

24. The male hegemony in family planning and women's health is being challenged in at least one Newfoundland community. Women in the village of Woody Point (about 150 km north of Stephenville), have recently gained considerable control over their reproductive lives. The local medical clinic is operated by a female doctor and nurse team who are attempting an alternative approach to medicine. Their emphasis is on prevention and on staying healthy, rather than on the more typical way of "treating" women by medical professionals. In particular: 1. The high instance of sterilization among Woody Point women has been queried by the health workers. Today tubal ligations and hysterectomies are presented to local women as last options, rather than as the only method of limiting family size. Thus, the option for having another child at a later date is left open and the need for surgery is reduced; 2. the health workers attempt to bring their medical advice and care to the women themselves, as well as having women visit the clinic. Older women who find it difficult to seek medical care are given checkups in their own homes. Pregnant women and new mothers are also visited at home if they are unable to travel to the clinic. All women in the community are encouraged to receive regular examinations to take advantage of pre-natal care, to discuss family planning, to have annual pap smears, and so forth. Essentially, there is a continuous interchange between the health care workers and the local women, similar in many ways to the traditional relationship the midwife had with her "patients"; 3. the high instance of (especially middle aged) women's dependency on such depressant drugs as valium has been reduced. Instead, women are encouraged to get involved in community activities, to apply to the government for work grants, to use their talents and skills -- in spinning, weaving, knitting, gardening and the like -- to make and sell the products of their labour. 4. Church and State control over women's biological reproduction has been challenged. Birth control information and services are made available to all women, regardless of their religion, age, marital status or class. State organizations such as Planned Parenthood have not been established in Woody Point, but nevertheless the women there feel that their needs are adequately taken care of without outside organizations. As one Woody Point woman put it, "The doctor and nurse here mix up birth control with all your other problems, so everything gets settled all in the run of a visit. It's nice having them so close by and, since they are women like the rest of us, you feel less shy "; finally, the insufficient educational programs provided by the Island's Denominational School System in regard to human sexuality has been contested. The doctor and nurse work together in attempting to challenge the common assumption of "female virginity" pre-

vailing in the community. They have organized a comprehensive human sexuality program for all school children over eleven years. Moreover, these health workers are reaching out into the community as well, holding public meetings with parents, showing films on their subjects, and, as importantly, are encouraging Woody Point males -- married and non-married -- to seek contraceptive information and services.

FOOTNOTES: CONCLUSION

1. Particularly useful for me concerning working class women's exploitation has been the work of socialist feminists such as Veronica Beechey, "Some Notes on Female Wage Labour", Capital and Class no. 3 (Autumn) 1977; Jean Gardiner,"Women in the Labour Process and Class Structure", in Alan Hunt, ed., Class and Class Structure (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977); Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wople, eds., Feminism and Materialism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); and, in particular, Michèle Barrett, Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist-Feminist Analysis (London: Villers Publications Ltd., 1980).

2. Precisely what meaning "patriarchy" and the "patriarchal family" have in regard to feminist analysis is still disputed among socialist feminists themselves. For a brief exploration of this dispute see Sheila Rowbotham, "The trouble with 'patriarchy'", New Statesman, 21/28 (Dec., 1979) and for a reply to Rowbotham's article, see Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor, "In defence of 'patriarchy'" New Statesman (Feb. 1, 1980). For a detailed description of the patriarchal family as I understand it in this study, see B. Easton, "Feminism and the Contemporary Family", Socialist Review 8, no. 39 (May-June, 1978) and also see David Morgan, Social Theory And The Family (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975).

3. I found the impetus to write this section on how I arrived at doing feminist research in my former hometown, in part, through my reading of Liz Stanley's and Sue Wise's article, "Feminist Research, Feminist Consciousness and Experiences of Sexism", Department of Sociology, University of Manchester, Manchester, U.K., April, 1979.

4. For professional reasons, my advisor left for a year shortly thereafter.

5. For example, William Foote Whyte, "Observational Field-Work Methods", in Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart Cook, eds., Research Methods in the Social Sciences (New York: Dryden Press, 1951); Howard Becker, The Outsiders (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1963); and also Howard S. Becker and Blanche Geer, "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison, "Human Organization, vol. 16, no. 3 (Fall, 1957).

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