and the intensification and extension of work time which served to reduce the porosity of the workday. These methods, however, did not transform the customary organization of labour and workers retained much control over the actual process of production. Moreover, given the physical limits to the ability of workers to endure the expansion of the working day and in the context of working class resistance to these new measures, capitalists turned to other means in their attempts to extract surplus from workers. Firstly, the method of production within the workshop was reorganized with the introduction of a detailed division of labour, whereby operations usually handled by each worker were separated and assigned to different workers, giving rise to an interdependent organization of labour. The widespread introduction of machinery further extended the cheapening of labour and the erosion of workers' control over the production process. Marx provided an in-depth account of workers' considerable resistance to both the detailed division of labour and generalized mechanization, thereby showing that despite their disadvantaged position in capitalist relations of production, workers are, as David Knights and Hugh Willmott put it, "neither impotent nor ineffectual."²

Braverman³ closely adhered to the central tenet of Marx's analysis by reinstating the imperative of capital accumulation as fundamental in determining the continuous transformation of the labour process and the degradation of work in capitalist societies. He also recognized that employers had been successful in gaining greater control over the labour process during the early stages of capitalism. According to Braverman, however, the transition to real subordination was only completed through scientific management or Taylorism and associated changes in the industrial application of scientific knowledge. He argued that with the onset and consolidation of monopoly

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**WORKING THE LINE:
THE LABOUR PROCESS OF PASSENGER AGENTS AT AIR CANADA
1937 TO 1993**

by

Vivian Shalla, B.A., M.Sc.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

August, 1993

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WORKING THE LINE:
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1937 TO 1993

submitted by
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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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September 17, 1993

ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the historical development of the labour process of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada and, in so doing, contributes to the sociological understanding of the intersection of class and sex in shaping the world of white-collar work under advanced capitalism. The labour process and socialist feminist frameworks provide the theoretical foundation for analyzing the transformation in the nature, conditions and relations of passenger agents' work.

I argue that the historical transformation of the labour process of passenger agents is part of the general processes of proletarianization and feminization of white-collar work. I also establish the link between these processes and the process of class formation. My goal is to show that ongoing modifications to the passenger agent labour process, which are understood in the context of the broader Canadian political economy and the changing airline industry, gave rise to conflictual labour-management relations, thus creating the conditions for the emergence of a stronger and more militant union capable of influencing outcomes. The processes of technological change and work reorganization, skill and deskilling, strategies of control, employment practices and the labour market-household nexus are the key areas of investigation which render transparent the historical development of passenger agent work. These processes are understood within the context of resistance and accommodation.

This study highlights the destructive effects of the forces and relations of production in capitalist societies on human potential, and concludes that this wasting of human creativity can only continue and will most likely worsen under the present political and economic conditions, thereby deepening the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production and planting the seeds for its possible destruction.

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Air Canada headquarters management facilitated access to local offices. Iris Land and Heidi Hollander from the Air Canada Library eased my way through the company's documentation and granted me authorization to access restricted material at the National Archives of Canada. Local management offered assistance and shared valuable information on reservations and airport passenger handling operations. The staff at the National Archives of Canada made my archival research more manageable.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of two dear friends who, for reasons that I cannot fathom, chose to remain anonymous.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this dissertation is to analyze the historical development of the labour process of passenger agents at Trans-Canada Air Lines (TCA)/Air Canada and, in so doing, contribute to the sociological understanding of the intersection of class and sex in shaping and transforming the world of white-collar work under advanced capitalism. I argue that the historical transformation of the labour process of passenger agents is part of the general processes of proletarianization and feminization of white-collar work. I also establish the link between these processes and the process of class formation. While this study only deals with the specific expression of these processes in one case, it does allow us to reach certain conclusions on trends concerning women's white-collar work and point to some of the characteristics of the labour process in state-controlled enterprises.

The initial question that prompted this research focused on why the Canadian Air Line Employees' Association (CALEA), the union representing over 3,000 passenger agents at Air Canada - over 70 percent of whom are women - staged its first full-scale strike against the company in the spring of 1985 and why, in the summer of that year, it merged with the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) (and joined the National Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers Union of Canada (CAW-Canada) as local 2213 following the split from the international union shortly thereafter). While at first glance it may appear that the walkout and the merger could simply be explained by immediate concerns about the potential negative effects of the radical restructuring of the airline industry in the wake of deregulation, I contend that a more complete understanding of these actions requires that they be posed as a historical problem. I argue that continual yet fundamental

modifications to the labour process of passenger agents, which must be understood in the broader context of a fluctuating socio-economic environment and a changing airline industry, gave rise to conflictual labour-management relations, thus creating the conditions for the emergence of a more militant union capable of influencing outcomes. The expansion and strengthening of the union was a consequence of, and also contributed to, the shaping of this rising militancy. Women's permanent attachment to the labour market also helps explain the willingness of passenger agents to adopt more militant forms of action to resist worsening workplace and labour market conditions.

This study focuses on two key areas of investigation, namely the transformation of the labour process and labour market conditions of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada, and the actions of workers both in terms of resistance and accommodation as well as organization and politics. These processes are understood in the context of the growth and development of the Canadian airline industry and more specifically TCA/Air Canada. Though the time frame of the dissertation spans fifty-five years, the entire period from the early 1970s to the present remains the central focus of the study. The investigation is generally organized around two historical periods. The first period, which begins in 1937 and ends in 1969, is marked by the creation and expansion of TCA/Air Canada and the Canadian airline industry. During these years, the passenger agent occupation is created, the labour process is reorganized, workers collectively organize and labour demands become increasingly sophisticated. The second period, which commences in 1970 and extends into the early 1990s, is characterized by the further expansion and consolidation of the airline industry in the early stages, followed by crisis and restructuring in the form of deregulation, increased competition and

concentration, privatization and globalization. It is a time of massive capitalization in terms of aircraft and workplace technologies, and diversification of services to business and leisure travellers. Overall working conditions undergo significant transmutations. The period is marked by the growth and reconstitution of the union representing passenger agents and by increasingly conflictual labour-management relations. During this time, with the re-emergence of the women's movement, issues of concern to women are placed on the union's agenda.

The central theme of this study is the transformation in the nature, conditions and relations of white-collar work through the processes of proletarianization, feminization and class formation. I consider the implications of the specific expression of these processes for human potential. The key concepts that are used to weave together the changing experience of work include technological change and work reorganization, skill and deskilling, strategies of control, employment practices and the labour market-household nexus. These are understood within the context of accommodation, resistance and union organization.

The theoretical concepts that provide a backdrop to this study of work are generally located within the labour process and socialist feminist frameworks. The foundations of labour process theory laid by Karl Marx over a century ago had relatively little impact on the study of work and no major attempts were made to update his framework until the mid-1970s when there occurred a revival of interest in changes in the nature and organization of work in advanced capitalist societies. Harry Braverman's seminal treatise, Labor and Monopoly Capital,¹ which combined a restatement of Marx's conceptual categories and an application of these to major developments in the world of

work over the past hundred years, played a pivotal role in stimulating empirical research and in setting off theoretical debates on work, thereby restoring the study of the labour process to a central place within marxist and sociological inquiry. Theoretical considerations, however, have not evolved in a vacuum as material conditions have prompted a reconceptualization of what it means to work in advanced capitalist societies. The workplace was subjected to greater scrutiny when it became increasingly clear that post-war capitalist development had significantly modified this realm of social reality. Although mainstream social sciences, buttressed by the mass media, proclaimed the advent of a post-industrial society with more leisure time and less work time, it became clear that most peoples' lives remained highly defined and structured by work in one form or another. Moreover, workplace conflict dramatically increased in most western countries beginning in the mid-1960s, leading to the breakdown of the illusion of industrial consensus. By questioning mainstream assumptions about workplace changes and relations, the labour process perspective infused the analysis of work with a critical dimension.

Although studies which countered bourgeois accounts of work in industrial society revitalized the investigation of the labour process by reaffirming the inherently class-based nature of work under capitalism, feminists have challenged the adequacy of the overall framework because it failed to take sex into account. Since the late 1960s, feminists of various persuasions have systematically questioned the explanatory power of mainstream social sciences as well as Marxism and other radical approaches because of their failure to both identify and satisfactorily account for sex divisions and the subordination of women in society. Although women have always been present in a

variety of social contexts, their very presence as well as their experiences and contributions have been virtually ignored, and when they have been taken into account, their reality has usually been distorted. This distortion has served to obscure sex inequality and oppression. What mainstream and radical non-feminist discourses have presented as universal and absolute knowledge of the world is really knowledge created from the experiences of male actors. In unearthing women's experiences in an effort to recount the story more fully, feminists have produced alternative descriptions and explanations of social reality and, in so doing, have highlighted the nature of inequality and oppression.

The investigation and theorizing of women and work has been important to the socialist feminist project. In their attempts to revise social theories of work to make women and gender relations visible, socialist feminists have engaged permanently with the labour process perspective. While debates on the labour process have played a critical role in directing attention to the paid workplace, one crucial flaw has nonetheless permeated theoretical and empirical studies in this area. Although class relations have been central to the analysis, studies of the labour process have generally been devoid of considerations of gender relations. Moreover, contemporary research concerning work in which workers have been able to speak for themselves cast mostly male voices and experiences. The worker has generally been either sexless or male and usually found within an industrial setting. The exclusion of women leads to the assumption that the relation between capital and labour is one between bosses and male workers. When women's labour force participation has been addressed, it has tended to be seen as a special problem for employers, husbands or women themselves and dismissed as

peripheral or secondary to women's lives. An emphasis on women's work is crucial to a more complete understanding of paid employment, given the massive entrance of women in the labour force following the Second World War. Moreover, neglecting to study jobs where women predominate results in important trends in the world of work being overlooked and thus in weakened theories on work.

Over the course of the past two decades, feminists have been actively engaged in researching women's wage work under capitalism. Given efforts in this area, it is no longer possible today to claim that studying women's paid work is novel. While initial investigations relied primarily on statistical data and provided a broad overview of women's labour force work, dissatisfaction with the limitations of such research led to qualitative studies that examined the nature, conditions and relations of women's work. Despite their relatively limited number, these studies have been crucial in exposing workplace realities that could not be captured in broad statistical trends. Feminist scholarship has helped shift the agenda of the study of work by recognizing that paid work in advanced capitalism is more likely to involve manipulating symbols or processing people than dealing with things, and more likely to be providing a service than making a tangible product. In this context, my study aims to counter the assumption found in many labour process analyses, and so eloquently stated by Braverman, that clerical, sales and service occupations, which have undergone an immense growth since the Second World War, "require little description and analysis because they are conducted, for most part, in the public eye, and the labor tasks assigned to most of them are readily visualized".² This kind of statement not only tends to trivialize much of women's work, but contradicts many of Braverman's own assumptions about sociological

analysis. This inadequate and incomplete understanding of work fails to give centrality to those relations that give shape to what is witnessed by simply watching workers perform their duties. It falls short of going beyond mere appearances to grasp as central the hidden relations, the social and economic power and the modes of control and resistance that shape people's experience of work. Clearly then, what is lacking is an analysis of work as a process whereby human beings actively produce services within a complex social environment.

The study of the Canadian air transportation industry in general and of the labour process of airline workers in particular is important for several reasons. Air transportation has become a fundamental component of the expanding service producing industries that are a mainstay of the Canadian economy. It is also an essential feature of contemporary capitalism, especially because of the role it plays both in facilitating the conduct of business and in ensuring the development of tourism as a major economic sector worldwide. Moreover, the relatively young airline industry has experienced rapid change over the last half century and has been in a state of perpetual crisis over the course of the past two decades. In the current context of deregulation, massive restructuring and globalization of air transportation as well as the promise of cheap air fares, the industry has irrevocably captured the attention of the public and has been subjected to close scrutiny by academics. Little attention, however, has been paid to the implications of industry changes for airline workers whose labour consists in ensuring the rapid and efficient movement of people and goods. Furthermore, while airplanes have been the focus of attention when dealing with issues of technological innovation in air transportation - indeed aircraft have been a source of deep fascination and have been

held as a symbol of technological progress - the airline industry has been a leader in implementing computer and telecommunications technologies. These systems have a heavy impact on the labour process and job security of airline workers and on industrial relations, yet they have been subjected to very little scrutiny. These changes are a reflection of fundamental shifts in the forces and relations of production and thus need to be investigated.

This case study examines one specific group of airline workers, namely Air Canada passenger agents who work in reservations and city sales offices and at airport counters across the country performing customer sales and service duties. The goal is to carry out a qualitative in-depth historical investigation of the nature, conditions and relations of work in order to produce a more complete picture of the transformation of the labour process of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. The occupation of airline passenger agent is relatively new and, as such, represents an ideal opportunity to analyze developments at work. To my knowledge, this is the first systematic investigation of this airline industry labour process.

Two main research methods,* archival research and interviewing, were used to gather data for this study. Together, these methods serve to enhance our understanding by adding layers of information and by making use of different types of data for cross-verification and refinement. Throughout the investigation, both the union and the company were extremely cooperative in providing access to individuals and documents. The archival material, comprising for the most part previously untapped and unanalyzed

* A detailed discussion of the research process and methods of data collection appears in Appendix I.

union and company documents, was invaluable as a source of information and was necessary for gaining a basic familiarity with the terminology of the industry and for constructing much of the story. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded with fifty-eight persons, including individual workers, union representatives and company officials. The majority of interviews were conducted in the Toronto base during the summer of 1989 and in the Montreal base during late autumn and early winter 1990. Interviews were also conducted in Ottawa in the summer of 1990. Further interviews were carried out in Toronto in early 1993 to update the story. Informal conversations were also held with close to one hundred other individuals connected in some way to the airline industry. All persons encountered during the research were immediately welcoming and showed a keen interest in the project. Many gave a great deal of their time. Their openness and eloquence in describing their experiences resulted in a richly textured portrayal of changes in the nature, conditions and relations of passenger agent work. During my encounters with airline industry people, I was moved by the sense of pride yet the deep disillusionment, the resignation, the anger, the resistance and the want for more fulfilling and creative life experiences, and could not but sense the immensity of wasted human potential under capitalism.

In chapter two, I review the theoretical frameworks that are used to analyze the transformation of the work of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. In exploring the relevant themes and key concepts from theories of the labour process and socialist feminist theories of women and work, I delineate a frame of reference to facilitate the telling of the story and the fashioning of the analysis.

Chapter three provides an overview of the creation and development of TCA/Air

Canada and locates changes within the evolving Canadian air transportation industry. This sets the context for understanding the transformation of the labour process of passenger agents. I trace the growth in passenger traffic, the financial performance of the carrier, the inauguration of new routes, services and products, modifications to fare structures and the introduction of new types of aircraft. Moreover, I examine the growth in competition and its impact on the nature of the industry. I also emphasize the significant role played by the state in shaping the Canadian airline industry over the past half century.

In chapters four and five, I analyze major changes that have occurred in the immediate labour process of passenger agents since the formation of TCA in 1937 until the turbulent period of the early 1990s and relate these transformations to the expansion of air transportation and the spread of passenger handling functions. Both chapters deal for the most part with the effects of major waves of technological development, especially in the areas of computer and telecommunications technologies, on the organization of work, job security and employment practices, as well as on the provision of services. I argue that the ongoing implementation of new forms of technology and the restructuring of work have increased managerial control over workers and resulted in deskilling. I nonetheless show that these processes were not linear given the growing variety and complexity of products which acted as countervailing forces. In order to paint a more complete picture of the contemporary labour process, a large section of chapter five is devoted to an account by passenger agents of their work experience in the crisis-ridden environment of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Throughout both chapters, I trace the union's increasingly militant stance and the more conflictual union-

management relations that emerged beginning in the 1960s, and connect these changes to the process of proletarianization. Finally, I demonstrate that, as the work of passenger agents became more deskilled, automated and controlled, and as threats to employment security grew, the passenger agent job became increasingly feminized. In this context, I discuss some of the major difficulties women have faced in the workplace.

Chapter six addresses job security issues. I argue that the job security of passenger agents was gradually diluted with the continual introduction of new technologies, the cross-utilization of different groups of company employees and the contracting out of work. I focus much attention on the contracting out of airline customer services to independent travel agencies (made increasingly possible by technological innovations), one of the most significant causes of the erosion of passenger agents' employment security. Throughout, I demonstrate that these changes in employment practices, which are part of the process of proletarianization, contributed to worsening labour-management relations and spurred the union into more militant action. In the final section of the chapter, I assess the union's ability to use the collective bargaining process and the grievance system to oppose ongoing threats to job security, and discuss in some detail its more recent attempts to develop innovative policies and programmes to strengthen job protection.

Chapter seven deals with job training and workplace monitoring. In the first part of the chapter which focuses on training, I show that despite the need for passenger agents to develop sound people skills, training programmes have consistently been of a stronger, but still limited, technical nature. This approach to training has restricted the development of transferable skills and thus hindered passenger agents' labour market

mobility. I also point to the union's attempts to gain some control over training. In the second part of the chapter where I discuss the company's techniques for monitoring passenger agents, I demonstrate that these practices underwent a fundamental transformation whereby the paternalistic and unsystematic style of supervision of the early years was largely replaced by sophisticated computer-based monitoring beginning in the late 1970s. This furthered deskilling and work intensification, and increased managerial control over the labour process. I show that these workplace changes, which were part of the process of proletarianization, contributed to worsening labour-management relations as workers' and their union resisted growing managerial control and fought to eliminate, or at least limit, employer monitoring and measurement practices.

Chapter eight looks at issues related to work time and connects the paid workplace to the household. I argue that the work time dimension, an often overlooked aspect of the labour process, is important to workers because of its impact on the quality of life at work as well as outside of the workplace. I provide an in-depth historical investigation of various issues surrounding work scheduling such as the length of the workday, overtime, definitions of shift and work schedules, union involvement in the establishment of work schedules, company requested shift and schedule changes, and worker requested shift trades. In addition, I document the growth in the use of part-time labour and the changing working conditions of part-time employees. I demonstrate that while the union was initially successful in gaining some control over matters pertaining to work time, it has suffered major losses over the past decade, a situation which has resulted in worsening conditions for passenger agents. These changes, which are part of the process

of proletarianization, became one of the most contentious workplace issues and gave rise to much confrontation between workers and management. Furthermore, I discuss the different implications of work schedules, shift trades and part-time work for women and men passenger agents, given the sexual division of labour. I also examine how maternity leave has been dealt with by the union and the company, and explore the childcare and household division of labour.

Chapter nine documents the transformation of the union representing passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada from its beginnings as a small, independent and company-oriented association following the Second World War, through its development into a larger and stronger union regrouping workers from various airline companies in the mid-1980s, to its merger with the more powerful UAW in 1985 and its subsequent growth. I demonstrate that the union became more militant and progressive in its policies and practices, especially beginning in the late 1970s, in the context of the further degradation of work and of mounting pressures brought on by the economic crisis and growing attacks from employers and the state. In the final section of the chapter, I review women's status in the union. I reveal that despite women's numerical predominance in the union since the 1960s, they have been relatively absent from leadership positions, and issues of concern to women have generally not been central to the union agenda.

Chapter ten focuses on the transformation of labour-management relations at TCA/Air Canada. I trace the change from the paternalistic style of the early years to the more conflictual relations that emerged in the 1960s and worsened throughout the entire period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. I review important rounds of contract negotiations, concentrating on the issues raised and the nature of workers' collective

actions. I demonstrate that while an increasingly militant union was able to make important gains, it nevertheless faced major difficulties in resisting the employer's demands, given the deepening economic crisis and significant industry changes as well as fundamental modifications to the labour process leading to worsening working conditions and weaker job security. I pay particular attention to the 1984-1985 round of collective bargaining which culminated in the first full-scale strike by passenger agents against Air Canada in response to management's attempts to wrest major contract concessions from workers.

Finally, in chapter eleven, I pull together the research findings and draw general conclusions about the changing nature, conditions and relations of the work of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. I also discuss foreseeable labour process and airline industry changes that could drastically affect the work experience and job security of passenger agents in the not so distant future. In this context, I consider the more general implications of such mutations for women's white-collar work under capitalism.

Endnotes

1. Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).
2. Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, p. 367.

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter, I explore key concepts from theories of the labour process and socialist feminist theories of women and work. The most fruitful attempts thus far to develop a satisfactory analysis of work in capitalist societies lie within these theoretical frameworks. The following overview of themes from these schools of thought serves as a basis for developing an explanation of the transformation of the work of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. The historical materialist approach provides strong tools for the telling of the story of social experiences and relations and for the shaping of an analysis of this reality.

New Theories of the Labour Process

Marx¹ referred to the labour process as that process which brings together labour power and the means of production to create goods which satisfy the various needs and wants that exist in human society, or in other words to produce commodities that have a use value. This definition of the labour process reflects his materialist conception of society, a perspective that views labouring as the most fundamental activity in human history. Marx argued that production is always socially organized and when people enter into production they do so based on their relationship to the means of production, that is, either in their capacity of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. A distinguishing feature of the capitalist mode of production is the category of free wage labour. Individual workers are freed from legal constraints that prevent them from disposing of their own labour power, yet they lack the means to produce for themselves and are thus obliged to sell their capacity to labour in exchange for money in order to subsist. Capitalists, on the other hand, purchase labour power as well as necessary tools

and materials and set workers to produce commodities for exchange in the market. These products must realize in the market an exchange value greater than the cost of the factors of production. The commodity labour power has a special property in that it is capable of creating value greater than that required to reproduce itself. This capacity for surplus labour represents the essential source for the expansion of capital. Given the imperative of capital accumulation, the specificity of the labour process under capitalism is the subordination of the production of use values to the production of surplus value. In capitalist societies, labour power is thus oriented not to the satisfaction of human needs but to the expansion of capital.

The production process must constantly be revolutionized if profit is to be generated on an ever-expanding scale. Because the commodity that workers sell is not a fixed amount of labour embodied in a completed product but a potential, labour power, unlike the other commodities purchased by the capitalist, represents a variable and indeterminate component of the production process. This means that workers not only have infinite creative potential, but they also have a consciousness and can thus act on the conditions of their creation. In order to realize this potential and thus pump surplus out of workers, capital must transform purchased labour power into labour under its own control. Given the basic conflict of interests inherent in the labour-capital relationship, extraction of surplus always remains problematic.

Marx's painstaking study of the labour process revealed that employers had been successful in increasing productivity and gaining greater control over workers during the early stages of capitalism through such strategies as the gathering of independent artisans in workshops which facilitated the enforcement upon workers of regular hours of work,

and the intensification and extension of work time which served to reduce the porosity of the workday. These methods, however, did not transform the customary organization of labour and workers retained much control over the actual process of production. Moreover, given the physical limits to the ability of workers to endure the expansion of the working day and in the context of working class resistance to these new measures, capitalists turned to other means in their attempts to extract surplus from workers. Firstly, the method of production within the workshop was reorganized with the introduction of a detailed division of labour, whereby operations usually handled by each worker were separated and assigned to different workers, giving rise to an interdependent organization of labour. The widespread introduction of machinery further extended the cheapening of labour and the erosion of workers' control over the production process. Marx provided an in-depth account of workers' considerable resistance to both the detailed division of labour and generalized mechanization, thereby showing that despite their disadvantaged position in capitalist relations of production, workers are, as David Knights and Hugh Willmott put it, "neither impotent nor ineffectual."²

Braverman³ closely adhered to the central tenet of Marx's analysis by reinstating the imperative of capital accumulation as fundamental in determining the continuous transformation of the labour process and the degradation of work in capitalist societies. He also recognized that employers had been successful in gaining greater control over the labour process during the early stages of capitalism. According to Braverman, however, the transition to real subordination was only completed through scientific management or Taylorism and associated changes in the industrial application of scientific knowledge. He argued that with the onset and consolidation of monopoly

capitalism, Taylorism was embraced as the ultimate means to deskill, control and cheapen labour. Scientific management could be reduced to three main principles: the gathering by management of the knowledge of the labour process possessed by workers and the reduction of this know-how to their own rules and laws (or the dissociation of the labour process from the skills of workers); the concentration of this knowledge as the exclusive preserve of management together with its essential converse, the absence of such knowledge among the workers (or the separation of conception from execution of work); and finally, the use of this monopoly over knowledge to control and monitor each step of production. For Braverman, Taylorism could be viewed as nothing less than an essential and defining feature of the capitalist labour process which renders "conscious and systematic, the formerly unconscious tendency of capitalist production."⁴

He further argued that by systematically combining together previous insights, scientific management provided a method of control that could be applied at any given level of technology. Braverman maintained that even though there had been a limited degree of scientific-technical advancement in the workplace prior to the early decades of the twentieth century, there occurred, during the monopoly phase of capitalism, a more deliberate substitution of research and development for technological tinkering. This phenomenon both complemented and compounded Taylorism in the subsumption of labour to capital.

Braverman's study also focused on how capital movements and the ever-extending areas of capitalist commodity production gave rise to new labour processes. This led to an examination of the shift in the occupational structure from blue-collar to white-collar employment. Braverman revealed that workers in the new clerical and service

occupations and industries were also being subjected to Taylorism and automation as employers sought to wrest the maximum surplus labour from their purchased commodity, labour power. In examining the implications of the transformation of labour power under monopoly capitalism for the structure and composition of the working class, Braverman argued that the development of capitalist production tends to erode the differences between the types and categories of labour, thus leading to an overall homogenization of the working class through a process of proletarianization.

While Braverman's study has received much praise for furthering our understanding of work under advanced capitalism, it has nonetheless been subjected to much criticism over the years. The most sustained attack levelled against his treatise has been that by ignoring the role of worker resistance and class struggle, it failed to insert Marx's dynamic view of the development of the production process under capitalism.⁵ Braverman's analysis thus tended to be one-sided because it attributed omnipotent powers to capitalists in designing and controlling the organization of work and failed to see workers' actions as mediating factors to changes in the labour process. It also suggested, as Craig Littler and Graeme Salaman put it, "that capitalists no longer face the problem of labour power as a variable and indeterminate component of the production process."⁶ Detailed historical studies have convincingly demonstrated, however, that workers' actions in terms of resistance, accommodation and compromise are of consequence and thus do give shape and substance to the labour process.

A dominant thread in labour process theory has been the debate over the nature of skill and the deskilling process. An influential literature has developed which focuses on the craft experience and offers insights into what has happened to paid work under

capitalism.⁷ Notwithstanding the richness of these studies - which have generally gone beyond Braverman by including the dynamic of class resistance and compromise - the approach has been criticized for idealizing traditional craft work and the position of craft labour in industry. Al Szymanski⁸ and others have challenged the significance given to work of a craft nature, pointing out that skilled craft workers never did constitute the majority of the labour force and never amounted to more than a small percentage of the working class. Moreover, as Paul Thompson⁹ remarked, organized non-craft workers' opposition to capital has been a distinguishing feature of class struggle in twentieth-century capitalism. A limited focus on craft workers thus leaves out a whole set of work structures, experiences and relations and consequently cannot provide a complete or even adequate analysis of paid work under capitalism.

Braverman's central thesis, that there has occurred a generalized deskilling of labour in twentieth-century capitalism, has been supported and furthered by a main strand of labour process theory. This argument effectively challenges mainstream industrial sociology's contention that rising skill levels are an inherent aspect of capitalism. Most labour process commentators, however, have forcefully pointed out that deskilling is a historical process which is far more multi-faceted than that allowed for by a straightforward deskilling thesis, an approach that clearly does not do justice to the complex reality of what happens to work in twentieth-century western capitalism. A more nuanced analysis has developed which highlights the non-linear process of deskilling and the variety of skills outcomes. Studies¹⁰ have stressed the long and uneven process involved in deskilling and have demonstrated that certain groups of workers underwent waves of deskilling, while others retained their skills but experienced

a shift from the centre of production to its periphery. Evidence from studies¹¹ also indicates that new skills could and did emerge through the implementation of new technologies and products, but that these skills were subject to the transformative pressures of capitalist development. And, as Craig Heron and Robert Storey observed, "the picture is clouded still further by the growth of the ambiguous 'semi-skilled' work force."¹²

This last point raises the issue of skills definition, another fundamental aspect of the labour process debate. Braverman's conception of skill, like that of most other contributors to the labour process perspective, focused on abilities and knowledge, the unity of conception and execution, and the exercise of control over the work process. Even though he did warn against the dangers of accepting official definitions of skills, by eschewing an examination of worker organization and custom and tradition in shaping the direction of the labour process, Braverman failed nonetheless to fully grasp the political dimension of skill.

By directing our attention to worker resistance and struggle, other studies¹³ have cleared the way for a consideration of the social construction of skill as combining ideology and collective action. Historical analysis reveals that groups of skilled workers were able to create strong craft unions and make use of their organizational strength to resist, to a certain extent, capital's assaults. Because of the collective control that these workers managed to secure through trade unions, they were able to preserve their skilled status, wage differentials and other rewards and privileges associated with skill even in the face of fundamental changes to the technical aspect of work. In order to achieve this end, mechanisms of social exclusion aimed at controlling apprenticeships and recruitment

to trades were adopted.

Studies¹⁴ have also shown that while some groups of workers have been recognized as skilled, the 'skills' in question can be learned in shorter periods of time than is officially stated. They have been able to expose that apprenticeships are not always devoted to teaching skills to the extent sometimes claimed. Moreover, research on work has concluded that so-called unskilled or semi-skilled jobs may also have a significant skill content which is not defined as such, a situation attributed to the lack of workers' organizational power or to stereotypes surrounding categories of work. As Ian Radforth¹⁵ pointed out, for example, the abilities of less respectable workers such as bushworkers have been unrecognized. And, as I shall explore at greater length later in this chapter, the considerable skills of women have also been systematically downgraded. Furthermore, Tony Manwaring and Stephen Wood¹⁶ have underlined the presence and importance of what has been termed 'tacit skills', that is, the day-to-day knowledge and creativity that workers make use of in production. Such skills, which are acquired after years of on-the-job experience, are usually taken for granted by workers as well as by employers who are able to have them deployed.

Braverman's inquiry was pivotal in reestablishing a critical analysis of technological change as it was for other aspects of the workplace. Numerous studies¹⁷ have substantiated his claim that particular technologies are designed and implemented to deskill, eliminate and control human labour in order to enhance profitable accumulation. In specifying that technologies bear the imprint of the social context in which they are developed and deployed, the labour process literature has provided an important corrective to the conventional belief dominant in academic, workplace and

mass media milieus that technological change is neutral and determines the organization of work and the unfolding of production on the basis of technical necessity and efficiency. According to the latter view, technological innovations are inevitable and in the common interests of capital and labour. Those who oppose such change are seen as standing in the way of progress and thus dismissed as Luddites. In an attempt to transcend technological determinism, labour process theorists argue that technology is not neutral nor inevitable, but, as David Noble so eloquently put it, "the intentions and choices of particular people have informed the design and deployment of the new technology, given its shape, direction and purpose."¹⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that new technologies bolster capital's power to restructure the labour process, constraints are imposed by workers' actions. New forms of technology introduced to revolutionize production, however, can make worker resistance even more difficult, a reality that presently confronts large numbers of workers in the context of global restructuring. Especially significant are fundamental innovations in microelectronics, a new generation of technology that has considerable impact on the nature and conditions of work. This technology also has profound implications for the position of workers in the labour market given its ability to eliminate labour and restructure the employment relationship through the contracting out of work and various forms of homeworking, thereby impinging on job security. There is clearly no inevitability in the manner in which technology has degraded and eliminated human labour because alternative systems can be chosen and systems can and do embody the possibility of greater creative input from workers.

The theme of managerial strategies of control has been a major focus of the

labour process debate. Following Braverman, research¹⁹ on the workplace has revealed the extensive influence of Taylorism on blue-collar jobs. A growing number of studies²⁰ on white-collar labour processes also lend testimony to the impact of Taylorism as a significant set of management practices structuring this type of work. Although empirical evidence indicates that this method of control is clearly a set of implemented practices, various commentators have nonetheless critiqued Braverman for relying too heavily on an assumed universal and unproblematic adoption by management of Taylorism to secure control of the labour process. Studies²¹ have shown that Taylorism was a far more complex phenomenon than Braverman supposed. Indeed, scientific management was not universally adopted as the strategy for designing work and controlling labour, and when it was actually favoured, implementation tended to be varied and uneven. Moreover, Taylorism encountered several obstacles including resistance not only from workers, but also from management.

A dominant feature of the control debate has been the theme of alternative strategies to the Taylorist model. Three influential labour process theorists, Andrew Friedman, Richard Edwards and Michael Burawoy - writing immediately following the publication of Braverman's treatise - developed typologies of employer strategies of control and linked changes in strategies to conflict at work.

In his examination of a number of case studies on work in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British capitalism, Friedman²² demonstrated that management has been able to draw on strategies which rely on either direct control or responsible autonomy to exercise authority over workers. With the direct control type of strategy, of which Taylorism is the clearest expression, management achieves control by means of the

specification of work methods, close supervision and coercion. By minimizing the area of workers' responsibility, it suppresses the variability inherent in labour power. The responsible autonomy strategy, on the other hand, aims to harness the creativity of labour power by providing workers with the possibility of exercising a certain degree of discretion over their immediate work process. Friedman considered contradictions within each strategy and the problem of switching from one mode of control to another. Both strategies present fundamental limitations in that direct control treats workers as though they were machines and responsible autonomy treats workers as though the aims of capital were their own, whereas in reality, workers have an independent will and have alienated their labour power. Friedman noted:

There is always a fundamental tension between the need to gain co-operation or consent from those who do the work, and the need to force them to do things they do not wish to do, or to be treated in a way which is against their own interests, in order that the goals of those 'in control' of the labour process be achieved.²³

He contended that management's choice of method is conditioned by worker resistance as well as by changing market conditions for labour and products. In his scheme, different types of strategies are used by managers when dealing with different groups of workers who are seen as either central or peripheral to operations. Central workers, who are usually organized and more skilled, are likely to be dealt with in terms of responsible autonomy, whereas peripheral workers, who are poorly organized and more expendable, are susceptible to direct control. While he noted that both types of strategies have characterized management throughout the history of capitalism, Friedman argued that there has occurred a general shift towards responsible autonomy strategies which allow employers to deal more effectively with organized labour through the use of conciliation

and cooptation instead of coercion.

In tracing the development of capitalist control over the labour process in the United States, Edwards²⁴ constructed a model of three historically successive dominant methods of control, simple, technical and bureaucratic. He conceptualized shifts in control in terms of worker resistance and changing socioeconomic conditions. According to Edwards, simple control, which characterized competitive capitalism and involved direct, authoritarian supervision, began breaking down under the strain of worker resistance and the centralization of capital. Following unsuccessful experiments during the early decades of the twentieth century, which included scientific management, welfare measures and company unions, there occurred a shift to structural forms of control that were part of the physical or social organization of the workplace rather than dependent on the personal power of employers or their functionaries. The first of these methods was of a technical nature and emerged in production processes, such as the assembly line or continuous flow production, which largely relied on a technology that paced and directed workers, and thus annihilated their initiative on the job. Edwards argued, however, that these forms of work organization tended to unify the labour force and provoked widespread worker militancy, especially during the 1930s. Such problems eventually led to the emergence, in large-scale organizations, of a second type of structure-based strategy which became dominant during the post-war period, namely bureaucratic control. For Edwards, this form of control is:

embedded in the social and organizational structure of the firm and is built into job categories, work rules, promotion procedures, discipline, wage scales, definitions of responsibilities, and the like.²⁵

This institutionalized control, which places emphasis upon the incorporation of the

workforce, stratifies work and job titles and provides a definite structure of rewards and sanctions by impersonal rules and unobtrusive controls. According to Edwards, because American capitalism developed unevenly, modern industry is characterized by the existence of all three structures of control which underpin the three major labour markets that emerged under advanced capitalism. Secondary labour market jobs, which require few skills and provide poor wages, poor working conditions, few opportunities for advancement and minimal job security, tend to be vulnerable to simple control. Subordinate primary labour market jobs, which require firm-specific skills and offer higher wages, better working conditions, greater possibilities for promotion and relatively stable employment, are linked with technical control, while independent primary labour market jobs, which require high skill levels and are characterized by relatively high wages, good benefits, good working conditions, secure employment and career ladders, are associated with bureaucratic control.

Like Friedman and Edwards, Burawoy²⁶ also worked with a typology of managerial strategies. He identified two modes of control, despotic and hegemonic. The former, which is largely based on coercion, is the same as simple control and is associated with competitive capitalism, whereas the latter refers to more sophisticated means of winning consent in monopoly capitalist firms. Burawoy maintained that under hegemonic regimes, the interests of management and workers are 'concretely coordinated' in the generation of surplus value, thereby inserting the worker into the labour process as an individual rather than as a member of a class in opposition to another class. He discussed how the obscuring and securing of surplus labour is achieved through the organization of the labour process into some form of game with

informal rules and practices which involves the active participation of both management and workers and which includes a system of rewards dependent upon individual rather than collective effort. Burawoy also argued that under monopoly capitalism, two workplace apparatus emerged to effectively integrate workers. The internal labour market, with its promise of rewards and mobility, internalizes the competitive individualism of the external labour market and fosters greater commitment to the enterprise. The internal state, in the form of collective bargaining and grievance machinery, institutionalizes conflict and constitutes workers as industrial citizens by providing them with a set of contractually defined rights as well as obligations, but also serves to set limits on managerial discretion. In his early work, Burawoy, like Friedman and Edwards, pointed to a general historical shift towards more consensual forms of workplace organization. However, he later identified a third type of factory regime, hegemonic despotism, which became dominant with the recessionary climate of the 1980s.²⁷ He maintained that the increased mobility of capital and the internationalization of the division of labour weakened union organizations and forced concessions from workers. The new despotism was not like that of competitive capitalism because it was founded on the hegemonic regime it was replacing. As he stated:

workers face the threat of losing their jobs not as individuals but as a result of threats to the viability of the firm. This enables management to turn the hegemonic regime against workers, relying on its mechanisms of coordinating interests to command consent in sacrifices."²⁸

The three above-mentioned labour process theorists clearly went beyond Braverman's understanding of workplace relations, especially because they took into

account the effects of workers' actions on modes of managerial strategies of control and offered a more nuanced analysis of changes in control systems. They have been criticized, however, for falling victim to what Littler and Salaman³⁹ identified as a 'panacea fallacy' by suggesting that one strategy or another served to overcome contradictions inherent within the capitalist labour process, thereby successfully stabilizing capital-labour relations. Other analyses⁴⁰ of the labour process have avoided such an assumption and have instead focused on the multi-faceted nature of control by exploring the range of control dimensions and strategies which are used in the same time period and frequently in combination.

What is clear from these studies is that the antagonism inherent in the capital labour relation and the dynamic nature of capital accumulation create many of the conditions for diversity in managerial practices. As employers attempt to make effective use of the labour power they purchase and extract the maximum effort from this living commodity, workers fight their bosses' impositions and rarely just let the 'circumstances' prevail. The problem of management is that control remains problematic as long as workers are hired because, contrary to the other commodities involved in production, labour power is always embodied in people with independent and potentially hostile wills. Workers' attempts to resist the onslaught of oppressive conditions and relations have taken various forms, ranging from collective struggles to more informal and unorganized actions to solitary and hidden efforts. These struggles, in and out of the workplace, have occurred over various aspects of work. Even though worker resistance has often been contained by restrictive legalism and bureaucracy, upsurges in militancy unequivocally demonstrate that the working class cannot be permanently suppressed. The process of

class formation has never been direct or unmediated.

While workers have an interest in resistance to subordination, they are nonetheless tied to the interests of their employers. They are therefore compelled into acts of resistance while actively participating, sometimes grudgingly, in the capitalist labour process. Clearly, in an individuating and alienating environment, workers devise various means to get by. Capital, for its part, cannot rely wholly on direct control or coercion and workers' cooperation and creative powers must be engaged and mobilized. There thus develops a "complex interplay of antagonism and co-operation,"³¹ a continuum of overlapping worker and employer initiatives and responses.

Clearly, as the above review of the labour process literature reveals, management is not omnipotent when it comes to the organization of work because workers' actions do influence the outcome. Moreover, employers do not always hold a coherent and fully conscious set of policies, nor do they have omniscience about the effects of their policies and strategies. The existence of different levels of management can create bottlenecks, given that decisions taken at the upper echelons of a corporation may not be, and probably are often not, implemented in a coordinated and even manner throughout the organization.³² As Littler argued:

intended strategy is transformed into emergent practices (realized strategy) only with 'leakages' at all levels of the organization, though there is some limits to the deviation of practice from policy.³³

Like workers, employers and managers are never mere ciphers and choices are made, albeit within a set of constraints. Furthermore, as many of the studies previously cited have shown, given the contradictory nature of capitalist development, long-term strategic planning often becomes piecemeal and secondary to coping with everyday crises.

Employers' policies, strategies and actions have not always been specific to the immediate labour process. Indeed, as a number of commentators³⁴ have pointed out, the market conditions for labour and products, which are influenced by factors such as the size of the corporation, the degree of competition, the state of the overall economy and the impact of government policies, are often the main focus of managerial activities. Managerial decisions concerning these markets that are unspecific to the labour process usually have deep implications for the nature and organization of work and for relations of production.

Since the late 1970s, labour process theorists have begun taking into account the relevance of the state in shaping workplace transformations. During this period, a debate on the most useful theorization of the contemporary state has been under way which has paralleled the debate on the labour process.³⁵ The most fruitful attempt to understand the state in capitalist society has focused on the Marxist concept of the relative autonomy of the state. This theoretical premise arose in opposition to the tendency to reduce the state to a blind instrument of the capitalist class. The relative autonomy thesis provides a means of viewing the state as exercising some independence from direct capitalist class manipulation even though it recognizes that the state is not independent of forces in capitalist society and is shaped by the dominant social structures of, and relations within, that society. According to this approach, the state is conceptualized as a location of, and a mediator for, inter- and intra-class conflicts, alliances and compromises.³⁶

For Marxist theorists, the capitalist state plays a role in securing and enhancing the general conditions necessary for the creation and appropriation of surplus value on an ever-expanding scale. In order to ensure that capitalism is maintained over the long

term, the state must mediate the competing interests of different fractions of the capitalist class. This means that its decisions and activities have, at times, frustrated individual capitalists and that conflicts have arisen between capitalists and state agents.

State policies and programmes aimed at ensuring favourable conditions for the long-term operation of capitalist enterprise have varied over time and between social formations. In Canada, as elsewhere, they have historically included measures to ensure the creation of an infrastructure, the institution of systems of credit to facilitate the financing of large overhead costs and the provision of grants, bail-outs, tax incentives and depreciation allowances.³⁷ As Leo Panitch aptly remarked, the state has "underwritten the private risks of production at public expense."³⁸ It has also helped create a labour market for capital through land, immigration, education and employment policies and programmes.³⁹

While promoting capital accumulation, the state also acts to contain conflict and mediate, not only among various factions of capital, but also between subordinate and dominant classes. In the process, it participates in legitimating power relations in the workplace and more generally in society. The actions of the subordinate classes, however, do have an impact on state strategies. The relative autonomy concept helps explain how the state responds to working class demands (and thus how gains are made by the labour movement) while at the same time securing the long-term interests of the capitalist class. Much of the state's welfare activities involving the provision of public education, health care, social security and welfare programmes are generally the outcome of popular and working class demands and, as such, can be seen as gains for subordinate groups. Nonetheless, as Ian Gough⁴⁰ and others have argued, state expenditures in the

form of social wages and social services also facilitate the reproduction of a healthy, well trained and disciplined working population and serve to ensure the reproduction of capitalist social relations, thereby facilitating the process of capital accumulation.

An interventionist state in the realm of industrial relations has been important in mediating between management and workers and thus in shaping overall relations between capital and labour. Critical analyses of industrial relations have shown that concessions won through labour's combativeness have generally been channelled into workplace apparatus regulated by legislation.⁴¹ Increased state regulation of workplace relations has thus facilitated the institutionalization of industrial conflict and the effective integration of the working class into capitalist relations of production. In an effort to link larger politics to workplace politics, Burawoy has advanced the concept of the internal state in reference to state-based mechanisms within the labour process which regulate and contain conflicts and thus manage the class struggle. Formal procedures have tended to replace strike action and other activities, but the bureaucratization of workplace politics does not preclude the possibility of worker unrest being expressed in non-regulated and non-sanctioned practices. Moreover, with the current shift towards a more coercive, less consensual system of state-labour relations, workers may engage in alternative forms of resistance.

The state has also become relevant to labour process theory for another major but often overlooked reason. During the period of growth and expansion following the Second World War, the state emerged as a major employer. While case studies⁴² of state workers are relatively few, there are clear indications that the labour process in state-controlled institutions has undergone fundamental transformations similar to those

in private enterprise. Clearly, governments are not driven by the requirement to accumulate capital as is the case with private corporations. Moreover, they can raise taxes to generate revenue to cover expenditures, and deficits can also be used over long periods of time without leading to financial collapse. The state, however, is located within a specific mode of production, and economic relations and structures definitely set limits on its options. Rising deficits and increased taxes on both corporations and individuals do have implications for capital accumulation. The state is thus compelled to reduce labour costs and enhance productivity by pumping surplus labour out of its own employees. The extent to which it succeeds in these efforts will of course depend on the balance of class forces that traverse the state at any particular conjuncture.

Socialist Feminist Theories of Women's Work

The most fruitful attempt thus far to theorize women's work can be found within the socialist feminist framework. The analytical roots of this relatively recently developed body of thought are located within both radical feminist and Marxist traditions. The newly formulated perspective does not merely seek to synthesize these two approaches but strives to go beyond their respective limitations and inadequacies and produce a more complete explanation of gender relations and women's subordination. The socialist feminist project has been, in large part, to explicate the complex and often contradictory links between sex and class in capitalist societies. As Jaggar put it:

Socialist feminists claim that a full understanding of the capitalist system requires a recognition of the way in which it is structured by male dominance and, conversely, that a full understanding of contemporary male dominance requires a recognition of the way it is organized by the capitalist division of labor.⁴³

Given this agenda, socialist feminists have been highly critical of radical feminist and Marxist analyses because of their narrow focus on one basis, either sex or class, to explain the subordination of women under capitalism.⁴⁴ While acknowledging the fundamental importance of class to an understanding of women's oppression, socialist feminism faults Marxist analyses for failing to recognize that sex is a basic organizing principle of capitalist societies. It thus challenges the tendency in Marxism to reduce women's oppression to capitalist exploitation and consequently to by-products of class relations. Class processes do not fully encompass and therefore cannot adequately make sense of women's structured reality and everyday experiences. In considering the sex ordering of society, it is clear that there is no unambiguous homogeneity of interests in the working class. Like radical feminism, socialist feminism maintains that any analysis of society must insist on the specific and distinct character of gender relations and divisions. In pointing to the unequal and hierarchical distribution of power between women and men, feminists working within both frameworks argue that a concept of male privilege and male domination is essential to comprehend women's oppression. Unlike radical feminism, however, socialist feminism posits the need to conceptualize women's position in a historical rather than universal and sometimes biologicistic way. According to socialist feminism, although male domination of women has been documented throughout most of recorded history, to view female subordination in a transhistorical way distorts its meaning and precludes the possibility of seeing its variability within and between different modes of production and social formations. Socialist feminism advocates a historical analysis that roots the discussion in processes instead of static, unchanging structures, thus leading to an investigation of the interactive role of sex and

class in historically specific and concrete contexts.

Like Marxism, socialist feminism's method is not only historical but also materialist and, as such, it is committed to an analysis of the material and social arrangements that frame particular situations of domination and subordination. Though materialism is central to socialist feminism, its proponents have argued that it is necessary to broaden the meaning of what is considered the material conditions of human life. For Marxists, the historically prevailing system of organizing social production to ensure human sustenance refers to the economic dynamics of society and, under capitalism, this centres on the ways in which various goods and services are produced for exchange in the market. Socialist feminism goes beyond this specific economic dynamic and speaks more broadly of all the conditions that create and sustain human life, including market commodity production as well as the unpaid, invisible domestic work involved in procreation, childrearing and general household maintenance.⁴⁵ The domestic labour debate,⁴⁶ though fraught with difficulties, has been quite valuable in rendering visible and in establishing the significance to capitalism of the unpaid and unseen work performed overwhelmingly by women in private households for the daily and generational reproduction of free wage labourers. It has also been instrumental in establishing that the private household and the formal economy are interpenetrating parts of the same system.

The totality of these human activities is captured by the analytical concept of the sexual division of labour which has been a unifying theme in the socialist feminist framework but remains unproblematized in both radical and mainstream theory. According to Iris Young, a sexual division of labour analysis is useful in that it:

allows us to do material analysis of the social relations of labor in gender specific terms without assuming that all women in general or all women in a particular society have a common and unified situation.⁴⁷

In emphasizing the centrality of the sexual division of labour in understanding women's oppression, the approach focuses on the activities and relations that produce, reproduce and modify the material conditions of people's lives through a process of contradiction that involves the dynamics of sex and class. These real conditions and relations pattern and are patterned by sets of ideas about sex differences. As Michèle Barrett⁴⁸ argued, the ideological supports for the sexual division of labour are to be found in the social construction of gender.

Socialist feminists are interested, not only in the determinate character of the sexual division of labour, but also in how this division is created by, or intensifies power differentials between women and men at specific historical moments. One of the main achievements of the socialist feminist framework has been to show how the separation of the private household and the public workplace, brought about by the development of large-scale production under the wage labour system, has proven oppressive to women. The splitting of social life into two spheres under capitalism has created a historically unique situation for women, and the subsequent processes have substantially contributed to the formation of a sexual division of labour in which women's position is located primarily in relation to their responsibility for childcare and other domestic labour within the privatized area of the household and in relation to a historically segregated labour market where women are subordinate.

Clearly then, the sexual division of labour, which denotes all structured sex differentiation of work in a society, refers, under capitalism, to the mechanisms that

allocate work on the basis of sex both within and between the household and the wage labour market. Given that the sexual division of labour is a process which cuts through the private sphere and the formal economy, socialist feminism considers the contradictions and connections between household and paid labour relations and their impact on the subordination of women.

In the labour market, the sexual division of labour involves a sharply structured differentiation between male and female areas of work. While the demarcation has shifted over time, sex-based segregation has persisted. Women have been clustered into particular occupations and industries rather than spread evenly among them. This dimension of labour segmentation is exacerbated by a vertical division in which women are disadvantaged relative to men in terms of pay, working conditions, job security and promotional prospects.⁴⁹ Moreover, as argued by Barrett, the division of labour includes an ideological dimension:

the categories of work primarily undertaken by women have clearly been constructed along the lines of an ideology of gender which poses servicing and caring work as pre-eminently 'feminine'.⁵⁰

In their efforts to produce a satisfactory explanation of women's subordinate position in the labour force, socialist feminists have turned to labour market segmentation theory for some insights. Although the segmentation framework recognizes that women's employment situation is not equal to that of men's and acknowledges that women are disproportionately located in the secondary labour market, its analytical power is limited for several reasons: it merely considers sex as one of several cleavages that divide the working class, it tends to overemphasize the role of conflict between capital and labour and underemphasize the importance of intra-class struggles in explaining stratification in

the labour market, it does not provide an explanation of why women end up in particular kinds of paid jobs and it fails to link women's labour force jobs to their domestic work. In addressing these issues, socialist feminists have produced a more sophisticated explanation of women's labour force participation.

In a pioneering article where she made the historical processes engendering sex-based segmentation a central issue in the study of women's work, Heidi Hartmann¹ argued that job segregation by sex could not be fully explained by capitalists' need to divide and rule the labour force and insisted that the practices of male workers had to be taken into account. In attributing agency to men as such, she emphasized male material interests in helping to create and sustain segmentation and hierarchy in the labour market. According to Hartmann, the emergence of capitalism threatened the pre-capitalist division of labour in the household, whereby men controlled the labour of women and children, because the latter groups were being used by capital as an important source of wage labour. Hartmann also pointed out that when women entered wage labour, they appear to have been at a disadvantage relative to men because they possessed fewer skills that could be easily monopolized, commanded lower wages and were less well organized. Men on the other hand displayed stronger organizational and work skills that could more readily be monopolized. Threatened by competition from this cheaper source of labour power and faced with the potential loss of control over the labour of women in the household sphere, working class men, through their political and trade union organizations, played a role in limiting women's participation in paid labour, maintaining their inferiority in the labour market and ensuring their subordination in the household. This was achieved through exclusionary policies and practices in terms of trade unions,

jobs and skills, as well as through fights for protective legislation and the family wage. Once established, the sexual division of labour within the household and within the labour market served to reinforce each other.

While Hartmann emphasized the material interests of men in the creation and perpetuation of women's inferior position within both the labour market and the household, Barrett⁵² stressed the importance of ideology in influencing the outcome. According to Barrett, the specific family-household system that developed under capitalism and the entrenchment of a sex-segregated labour market were not inevitable, but emerged through a historical process in which a pre-existing social differentiation of tasks and an ideology of sex difference that posited women's natural connection to domesticity and men's naturally dominant role within the household were integrated into capitalist relations of production. This ideology of familialism, which defined family life as naturally organized through a male breadwinner with a financially dependent wife responsible for rearing children and maintaining a home, arose in part from pre-capitalist conceptions of women's proper place, but was largely a bourgeois construction that reflected the household structure of the capitalist class. Young⁵³ argued that bourgeois ideology greatly expanded and romanticized women's association with the domestic sphere and dissociation from work outside the home. Studies⁵⁴ have shown that an ideology of domesticity and motherhood was deeply entrenched in middle-class reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was largely accepted by the working class, regardless of actual household structure.

In questioning the centrality of the role of ideology in accounting for the development of the sexual division of labour and the formation of the family-household

system, Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas⁵⁵ have suggested an alternative interpretation that places considerable weight on the exigencies of biological reproduction. They argued that the biological functions of reproduction, specifically pregnancy, childbirth and lactation, as well as childcare were not readily compatible with work outside the home. Capitalist dynamics of production thus posed a severe threat to the survival of the working class. According to Brenner and Ramas, because women spent much of their adult life bearing and nursing children (high fertility was part of an overall strategy of survival) and given that a sexual division of labour and a wage differential favouring men already existed, the most logical and only real alternative for resolving the crisis of working class reproduction was the family-household system. In critiquing such arguments, Jane Jenson⁵⁶ emphasized that women's position is a consequence of social relations and not of childbirth per se and that maternity needs to be understood as a socially constructed relationship. She added that "the mere existence of difference does not lead to its congealment as a system of unequal power."⁵⁷ Clearly, biological difference is given meaning in particular social contexts and cannot be used to explain sex segregation and inequality.

Marx's concept of the industrial reserve army of labour has also been important in the socialist feminist analysis of women's labour force participation, especially that of married women. According to the marxian theory, there is a general tendency for the process of capital accumulation to constantly generate a relative surplus population of workers which can be drawn into the system of wage labour when required due to expansion and expelled when no longer required. This labour reserve is a product of capital accumulation, but is also a necessary condition for further accumulation. The

industrial reserve army provides an available, flexible, disposable and cheap working population which responds to capital movements and acts as a competitive element, thereby regulating wage levels and ensuring the maintenance of profits.

In one of the first systematic attempts to make use of the reserve army thesis to understand women's position in the labour force, Pat Connelly⁵⁸ established a link between women's work in the household and the ways in which capitalist development creates and absorbs a surplus labour force. She argued that because women were initially defined out of the sphere of capitalist commodity production and were assigned the responsibility of the production of simple use values in the household, they formed a latent or institutionalized inactive reserve army of labour. This reserve became activated, according to Connelly, when capitalist commodity production expanded into new areas, taking over activities traditionally accomplished in the home and eradicating old means of survival. Marilyn Power⁵⁹ provided an analysis of how capitalism's invasion of women's work in the home over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gradually changed the nature of this work from predominantly production for both use and exchange to predominantly maintenance, thereby eliminating women's ability to support themselves and their families through work outside the sphere of capitalist production. Because of this erosion, women were compelled to seek paid employment to purchase what was considered necessary to maintain a reasonable standard of living and, conversely, the existence of goods and services made women available to work outside the household, but only to a certain extent as domestic labour was not eliminated. Concurrently, women were systematically drawn into the paid workforce as their labour was needed in the formal economy in the wake of massive capitalist

expansion. The steady rise in women's labour force participation rates following the war lends credence to the assertion that women historically constituted an available, latent reservoir. As well, the segmentation of the labour market and the forms taken by female labour are evidence that women tended to provide a flexible and cheap source of labour power, especially for the growing service and clerical occupations and industries.

Veronica Beechey,⁶¹ for her part, argued that women are a preferred source of the industrial reserve army and the advantages to capital rest on the existence of the family and the ideology of women's dependence within that institution. More specifically, Beechey sought to demonstrate that women are a cheap source of labour power for capital in that they can be paid wages below the value of their labour power because of the assumption that they have only themselves to support or are partly dependent upon men's 'family' wages for part of the costs of their reproduction, whereas men's wages are based on the assumption that they have a family to support. For these same reasons, women who are made redundant tend to disappear virtually without a trace back into the family, a situation which underlines their disposability and flexibility.

The usefulness of the reserve army concept to understand women's labour force participation has been strongly challenged. While most commentators have accepted the argument that women provide a reservoir of labour to be tapped into during times of boom and labour shortage, some have questioned the assumption that female labour is particularly disposable at times of economic crisis. Irene Bruegel⁶¹ and Pat Armstrong⁶² have suggested that labour market segmentation and uneven development protect women from automatic expulsion from the workforce during periods of economic contraction and declining demand for labour. According to these commentators,

women's employment opportunities have been sheltered from the worst effects of the recessions of the mid-1970s and early 1980s, especially because of the continued expansion of the service sector. Armstrong noted, however, that women's official unemployment rates hid the fact that many became underemployed with fewer hours of work while many others simply disappeared from the unemployment data. Furthermore, both Bruegel and Armstrong maintained that the degree of protection that sex segregation had provided women was under threat, especially in the context of the increasing automation of many clerical, sales and service jobs where women traditionally found most of their paid employment and where the cheapness of female labour provided a definite advantage to employers.

The use of the industrial reserve army thesis to account for women's position in the labour force has also been challenged by Floya Anthias⁶³ on the grounds that women have moved permanently into the paid labour market and no longer constitute a reservoir. To speak of women in such terms thus marginalizes the importance of their employment under advanced capitalism. Unquestionably, the latent reserve of women previously without paid work has largely been drawn into commodity production, but many women still belong to the floating reserve of workers who, in response to capital movements and thus to changes in labour requirements, enter or leave the labour market or move from one job to another. In addition, many women still form part of the stagnant reserve of irregularly employed and low-paid workers found in the marginal areas of the economy. Many researchers⁶⁴ have noted that it is principally as part-time workers that women continue to provide an available, flexible and cheap pool of labour. Indeed, since the early 1980s, there has occurred an increase both in the number of part-time jobs and in

the proportion of women undertaking part-time work. Given the nature of many of these jobs and the lack of unionization, women are easily hired, easily fired and readily replaced.

As with most other key themes in labour process theory, the issue of skill has been fundamental to the socialist feminist project of understanding women's labour force work. Socialist feminists have devoted attention to explicating why women tend to perform semi-skilled and unskilled jobs while men tend to perform the skilled ones. Such a focus rests on the assumption that there are real material and intellectual properties involved in skill which cannot be acquired overnight but are usually learned through training and practice.

As argued earlier, the view that skill is simply technically derived is a partial and inadequate view of reality. The premise that skill is socially constructed has been central to the socialist feminist framework because it goes beyond explaining why skills are divided along the lines of sex and forces a questioning of the very definition of most of women's work as unskilled. While socialist feminists have not been alone in advocating a social construction of skill thesis, they have gone beyond other radical analyses by directing our attention to the sex dimensions of skill. Although labour process theorists have been quite adept at pointing to the class struggle involved in the acquisition and definition of skill, they have generally failed to place such processes in the context of relations between women and men. They have thus followed Braverman who, although warning against accepting official designations of skill, did not recognize that definitions put forward are also saturated with a sex bias and failed to see that skill is a component of male power. The evaluation of skills is a highly political, ideological and contextual

process. As Jane Gaskell argued:

In making statements about and evaluations of skill, we stand in our historical time and place, in our culture. We stand in traditions of thought that have been thoroughly dominated by men. And we come face to face with basic questions of value, of power, of women's place in the world.⁶⁵

Who is deemed skilled and what is labelled skill varies according to power relationships based on class as well as sex. Research by socialist feminists has been instrumental in establishing that men have sequestered certain highly rewarded skills over time and have successfully hindered women's ability to follow paths of skill acquisition through social mechanisms that involved excluding women from trade unions, associations and professional groups as well as restricting entry and defending control over apprenticeships and other forms of training and education leading to licensing.⁶⁶

Training has historically been an important measure of skill and the form and length of training for women's and men's work have usually been different. Moreover, official training programmes and credentials partly mask reality. As discussed earlier in this chapter, labour process studies have pointed to evidence on how little time is really needed to learn certain recognized skills and how little time is actually spent teaching them. Gaskell made an important point when she remarked that:

the fact that untrained women were used by employers to replace male workers suggests that the skill necessary for work could still be picked up more casually than through a formal apprenticeship.⁶⁷

Though she was referring to the use by employers of women as strikebreakers, the same observation can be made with respect to women's employment in a variety of traditionally male 'skilled' areas during the Second World War.

The picture is further muddled when we consider the evidence that certain well

organized groups of male workers were able to retain the status and other rewards of skill even when they failed to prevent the dilution of their skills. The extent to which a particular occupation is considered skilled partly depends on the ability of workers and their organizations to insist on such recognition. In a study where she examined changes in the labour process of composers, Cynthia Cockburn concluded that "the tangible factors in skill may be over-stated for purposes of self-defense and are variably deployed in socio-political struggle."⁶⁸ Historically, women have generally not been represented by strong organizations and have thus been at a disadvantage in the process involved in managing skills definition in terms of training programmes, credentials and collective bargaining. Work traditionally performed by women has often been deemed unskilled because it is considered part of their nature or femaleness and not something that is learned through formal training and apprenticeships. Jobs that "capitalised on the qualities and capabilities a woman had gained by virtue of having lived her life as a woman"⁶⁹ are not usually defined as skilled and tend to be poorly rewarded. A large proportion of women's jobs require interpersonal and caring skills, but these 'people' skills are defined as personality and are thus taken for granted and not counted as skill. That complex social and servicing skills are systematically unrecognized and downgraded is part of a general cultural denigration of women. The differentiation between skilled and unskilled work has been informed by assumptions about women and men and has contributed to the construction of gender. When sex is taken into account, the material and ideological components of skill are deeply intertwined.

The contention that skill is intricately tied to the sex of the worker takes on a new dimension when we consider that women and men sometimes do the same or similar

work, yet the women's jobs are considered less skilled than the men's. This contradiction has been cogently outlined by case studies which have been able to juxtapose the realities of women's and men's work. A significant body of research on the clothing industry, for example, has questioned the skill basis of the distinction between male craftsmen and female operators.⁷⁰ Similar observations can also be made about white-collar work. Indeed, the division between women's work and men's work, which is often a distinction between clerical and administrative jobs, cannot adequately be explained in terms of skill. When disaggregated, it is clear that there is much overlap in the skills required and the tasks accomplished in each broad grouping.⁷¹

Another instance of skill as ideology which involves a sex dimension concerns the distinction between mental and manual labour. Even though mental labour is generally more highly valued and thus judged as being more skilled than manual labour, when the sex variable is included, the equation becomes somewhat blurred. Social, communications, organizational and literacy skills are highly rewarded for occupations where men predominate and less so where women predominate. Clearly, this situation can be largely attributed to women's lack of power. The social definition of skill thesis has been important in recent debates on pay equity.⁷² Questions have centred on the relative value of technical, physical and social skills and on the weight given to different kinds of tasks within each category. At issue is the feasibility of assessing jobs objectively without a political point of view implicit in the analysis.

Another important focus of socialist feminist inquiry in recent years has been the impact of technological change on women's paid employment. Research in this area occurred partly because of significant developments which were beginning to

fundamentally alter the nature and conditions of work where women predominate. In emphasizing the social relations involved in technological change, labour process theorists have been quite adept at exposing the technological determinism inherent in much mainstream and scientific accounts of technology. By unveiling the class dimension of the social relations of technology, they have, however, only partly de-fetishized technology. The socialist feminist literature has forcefully maintained that, for technological development to be understood as a social process, the analysis must consider the fact that technological systems reflect class and gender relations and divisions in society and, in turn, shape, reproduce or potentially transform these relations and divisions. Judy Wajcman noted, "it is impossible to divorce the gender relations which are expressed in, and shape technologies from, the wider social structures that create and maintain them."⁷³ Technology is clearly not an independent force, and the manner in which it affects the nature of work is conditioned by existing structural realities and social relations that must be seen to include sex.

In an effort to illuminate the different relations of men and women to technology, socialist feminists have pointed out that capitalists and male workers have taken initiative over technology. Technological systems are overwhelmingly designed, built, marketed, sold, installed, managed and serviced by men.⁷⁴ Women generally operate machinery and are usually not found in jobs that involve knowledge of the structure or internal processes of the equipment. In a review of the literature on women and technology, Wajcman⁷⁵ has revealed that male dominance over technology has in large part been achieved by the active exclusion of women from areas of technological work and technical skills. Socialist feminists have contended that technical knowledge and

competence is a key source of men's power over women. In pointing to a politics of gender power, Cockburn posited that:

The appropriation of muscle, capability, tools and machinery by men is an important source of women's subordination, indeed it is part of the process by which females are constituted as women.⁷⁶

Conversely, men's affinity with technology must be seen as integral to the constitution of male gender identity.

It should be stressed, however, that not all women and all men have the same relationship to machinery and technical know-how. Indeed, technology is used by some men to dominate other men and not all men are technologically capable. Moreover, capital's interest in technology does not necessarily coincide with that of male workers. In introducing technologies specifically designed to break the craft control of men, capitalists have readily exploited sex divisions. The sex of the workforce has also influenced the direction of technological innovations in other ways. Wajcman,⁷⁷ for example, pointed to historical evidence which indicates that the rate of technical development has depended, to a certain extent, on the price of the available workforce. She argued that there may be less incentive to invest in technological innovations if cheap labour power can be readily purchased.

Though this may have been the case for white-collar occupations until relatively recently, the push to increase productivity in these areas of work has resulted in the massive implementation of new labour-saving technologies. The introduction of microelectronics and telecommunications technologies into white-collar jobs has been the focus of an important strand of research on women in the paid workplace because these sophisticated information- and computer-based technologies, designed and implemented

to increase productivity, are refashioning many of the more labour intensive jobs where women are concentrated. Building on Braverman's analysis of the transformation of white-collar work, a number of studies⁷⁸ have viewed the implementation of new forms of technology in this area as a factor in the general process of deskilling and proletarianization. Empirical investigations have documented the disproportionately negative effects of automation on the job content and autonomy of women's white-collar work. Analyses of technological change in the office have concluded, however, that reality is more complex than that provided for by a simple deskilling thesis. In comparing the effects of new technology on typists and secretaries, Juliet Webster,⁷⁹ for example, observed that automation exacerbated preexisting differences in the nature of work. She found that the rationalization and fragmentation of work had predated the advent of computer technology and that the new equipment served to reinforce this tendency for typists, yet it reduced some of the routine work for secretaries. Other studies⁸⁰ have discovered that while some routine jobs are eliminated with the introduction of technologies, new ones are generated. However, even though creative tasks often come into being, they are generally located further up the occupational hierarchy and are thus less available to women. This situation is not inevitable given the wide-ranging possibilities of the new technologies.

What is clear from the literature is that the implementation of new technologies has not substantially undermined the sexual division of labour. Women continue to be confined to poorly paid jobs with few opportunities for promotion and are faced with increased risks of redundancy. Overall, workplace technologies have not proven liberating to women despite promises that they would help eradicate inequalities,

eliminate undesirable jobs and give rise to more interesting and fulfilling work.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, structures of control at work have been a central focus of labour process theory. The sex dimension of control, however, has largely been absent from the debate. Patterns of control in the workplace reflect not only power relations between capitalists and sexless workers, but also power relations between women and men. While case studies have revealed that women workers are subjected to the same modes of control as their male counterparts in the labour force, there is nevertheless evidence that the sex of the worker has implications for forms of control. Women, for example, are more likely to be found in workplaces where direct control is prevalent than where responsible autonomy is adopted. Moreover, as Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle⁸¹ have suggested, bureaucratic control structures are seen to operate as if women can succeed on the same terms as men given the rationality, neutrality and impersonality of the system. Because of these assumed characteristics, discrimination on the basis of sex is denied and women are held responsible for their lack of success.

In another vein, studies⁸² have pointed to the use of socially constructed femininity and the ideology of maternity and domestic responsibility as a means of controlling women workers. Feminists have also drawn attention to the existence of sexual harassment, an insidious and prevalent yet until recently virtually hidden form of control faced by women. While it is not specific to the paid workplace, there is growing evidence that this form of control is part of women's paid work experience.⁸³ Feminists have been critical of the explanation of sexual harassment in terms of universal 'natural' behaviour, and have argued that it must be understood as part of the sexual objectification of women and of broader power relations. In discussing sexual

harassment in the workplace, Debbie Field⁸⁴ has differentiated between the social power of male co-workers and the direct economic power of male employers to physically and sexually intimidate and coerce women. Both, however, function to reinforce women's inferior status in the workplace and affect the quality of their working lives and job opportunities.

Beginning in the late 1970s, another major area of socialist feminist investigation centred on the role played by the state in the creation and reproduction of women's oppression in capitalist societies. In the process, feminists became critical of Marxist theories of the state for focusing exclusively on the class nature of the state and its role in structuring the capitalist economy, while ignoring how it organized and reflected sex divisions. In one of the earliest and highly influential studies of women and the state, Mary McIntosh⁸⁵ argued that the state contributes to women's oppression especially through the material and ideological support for a particular form of household dependent upon a male wage and the unpaid domestic work of women and through the structuring of women's participation in the formal economy. Empirical research by socialist feminists⁸⁶ has convincingly demonstrated how the state, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was instrumental in ordering women's subordination through the construction of motherhood. Their analyses of the activities of the state in terms of legislation, policies and programmes in the areas of family, welfare and labour reveal a pattern of state intervention in the process of reproduction which has served to reinforce the sexual division of labour both within and between the household and the labour market. Investigations of post-war state activities indicate that the state has continued to support a hierarchical sexual division of labour.⁸⁷ Moreover, following the Second

World War, women's relationship to the state took on a new dimension as governments became major employers of women. In its treatment of women as labour and through its labour relations practices, the state has served to construct and reproduce women's subordination.

Though the state has intervened to both create and reproduce the hierarchical ordering of society based on sex through its various policies, programmes and laws, its involvement has varied both historically and between social formations, a point cogently made by Jenson.⁸⁸ An important element of the state's overall support of sex inequality throughout the history of capitalism can be located at the level of ideology. While ideologies concerning women's and men's proper place have been constructed in, and supported by the state, they have not remained static over the years but have undergone shifts. Notwithstanding that the state has played a major role in organizing and institutionalizing relations of male domination and female subordination, the concept of the relative autonomy of the state leads us nonetheless to view it as an arena for sex as well as class struggles. In this context, it is important to point out that the state, through different laws, policies and programmes, has at times responded to women's demands for changes both in the household and in the workplace, thereby helping to erode male privilege.

A growing amount of attention has been paid, especially since the early 1980s, to recording and analysing women's resistance to and struggles against oppressive and stifling structures and conditions. In demonstrating that women have indeed resisted, feminists refuted earlier ideas about women as reactionary and conservative and passively accepting their conditions. As Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong put it "women [are]

not simply passive or active, but often both at the same time."⁸⁹

The rapid increase in women's labour force participation following the war meant that more women were becoming fully integrated into a new set of relationships. They nevertheless still found themselves dealing with old relationships in the household. Women were thus caught having to manage the sometimes conflicting and contradictory situations arising from their involvement in different yet interconnected social relationships. Because of the nature of their oppression and their double day of work, women's resistance has been multifaceted and has cut across both public and private spheres, thereby engaging employers, unions and the state as well as partners.

Women have resisted individually as well as collectively. Studies⁹⁰ have shown that women do fight partners in an attempt to alter the household division of labour. Though they have been only partly successful, the gains have been real. Studies⁹¹ have also revealed that women in the paid labour force, like their male counterparts, have, on an individual basis, resisted oppressive and exploitative working conditions through absenteeism and by breaking rules, sabotaging equipment and quitting jobs. For women more than men, some of these actions may be the result of having to accommodate two spheres of life, given their responsibilities in the household. Women missing or quitting work in order to care for others is one of the clearest examples of this situation. Although women have fought back individually, these undoubtedly boundless instances are relatively difficult to document as they tend to be partly hidden.

Women's collective resistance has been relatively easier to document. The women's movement has brought about an increased awareness of women's oppression, and struggles have resulted in important changes to their material conditions. Many of

these battles have centred on issues that cut across the public and private spheres and have been fought in and against the state. The labour movement has also been a central arena for women's struggles. Women unionists, together with their male counterparts, have fought employers and the state for improved rights, but women have also had to fight within and against unions to better women's lot. Indeed, women's relationship to union's has been a problematic one. Historically, the fear of competition and sexist attitudes have resulted in men acting to exclude women from unions. Moreover, unions have been slow and sometimes unwilling to organize in many areas of work where women predominate. Despite these difficulties, women in unions have usually enjoyed better pay, working conditions and job security than non-unionized women, although generally they have not fared as well as either unionized or non-unionized men.⁹² As more and more women entered the labour force, as women's membership in unions grew, as unprecedented numbers of women became active in unions, and as the women's movement gained strength, attention was increasingly being paid to issues of particular concern to women and all issues were increasingly seen as being of concern to women. A consideration of women's problems and needs did not flow automatically from an increase in numbers, but resulted from considerable efforts by members, especially women, committed to making their unions more responsive to these needs. As Heather Jon Maroney⁹³ pointed out, the radicalization of women in the paid labour force has deeply altered the shape and direction of the labour movement.

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3. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

In this chapter, I document the creation and growth of TCA/Air Canada and situate its development within the Canadian air transportation industry. This overview provides a context for understanding transformations in the labour process of passenger agents. In establishing the crucial elements that have shaped the industry and in identifying changes that have occurred since the creation of TCA as a crown carrier in 1937, I examine the growth in passenger traffic, the financial performance of the carrier, the introduction of new routes, services and products, changes in fare structures, and the implementation of new aircraft types. Because air transportation was highly regulated until the mid-1980s, I also outline the evolution of various state policies and practices which influenced the development of the airline industry in Canada. Finally, I discuss the conditions underlying the deregulation and restructuring of the industry and the privatization of Air Canada as well as the nature of these transformations.

The Early Years of Civil Aviation

Aviation developed slowly until the First World War when airplanes were improved enormously.¹ In 1919, in order to implement Canada's obligations under the Paris Convention on international aerial navigation and also to regulate national civil aviation, the federal government adopted the Air Board Act (known as the Aeronautics Act since 1927) which governed the licensing of aircraft and personnel, the making and enforcement of safety regulations and the investigation of air accidents. Initially, the state was not involved directly in the economic regulation of the commercial airline industry.²

The exploration and development of Canada's North, which was inaccessible by

road or rail, stimulated the expansion of air services. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, bush flying operations were pioneered in Canada for the transportation of passengers and freight, especially in remote areas of the northern hinterland. The mining industry in particular made extensive use of air transport services. The establishment of civil aviation also revolved around mapping, surveying and the protection of forests against fire. Contracts between the Post Office, which was eager to implement air mail service, and private aircraft operators acted as a major catalyst in the formation of the Canadian air transportation industry.³ In 1934, the Air Industries and Transport Association of Canada was established to promote the interests of both the air carriers and their suppliers of equipment and services. In 1962, the two groups split with the Air Transport Association of Canada representing air carriers and the Air Industries Association of Canada acting as the service organization for suppliers.⁴

During the early years of commercial aviation, the provision of the necessary infrastructure was largely the responsibility of private individuals or communities. However, in the early- to mid-1930s, in the depth of the Great Depression, the federal government undertook the construction of airfields and emergency landing strips across the country as part of unemployment relief programmes. It eventually assumed responsibility for the direct provision of airport services and infrastructure across the country.⁵

By 1936, mounting political and economic pressures persuaded the federal government to take action to create a national intercity passenger and mail air transportation system. In the context of a strong tendency towards north-south ties and because air transport in the United States, as elsewhere around the world, was already

well established, many argued that transcontinental air service was essential to promote pan-Canadian economic development, maintain national linkages within Canada and prevent encroachment by the rapidly expanding American airlines. Furthermore, a trans-Canada air transportation system would serve the Post Office's need for improved air mail service. Transcontinental air transport became more feasible with advances in aircraft technology which, by the mid-1930s, resulted in the introduction of more sophisticated aircraft capable of carrying passengers over longer distances in relative comfort and safety.⁶

Given the growing importance of commercial air transportation and in view of plans to set up a national air service, responsibility for the control of civil aviation was transferred, in 1936, from the Department of National Defence to the newly established Department of Transport. That same year the Liberal government of the day proposed that the two national railway companies, Canadian National Railways and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, as well as Canadian Airways Ltd. (which was the largest air transport enterprise in Canada at the time and in which both railway companies held shares) jointly form an airline company for the purpose of operating the planned transcontinental airway system. The proposal was rejected, however, by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and Canadian Airways Ltd. As a result, the Trans-Canada Air Lines Act was passed by the Parliament of Canada in April 1937, creating TCA as a crown corporation responsible for providing scheduled airline service, including the transportation of mail, passengers and freight. The new company was to function as a wholly-owned affiliate of the government-owned Canadian National Railways which disposed of its shares in Canadian Airways Ltd. TCA was to operate the transcontinental

route and some additional routes as well as international services, while supplementary domestic routes were to be left to private enterprise. TCA would also be required to provide air service on traffic arteries designated by the government as being of social and national importance. Finally, the Post Office was directed to give preferential treatment to the crown carrier.⁷ In 1938, the Board of Railway Commissioners was renamed the Board of Transport Commissioners and was granted economic regulatory jurisdiction over air carriers as well as railway companies.⁸

TCA purchased its initial aircraft from Canadian Airways Ltd., including two ten seat Lockheed Electras with a cruising speed of 175 miles per hour, and a Stearman biplane. In September 1937, it began operations with the takeover of the Vancouver-Seattle mail and passenger route from Canadian Airways Ltd.⁹ In April 1939, passenger service was inaugurated between Vancouver and Montreal with slightly faster and larger Lockheed Electras utilized on this route. Meals consisted of boxed lunches made up of either cold cuts or sandwiches and fresh fruit. The flights were long and slow with uncertain weather conditions often presenting real hazards. In addition, the Electras' cabins were unpressurized which meant that oxygen masks were required when flying over the mountains. However, the journey between Vancouver and Montreal took only slightly over fifteen hours as compared to several days by rail.¹⁰ During the first two years of operation, the company experienced a tremendous growth in passenger traffic, but incurred financial losses mainly due to start-up costs (see Table 1).

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, TCA's initial development plans were halted. During the war years, military aviation received higher priority than civil aviation and seats on the carrier's flights were generally reserved for people on essential

war service. While passenger growth was high with the company recording profits (see Table 1), traffic expansion was nonetheless limited by TCA's shortage of aircraft and personnel. In spite of these circumstances, the company was able to build a pattern of Canadian intercity routes and increase flight frequencies. Part of the extension of air services included the completion of the transcontinental route through to Halifax in April 1941, two years after the inaugural flight between Vancouver and Montreal. That same year, air service was established between Toronto and New York. Larger and more powerful Lockheed Lodestars, which became part of TCA's fleet in 1941, were used on many of the new routes.¹¹ In 1943, the federal government set up a transatlantic air service to carry passengers on urgent war business and mail for the armed forces as well as cargo of importance to the war effort. Using government-owned converted Lancaster bombers, TCA provided this service, thus paving the way for its overseas operations following the war.¹²

Soon after the formation of TCA, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company gained complete control of Canadian Airways Ltd. and began acquiring a number of smaller financially pressed air carriers. In 1942, these airline companies were merged resulting in the founding of Canadian Pacific Air Lines Ltd. (CPAL), a new subsidiary of the railway company.¹³ This amalgamation of licences marked the beginning of a sustained drive by CPAL to attain a larger share of the Canadian air travel market.

Despite the government's policy that TCA was to establish and operate the transcontinental air system, when the latter applied for a licence to carry passengers between Vancouver and Victoria in 1943, the Board of Transport Commissioners denied the crown carrier's request because the route was already served by CPAL. In the wake

of this incident, the government transferred regulatory authority over airlines from the Board of Transport Commissioners to the newly created Air Transport Board in 1944. The Board's powers, however, were significantly limited, given that the issuance of licences was subject to the approval of the Minister of Transport and the regulatory agency was required to grant TCA any licence that the carrier needed to fulfill its contract with the Minister. In issuing licences to other carriers, the Board made use of the ill-defined 'public convenience and necessity' criterion to determine whether the proposed commercial air service should be allowed.¹⁴

By 1945, the domestic route structures of TCA and CPAL clearly reflected the government's policy of avoiding competition in the industry and of favouring the crown carrier on main routes. TCA boasted a transcontinental route network extending from coast-to-coast and beyond to the United Kingdom and linking other important city pairs in Canada. Moreover, its operation of the Toronto-New York service marked the company's first foray into the American market since the inauguration of the Vancouver Seattle route. For its part, CPAL, which had come to dominate the private sector of the industry, was licensed to serve several points north of the transcontinental route.¹⁵

When TCA began operations in the late 1930s, it experienced little difficulty in recruiting a labour force. Because of the novelty and exoticism of this young industry, the company could easily attract workers. Initially, men were hired to fill all newly created positions, except for flight attendant jobs (then called stewardess). However, during the war years, severe labour shortages meant that the air carrier, like many other enterprises, was compelled to hire a large proportion of women in many different types of jobs. Following the war, women were, for the most part, expelled from traditional

male-dominated occupations, but they retained a foothold in women's traditional areas of employment such as clerical, sales and service work. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, women's labour force participation rose dramatically in Canada and throughout the world. The air carrier, which was experiencing rapid expansion, had easy access to a large pool of labour to fill the growing number of passenger handling jobs.

During and immediately following the war years, the major groups of TCA workers formed unions or associations. This unionization drive was part of a broader trend occurring throughout the western world. The Traffic Employees' Association (TEA) representing passenger agents was created in 1946. In 1955, it became known as the Sales Employees' Association (SEA) and, in 1966, it was renamed the Canadian Airline Employees' Association (CALEA). For their part, flight attendants formed the Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants' Association (CALFAA) in 1948, while various categories of ground workers joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and began bargaining with TCA in 1940. Finally, the Canadian Air Line Pilots' Association (CALPA), which was organized as a voluntary association in 1937, was certified as the collective bargaining agent for pilots in 1944.¹⁶ TCA workers, like those employed by all airline companies, were subject to federal labour legislation.

The Post-War Years and the 1950s

Following the Second World War, civil aviation worldwide entered into a period of exceptional growth and development. In 1944, fifty-two nations participated in a conference on aviation in Chicago where the Convention on International Civil Aviation was adopted. The Convention provided for the creation of the International Civil

Aviation Organization (ICAO) which served as a medium for the cooperation of states on civil aviation and the settlement of disputes in this area. The ICAO was responsible for developing a standardized system for matters such as air navigation, licensing, safety and landing procedures. In 1947, the ICAO became a specialized agency of the United Nations. At the time, it had a membership of 47 nations and, by 1985, this number had soared to 156. The Chicago Convention, as finally approved, provided for the recognition of five 'freedoms of the air'. The first two freedoms allowed signatories the right to fly over the territory of a foreign nation without landing, and the right to land on the territory of a foreign nation for non-traffic purposes. The third and fourth freedoms enabled a state to drop off and pick up passengers and cargo in a foreign country, and the fifth freedom involved the right of a state to carry passengers and cargo between two foreign states. These 'freedoms' were the basis for the negotiation of bilateral air agreements between nations to coordinate air services.¹⁷

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), a private organization of airline companies founded in 1945 but which owed its origins to the International Air Traffic Association established in 1919 by a group of European airlines, became very active after the Second World War, especially in matters pertaining to the standardization of industry forms and procedures and to the determination of international fares through tariff coordination conferences. Decisions on air fares and other issues by this international cartel were subject to approval by the governments of countries affected by any changes. By 1986, this organization comprised approximately 140 scheduled airlines.¹⁸

In Canada, the lifting of wartime priority restrictions, the introduction of services

to new communities, the scheduling of additional flights and the use of larger aircraft made air transport available to a wider segment of the population. Promotional campaigns forcibly brought to the attention of Canadians the air services available to them. The worldwide post-war economic boom and the concomitant rise in disposable incomes also stimulated air travel.

Immediately following the war, TCA experienced a huge surge in traffic with the number of passengers carried increasing by 67 percent in 1946, by 40 percent in 1947 and by 27 percent in 1948. During the remainder of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s, traffic growth continued at a strong pace, with the volume of passengers carried generally expanding by over 15 percent annually. The actual number of passengers carried on an annual basis, which totalled 183,121 in 1944, reached 3,209,197 in 1959 (see Table 1).

Massive development necessitated heavy expenditures in all areas. Large numbers of workers were hired which called for extensive training programmes. Fleet renewal and expansion was greatly accelerated. The construction and acquisition of buildings as well as the purchase of other equipment and material significantly added to overall costs. In this context, TCA reported huge annual deficits from 1946 to 1950, but registered modest profits throughout the remainder of the 1950s (see Table 1).

In 1945, when TCA began planning its post-war development in Canada and the United States, it negotiated the acquisition of a large fleet of DC-3 aircraft from the military. This twenty-one passenger airplane with a cruising speed of approximately 180 miles per hour was converted to commercial transport form and began replacing the smaller and aging Lockheeds. In 1947, the company took delivery of its first forty

passenger pressurized North Star aircraft built by Canadair. This airplane, with a cruising speed of approximately 230 miles per hour, was introduced on certain long-range routes; it significantly improved the quality of air travel and reduced by up to five hours the time required to complete the Vancouver-Montreal route. This fleet expansion allowed TCA to deploy the smaller DC-3s for improved intercity service and to retire the remainder of the Lockheeds. In 1954, Lockheed Super Constellation aircraft were added to the fleet replacing the North Star on transatlantic and southern routes. This long-range equipment, with a seating capacity of sixty-three passengers and a cruising speed of approximately 300 miles per hour, was later utilized on the transcontinental route. The following year, TCA became the first North American carrier to operate turboprop powered aircraft when it began flying the forty passenger Vickers Viscount on domestic and transborder routes. With a cruising speed of approximately 310 miles per hour and characterized by low vibration and a quiet flight, the Viscount offered a high standard of air transport. In order to meet the growing demand for air travel, the company increased the seating capacity of its DC-3 and North Star equipment and purchased larger versions of the Super Constellation and the Viscount.¹⁹

During the post-war years, TCA established a basic pattern of domestic, transborder, southern and overseas routes. In 1947, TCA (Atlantic) Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of TCA (the corporate distinction between the two companies was abolished in 1952), assumed responsibility for the operations previously handled by the government's transatlantic air service. Bilateral air agreements negotiated between Canada and other countries opened the way for further growth and helped strengthen the company's international route system. TCA inaugurated service to France, Germany,

Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Florida, the Caribbean and new destinations in Great Britain. Additional routes were initiated between points in Canada and the United States. TCA not only added routes to its network, but also augmented flight frequencies and improved schedules. In the late 1950s, non-stop air service was implemented on a number of transcontinental and transatlantic routes. New and modern aircraft boosted capacity on many routes and offered greater comfort to travellers. Improvements to passenger service included the provision of hot meals by the mid-1940s and pre-cooked frozen foods by the late 1940s, changes which resulted in substantial economies to the airline through the elimination of waste.²⁰

Until the end of the 1950s, minimal fare hikes and the introduction of promotional tariffs helped stimulate air travel and firmly establish the air transport industry. Although domestic fares were raised by 10 percent in 1947 to offset mounting material and labour costs, no other increase occurred until 1962. The stability of air fares was in marked contrast to the rising consumer price index. Higher transatlantic and transborder fares were introduced, however, on a number of occasions.²¹ While international fares were generally determined by IATA tariff conferences, domestic fares were set by air carriers, although the Air Transport Board could deny or modify a rate change. Tariffs designed to make air transportation available to more people and at the same time stimulate traffic during the off-season and off-peak periods were instituted. In 1948, round trip transatlantic excursion fares were launched in an effort to encourage winter travel. In the early 1950s, these types of fares were applied to domestic, transborder and southern services. A family fare plan was made available on North American routes in 1949 and on transatlantic services in 1955, thereby providing low-

cost air transportation for families during certain periods of the week.²²

Intensified competition on the transatlantic route compelled TCA to join other carriers in reducing the price of a round trip ticket through the implementation of a low-fare tourist class in 1952. With the extension of this coach service to North American routes in 1954 and to southern destinations in 1955, substantial fare reductions brought air travel within the financial reach of a growing number of people. In 1955, tourist-class fares accounted for 32 percent of all TCA passenger traffic. Tourist-class fares were markedly lowered in 1958.²³

During the first decade or so of its existence, TCA did not face any real competition from other Canadian carriers. Despite the fact that CPAL had persistently sought access to international and transcontinental routes since its creation, competition on international services was strictly regulated, with the latter carrier entering the field only in 1949 following the federal government's decision to grant it transpacific routes. During the 1950s, CPAL obtained the right to introduce air service to countries in Latin America, southern Europe and the Netherlands.²⁴ Notwithstanding these concessions to CPAL, TCA was designated as Canada's flag carrier and received the preferred routes.

Although CPAL was given authority to develop a limited number of international services beginning in the late 1940s, it was denied entry into the lucrative transcontinental market until 1959. Canadian air travel had been overwhelmingly dominated by TCA because federal administrative powers promoted and protected the economic viability of the crown carrier. TCA's monopoly began to collapse, however, when the Conservative government, elected in 1957, sought to give CPAL a share of the

transcontinental market. Throughout the years, CPAL had repeatedly lobbied the government for the removal of restrictions that prevented it from competing on equal terms with the national air carrier, especially in the context of a broadening domestic air travel market. In 1958, a study commissioned by the federal government on the implications of allowing competitive services on transcontinental routes recommended regulated competition only so as not to threaten the profitability of TCA. Consequently, in early 1959, CPAL was granted one daily flight each way between Vancouver and Montreal with stops in Winnipeg and Toronto. This decision, which effectively permitted limited competition on the transcontinental route, was partly justified on the basis that it would strengthen CPAL's position on the international routes it served.²⁵ The new government was obviously not any more prepared than its Liberal predecessors to authorize unlimited competition that would force TCA to abandon its services to smaller communities or become a heavy drain on the public purse. Indeed, the state's civil aviation policy was largely geared towards protecting the crown carrier's profitable mainline and international routes from competition in order to cross-subsidize unprofitable, yet socially and politically desirable, regional and local services.

The Early 1960s

The expansion of the airline industry, which characterized the immediate post-war period and the 1950s, continued throughout most of the 1960s, albeit at a slower pace. Migration from other countries to Canada and between provinces encouraged demand for long distance transportation as people travelled to visit friends and families who now lived far away. The constant rise in Canada's population as well as the steady growth

in real income stimulated demand for air travel. Economic expansion in general also resulted in more business travel. The introduction of faster, quieter and more comfortable aircraft during the 1960s made air travel quite attractive, especially when compared to other modes of transportation. The implementation of different types of fares and the wider availability of economy-class service persuaded more people to fly. The rising popularity of air travel for both business and leisure purposes ensured continued expansion for air carriers worldwide throughout the decade.

The early 1960s were relatively difficult for airline companies which faced acute economic problems associated with the costs of introducing jet-powered equipment. The transition from turboprop to jet airplanes in the 1960s closely followed the replacement of piston-engine airplanes with turboprop models, thereby imposing a heavy burden of capital investment on carriers. These costs, combined with a condition of oversupply brought on by greater competition, the tremendous increase in carrying capacity of the new aircraft and modest passenger traffic growth, helped generate a series of financial deficits for major airline companies in the early 1960s. TCA, even with its quasi-monopoly in the Canadian market, did not escape unscathed. Even though it experienced larger traffic volumes, the crown carrier suffered losses in the first three years of the decade and registered only a small profit in 1963, following almost ten years of financial surpluses (see Tables 1 and 2).

TCA inaugurated jet air service in Canada in April 1960. The 127 passenger DC-8 aircraft, which could travel at a cruising speed of approximately 550 miles per hour, revolutionized air transportation. Flight time from Montreal to Vancouver was reduced from nine hours and fifteen minutes to just over five hours. The introduction of DC-8

aircraft on transatlantic routes later that year cut travel time between Montreal and London from eleven hours and ten minutes to six hours. The popularity of jetliners, which were used for long-range services, was immediate. This equipment held much appeal for airline companies because of the improvement in productivity made possible by an airplane that could handle the work of about four Super Constellations. In 1961, TCA took delivery of the first of its big turboprop Vanguards. These airplanes, with an initial seating capacity of 96 passengers and a cruising speed of approximately 420 miles per hour, were used on a number of domestic, transborder and southern routes. The quality of transportation service offered was thus vastly improved in the early 1960s through greater use of jet equipment and the substitution of larger and faster turboprop Vanguards for Viscounts on some routes. This period also represented a crucial phase in the transition from piston power to turbine power as the DC-3s, North Stars and Super Constellations were gradually retired, leaving the Viscounts to provide for the bulk of short-haul transportation.²⁶ While TCA's route structure was only slightly modified as few new destinations were added, the airline enhanced the quality of existing services by improving schedules, increasing flight frequencies and ensuring a wider application of modern aircraft.²⁷

Concomitant with the introduction of new types of aircraft, a modified domestic fare structure was implemented and economy-class capacity was expanded. The tariff revision, which came into effect in January 1961, involved an amended basic calculation of passenger fares that reflected the cost of operations on specific route lengths. Domestic fares were thus substantially decreased on longer flights and increased on shorter trips, thereby reducing the cross-subsidization that previously required passengers

on longer flights to pay part of the cost of providing service to short distance travellers. Even if TCA's plans called for a wide extension of economy-class service (previously called tourist class), the emphatic shift away from first class came as a surprise. Indeed, while 44 percent of passenger traffic had been economy class in 1960, and an increase to 69 percent had been forecasted for 1961, the actual figure rose to 79 percent. In addition to the revised domestic tariffs, new low-cost excursion fares were offered on North American, transatlantic and southern services to help fill the large number of seats available. In early 1962, the affinity-group fare, which had been approved by the IATA in 1961, went into effect.²⁸ It was at this time that Wardair Ltd. first entered the international group charter business.²⁹

During the early 1960s, the burgeoning demand for inexpensive air travel prompted the airline to alter the seating configuration of its fleet to provide extra economy-class space. The overall revolution in travelling habits lowered the average amount of revenue derived from each passenger mile of transportation.³⁰ TCA reacted by raising North American economy-class fares in April 1962.³¹ The crown carrier faced a competitive disadvantage, however, because CPAL, which had been granted one daily flight on the long-haul transcontinental route in 1959, refused to follow suit and kept its fares lower than those of TCA until 1965.³²

The Mid- to Late-1960s

Whereas the early years of the decade had been plagued by a slowdown in national economic activity and passenger traffic had grown at a more modest pace than in the 1950s, demand for both business and leisure travel was boosted when the economy

began to recover in the mid-1960s. This expansion continued unabated until 1969, thereby ensuring easy profits for air carriers. Traffic growth was exceptional under the stimulus of Canada's centennial year activities and a developing interest by Canadians in southern vacationlands also positively influenced airline business. The boom in air travel was further fuelled by a series of strikes in other forms of transportation. During this time, labour-management relations grew increasingly conflictual and the company suffered its first series of strikes.

Air Canada (the crown carrier's name was changed from TCA to Air Canada effective January 1, 1965),³³ with its quasi-monopoly in the Canadian market, benefitted from the phenomenal surge in passenger traffic. Record profits were registered from 1965 to 1968, with only a marginal profit in 1969 (see Table 2) as traffic carried by the airline was affected by a month-long strike by workers represented by the International Association of Machinist and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW). Inflationary pressures and an economic slowdown at the close of the decade also contributed to a financially disappointing year for the carrier.³⁴

With the resurgence in traffic growth beginning in the mid-1960s, Air Canada augmented flight frequencies on numerous routes, provided additional direct and non-stop service and offered better schedules. Jet service was extended to a larger number of communities. New destinations opened up for the airline during the second half of the 1960s, following successful bilateral negotiations with other countries which gave Air Canada access to a few new international markets. More importantly, the crown carrier was designated to serve three additional American cities in 1966 and 1967 when a bilateral air agreement concluded between Canada and the United States gave the crown

carrier the right to fly to new destinations to the south beyond the traditional transborder routes to which Canadian airlines had been restricted. The agreement somewhat addressed Canada's complaint that its airline companies were only granted access to cities close to the border and Canadians bound for destination further south were required to switch to American airlines.³⁵

Throughout the mid- to late-1960s, Air Canada, like other carriers around the world, experimented with innovative fares which made airline travel available to a wider market. Economy-class family fares were offered on North American routes for the first time in 1964. In 1968, youth standby fares were introduced on these routes and discount fares were made available to senior citizens. There also occurred an expansion in the utilization of discounted promotional fares and an increase in the proportion of economy-class travel.³⁶

During this period, Air Canada had to contend with intensifying competition from both scheduled and non-scheduled carriers which were making significant inroads on transatlantic and southern services. In order to maintain its market share, the company sought solutions to this challenge. At IATA tariff conferences, Air Canada actively pressed for low-cost scheduled air transportation on transatlantic routes in the form of non-affinity mini-fares for group travel. A lower fare structure was approved for scheduled services in 1963 and again in 1966 and 1969, but the non-affinity tariff was rejected.³⁷

The second half of the 1960s was also a time of fleet modernization for air carriers. In the spring of 1966, Air Canada introduced the seventy-two passenger DC-9 jetliner, capable of travelling at a cruising speed of approximately 550 miles per hour,

to replace and complement the turboprop airplanes in service on short- and medium-range routes. In order to meet the continuing demand for low-cost travel, it augmented economy-class seating on some of its DC-8 equipment and converted some Viscount aircraft to economy-class configuration. In addition, larger DC-8s and DC-9s were purchased and aircraft utilization was increased to cope with the traffic boom of the late 1960s. Delays in the delivery of the new equipment at the height of the Expo '67 summer season made it difficult for Air Canada to meet the exceptional growth in passenger traffic. These larger jets were put into service in late 1967 and in 1968, thereby contributing to a capacity increase on some routes. In 1968, the airline began retiring its turboprop Viscounts and Vikings, thus moving towards an all-jet fleet.³⁸

The shortage of capacity during Expo '67 caused much consternation and the airline was swamped with complaints from customers unable to complete bookings or obtain reservations on flights of their choice.³⁹ As passenger traffic grew over the course of the 1960s and public opinion began favouring more competition, the Liberal government felt it could allocate to CPAL a greater market share on mainline domestic routes without harming Air Canada's economic stability. A second study was commissioned in 1966 on the viability of further transcontinental competition. The report's conclusions prompted the government, in 1967, to license CPAL to operate round trip flights twice daily between Montreal and Vancouver. Moreover, the carrier was granted the right to increase its capacity in stages so that by 1970, it could control 25 percent of total transcontinental capacity.⁴⁰

During the 1960s, CPAL also endeavoured to strengthen its position as an international carrier. In 1965, the government announced a policy that defined the

international spheres for the two airline companies. This merely ratified the status quo: Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, Southern and Southeastern Europe and the Netherlands were assigned to CPAL, and the rest of Europe, the British Isles and the Caribbean were assigned to the crown carrier. Air Canada and CPAL had also entered into an agreement in 1964 to pursue a policy to sell Canada first by ensuring that each airline promote the other's services as the first alternative to its own on international routes. Lack of access to transborder routes had been a persistent grievance of CPAL as Air Canada was the only Canadian carrier designated to provide service to the continental United States. In 1966, following the conclusion of long and arduous bilateral negotiations between the Canadian and American governments, CPAL gained a footing in this market when it was assigned the San Francisco route.⁴¹

Air Canada also began facing intensified competition from the regional carriers. Supported in their quest by the business communities and other groups in small and medium-sized cities which demanded better air transportation, as well as by provincial governments intent on promoting the interests of their respective regions, the regional airlines fought for access to some of Air Canada's and CPAL's routes throughout the 1960s. An airline policy announced by the Minister of Transport in 1966 promised regional airlines a larger share of scheduled traffic and allowed them to apply for licences on routes previously monopolized by the trunk carriers. In outlining the role of the regional carriers, the ministerial policy statement clearly established that these airlines would not become competitive on a substantial scale with the two mainline carriers and that certain secondary routes operated by the trunk carriers would be transferred to the regional airlines. Though the term 'regional carrier' was generally understood to mean

Eastern Provincial Airways Ltd. (EPA Ltd.), Québecair Inc., Nordair Ltd., Transair Ltd. and Pacific Western Airlines Ltd. (PWA Ltd.), it was not until a second policy statement was announced in 1969 that the regional carriers were specified by name and the regions in which they were allowed to operate were defined.⁴²

The Air Transport Committee of the Canadian Transport Commission, which replaced the Air Transport Board when the new National Transportation Act was passed in 1967, played a central role in the implementation of the regional policy and progressively expanded the route structure of the regional airlines. The new body exercised the same regulatory powers as those of its predecessor, but because of competition, albeit still highly regulated, the Air Transport Committee handled a greater volume of business than the Air Transport Board.⁴³

The Early 1970s

Slow business expansion and consumer caution, which marked the closing of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, had an adverse effect on the performance of airline companies. While traffic growth was less than anticipated, capacity was increasing in the industry, especially with the introduction of jumbo jet aircraft. This situation, coupled with rapidly rising costs, produced unsatisfactory operating results for Air Canada as well as for most other major airlines worldwide during the first two years of the decade. Air Canada suffered a loss in 1970 and registered only a slight profit in 1971. A stronger rate of economic expansion starting in late 1971 boosted the airline industry. Traffic growth, which outstripped projections in 1972 and 1973, compounded by strikes in 1973 by railway workers and employees of CP Air (the name had been

changed from CPAL, effective April 1, 1969), resulted in profits for Air Canada (see Table 2).

The early 1970s represented a period of fleet modernization for airline companies as larger jet aircraft capable of carrying more passengers at faster speeds were put into operation. Air Canada inaugurated B-747 non-stop service on some of its routes in 1971. The first of these spacious, comfortable jumbo jetliners could seat 365 passengers and were able to travel at a cruising speed of over 570 miles per hour. With its cabin crew of sixteen flight attendants, the aircraft carried more airline personnel than the total number of passengers that airplanes of thirty years earlier could accommodate. In addition, Air Canada inaugurated L-1011 service in 1973, thus extending the comforts of wide-body air travel to a greater number of Canadian cities. The Lockheed TriStar L-1011 jetliner could carry 257 passengers at speeds of over 570 miles per hour. In order to meet the growing demand for air travel, the company modified the seating arrangements in some of its DC-8 and DC-9 aircraft to increase economy-class capacity. The wider use of DC-9 equipment made it possible to introduce jet service to more cities.⁴⁴ During the early 1970s, Air Canada's domestic route structure underwent minor changes, whereby some services were taken over by regional carriers. Moreover, the crown corporation inaugurated additional non-stop flights, but few routes were added to the network.⁴⁵

In order to maintain its market share on the lucrative high-density, short-haul Montreal-Toronto route, Air Canada established Rapidair in April 1972, a service aimed at travellers commuting between these major centres and which featured streamlined check-in facilities and flight departures from designated gates at regular intervals.⁴⁶ Air

Canada also introduced a non-smoking section on its B-747 jetliners in 1971,⁴⁷ an initiative that received a high degree of public acceptance, thereby leading the company to extend this service on other aircraft types and eventually on most flights.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Air Canada faced intensified competition from charter carriers, as did other scheduled airlines around the world. The emerging popularity of charter flights pointed to a fundamental transformation of the air travel market. While the traditional business market maintained a healthy rate of growth, the industry began experiencing a tremendous surge in leisure travel. The new vacationers were price conscious and demanded total travel packages.

In response to these market changes and in an effort to remain competitive, many air carriers began diversifying into travel-related fields such as hotel accommodation, car rentals and tours in order to provide all-inclusive packages. As with other airline companies, marketing became a central function of Air Canada's operations. In 1972, Air Canada adopted a diversification policy and made plans to market certain non-scheduled services through Chartair Canada Services Ltd., a subsidiary company formed to act as a tour operator and charterer (the name was changed in 1973 to Econair Canada Holidays Ltd. and again in 1974 to Venturex Ltd., and finally to Touram Inc. in 1980).⁴⁸

Beginning in the early 1970s, a wider variety of tours, vacation packages, charter flights and other special services were offered as part of an effort to provide a complete product line that appealed to the different segments of an ever broadening travel market.⁴⁹ Discount rates, which catered to the leisure market, encouraged discretionary travellers to fly at times when traffic flows were light, thereby helping the airline achieve

more efficient use of equipment and facilities.

Air Canada's competitive position vis-à-vis non-scheduled carriers on international services also benefitted from important fare structure changes in the early 1970s. During the 1971 IATA fares conference, Air Canada, along with other carriers, argued for the establishment of a new fare structure on transatlantic routes which would enable scheduled carriers to gain a greater proportion of the mass travel market and recapture charter traffic. The proposal was not unanimously supported by IATA member carriers. A compromise agreement was eventually reached which offered significant savings on transatlantic travel through low-cost excursion fares, effective April 1972.⁵⁰ Finally, in late 1972, international regulations concerning charter operations were amended. The IATA allowed advance booking charters which used a minimum pre-booking deadline and a minimum stay provision instead of affinity requirements to prevent diversion of traffic from scheduled to charter services. The old affinity charter system, with its stringent rules governing the purchase of tickets, was abolished and the advance booking charters went into effect in April 1973.⁵¹ Consequently, an increasing number of people were able to travel at charter rates.

The Mid- to Late-1970s

The airline industry did not escape the vagaries of the economic crisis that began in the mid-1970s. Sharply rising inflation had an important counteracting influence on the expansion of air transportation. High interest rates and rising costs in all areas had an impact on the industry, with soaring aviation fuel costs exerting extreme pressures on carriers. While fuel costs had always represented a significant portion of airline

companies' budgets, they had been less prominent over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s following the retirement of piston-engine aircraft which were more fuel hungry than turbine-powered ones. The rising costs of doing business were passed on to consumers of air travel in the form of higher fares. From 1974 onwards, there were frequent fare increases on domestic and international services. With jobs disappearing and inflation running high, the purchasing power of workers' wages was declining. Reduced discretionary income cut into the ability of consumers to spend on leisure and travel.

For the air transport industry, the years of rapid growth and prosperity were drawing to an end. The poor economic conditions of the mid- to late-1970s prevented Air Canada from attaining forecasted passenger traffic levels (except in 1979) even though these targets had been set below traditional growth rates. The company incurred losses in 1974, 1975 and 1976, but profits were registered for the remainder of the decade (see Table 2). This was partly a result of the company's success in controlling overall costs and improving employee productivity through, amongst other means, the introduction of new technology. Air Canada also succeeded in diversifying its revenue base by marketing its technology and other services, a strategy that contributed to positive financial results.⁵²

Beginning in the mid-1970s, prevailing economic uncertainty led to diminished demand for air travel. The resulting overcapacity of most fleets, compounded by spiralling inflation, forced airlines to improve operating efficiency. Because of the capital intensive nature of the industry, it was difficult for carriers to respond quickly to a sudden sharp falloff in business. However, Air Canada, like other carriers, persisted

in its efforts to make the necessary modifications to its fleet. The company sold or leased surplus aircraft and launched programmes to re-equip older airplanes with new engines and interiors as a means of extending their life, range, capacity and fuel-efficiency. The carrier undertook to refit some of its L-1011 jetliners to increase flight range, thereby permitting the use of this equipment on transatlantic services. As well, extra seats were installed in some B-747s, L-1011s and DC-9s in order to add capacity without the need to purchase more equipment. This reconfiguration programme was crucial given that high interest rates impeded upon the ability of carriers to finance the acquisition of new airplanes. Air Canada, however, did take delivery, in 1974, of the first of its 144 passenger B-727s, capable of travelling at a speed of approximately 540 miles per hour. Because newly selected B-767s would not be in operation for a few years, DC-8s that had not been sold or leased out were refurbished. These overall fleet adjustment initiatives helped reduce the airline's costs and resulted in substantial fuel savings. In addition, fuel conservation programmes were instituted to revise aircraft speeds and cruising altitudes.⁵³

Air Canada also responded to the changing market conditions of the mid- to late-1970s by means of greater scheduling flexibility, route rationalization and more efficient fleet utilization to closely match capacity with available business. Measures included suspending service to destinations that were uneconomical, consolidating or cancelling underutilized flights, reducing flight frequencies, deferring the planned inauguration of new services and changing aircraft types on certain routes to limit available seats. However, in order to maintain its share of the business travel market, the airline increased frequencies and provided more direct and non-stop service as well as

convenient flight departure and arrival times for key flights serving this segment. Rapidair service was extended to the Ottawa-Toronto route in 1978. In addition, prime routes were added to the schedule, including transborder services made possible as a result of the 1973 revisions to the bilateral air agreement between Canada and the United States.⁵⁴ Other bilateral agreements and the federal government's 1973 policy statement revising the allocation of international routes between the two main Canadian carriers gave Air Canada access to potentially lucrative new destinations at the expense of CP Air. Nonetheless, during the subsequent ten years, Air Canada failed to inaugurate service on any of these routes.⁵⁵ Clearly, the federal government's power to dictate which Canadian airline would be granted routes obtained through air bilateral agreements with other countries was a key factor in the development of the two major Canadian carriers' international networks.

With the onset of the economic crisis in the mid-1970s, airline companies began raising fares in an attempt to bolster revenues. However, these tariff hikes occurred at a time when setbacks in world economies adversely affected business and leisure travel. In an effort to boost sagging traffic, airlines began experimenting with fare discounting. This served to both appease consumers and attract passengers, thus filling seats that would otherwise go empty. Before this time, the range of air fares had been relatively limited.

The year 1975 marked the beginning of a complex and tumultuous pattern of fare changes. That year, Air Canada introduced excursion fares at an unprecedented 35 percent discount to stimulate air travel within Canada during the off-peak fall and winter season. Similar fare reductions were offered on transborder flights. The youth standby

fare was revised to allow for greater discounts.⁵⁶ In 1976, in order to attract business immediately after the summer peak, the company eliminated the weekend restrictions that had previously applied to discount fares for senior citizens, families and group travel for trips within Canada. In an attempt to compete with charter operators, it launched the Nighthawk fare as a low-cost night-coach excursion tariff to attract passengers to its Florida and other southern destinations.⁵⁷ The same year, Air Canada established excursion tariffs called charter-class fares to compete with charter carriers which were not required to serve during off-peak periods. These fares were available on regular scheduled flights between Canada and the United Kingdom and were later extended to some European destinations. Though subject to certain restrictions, these fares offered the advantage of charter rates with some of the conveniences of scheduled service. They sometimes made it cheaper to cross the Atlantic than to cross Canada by air, a fact that did not escape an already disgruntled public.⁵⁸

By the late-1970s, Canadian consumers were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the continuing rise in the cost of air travel. In this context, the issue of fares, and to a certain extent that of competition between airlines, began receiving greater public attention. Responding to dissatisfaction over frequent fare increases, both Air Canada and CP Air introduced charter-class Canada fares on domestic routes, effective February 1977. While more stringent conditions of purchase were tied to these fares when compared to regular ones, the new incentive tariffs offered significant reductions on certain long-haul flights. Because these fares were only available on a small proportion of the total capacity and were quickly sold out, the initiative did not alleviate public discontent. The Consumers' Association of Canada, amongst other groups, demanded

the implementation of advance booking charter fares on domestic routes, whereby all of the seats on an airplane would be made available at charter-class rates. The Canadian Transport Commission responded by conducting public hearings on domestic advance booking charter fares beginning in September 1977. Consequently, Air Canada and CP Air (which had both opposed the introduction of such service in Canada arguing that charter-class fares were sufficient to serve the price-conscious consumer) as well as the regional carriers were granted the right to operate a limited number of advance booking charters.⁵⁹

The introduction of advance booking charters in Canada was the first phase of a three year experiment with domestic low-priced air fares instituted by the Canadian Transport Commission in January 1978. The decision to relax controls over tariffs set the stage for the launching of an increasingly complex variety of promotional fares. During 1978, charter-class fares were made available for shorter journeys, the advance booking requirement was reduced and the number of seats made available was augmented.⁶⁰ The Nighthawk fares implemented by Air Canada on southern destinations in 1976 were extended to travel within Canada in 1978 shortly after the inauguration of CP Air's Courier Jet service.⁶¹ In 1978, 1979 and again in 1980, fare regulations were loosened for domestic advance booking charters, resulting in fewer restrictions on the advance booking period, length of stay and ticket purchase conditions.⁶² In March 1979, Air Canada and CP Air announced the first of a series of domestic seat sales. Discounts on regular economy fares of up to 65 percent were offered for the off-season period on surplus capacity. This produced regular economy fares that were even lower than charter class and advance booking charter tariffs,

although advance booking and minimum and maximum stay requirements also applied.⁶³

This unprecedented diversification in fares was stimulated by increasing competition in the airline industry. Indeed, throughout the 1970s, Air Canada was faced with growing competition on domestic routes from CP Air, regional airlines and charter companies. While CP Air had been restricted to 25 percent of total capacity on transcontinental flights, by 1979 all such constraints on the carrier's operations had been eliminated, thereby allowing it to compete freely with Air Canada.⁶⁴ Furthermore, in 1979, charter airlines were permitted to compete with Air Canada and CP Air on main domestic routes. Wardair Ltd. was granted a domestic charter licence that same year and began operating advance booking charters on a regular basis in May 1980.⁶⁵

During the 1970s, regional carriers continued to fight for access to better mainline routes and sought to gain the right to provide scheduled service to Toronto. Despite attempts by the two national airlines to limit inroads by regional carriers - partly because of the importance of the feeder traffic provided by secondary routes for transcontinental and international services - the Canadian Transport Commission gradually extended the route networks of the regional airlines by allowing them to compete with Air Canada and CP Air on some mainline routes, take over some secondary routes and operate more charter flights. By decade's end, PWA Ltd., which purchased Transair Ltd. in 1978,⁶⁶ had become the strongest regional carrier and a major competitor for CP Air.⁶⁷

While unfavourable economic conditions and more intense competition from CP Air and regional carriers contributed to Air Canada's problems in the second half of the 1970s, the company also faced a major internal crisis. Following allegations in the House of Commons of improper business practices and conflict of interest on the part of

Air Canada in relation to its diversification plan of the early 1970s, the federal government established a commission of inquiry, in April 1975, headed by Willard Estey, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, to investigate the carrier's system of financial controls, accounting procedures and other matters pertaining to the fiscal management and control of the corporation. The commission's report, which was made public in December 1975, found that no dishonesty had occurred in Air Canada's operations.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, the new Air Canada Act, which came into force in early 1978, incorporated many recommendations of the commission and enabled the carrier to respond to the rapid changes in the industry. Under the revised Act, the federal government assumed direct ownership of the airline, thus severing the company's ties with Canadian National Railways. The new statute also called for the corporation to have due regard for sound business principles and, in particular, the contemplation of profit. In addition, Air Canada's powers were broadened to allow it to diversify into travel-related activities and businesses, a right already enjoyed by its private sector competitors. Finally, the provisions of the Aeronautics Act which required the Canadian Transport Commission to grant Air Canada any licence to fulfill its contract with the Minister of Transport were repealed, thereby placing the crown corporation under the same licensing regime as privately-owned carriers, a change of minor consequence for the airline given that it already held a large number of preferred licences.⁶⁹

The 1980s and Early 1990s

The 1980s and early 1990s proved to be an even more tumultuous period for the

airline industry. The beginning and end of the 1980s were plagued by economic recessions as were the early 1990s. In addition, deregulation of the airline industry worldwide created havoc in the air transport sector in many countries. During the entire period from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, employment growth in the airline industry was arrested as markets weakened, competition became more fierce and labour productivity increased. Throughout these years, workers at Air Canada, like elsewhere in the industry, were affected by major rounds of layoffs. Strikes also characterized the period. Though the 1970s represented a decade marked by strike activity on the part of the male-dominated IAMAW, the 1980s saw groups of workers where women predominate also initiate such action. Indeed, passenger agents and flight attendants both struck the company in 1985. During that year, the CALEA merged with the CAW-Canada and, in 1986, the CALFAA joined the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The Early 1980s

Severely mounting inflationary pressures in the early 1980s pushed up the costs of running an airline. Overall concerns about the deficit led the federal government to raise transportation and fuel taxes as well as charges for airport use and navigational aids. Moreover, interest rates soared, thus increasing the cost of carrying loans for the fuel-efficient aircraft ordered by carriers in the late 1970s to expand and renew their fleets in order to position themselves for more competition. Airlines' mushrooming costs were passed on to consumers of air travel in the form of higher fares. There were, however, real limits to the travelling public's ability and willingness to absorb these

increases. As the economy worsened and unemployment reached double-digit numbers, both leisure and business travellers cut back on their use of air transport, thus leaving airlines with empty seats and deteriorating profits.

Though Air Canada, like many of its counterparts, had registered strong traffic growth in 1979 following several years of weak expansion, it experienced only slight growth in 1980. The next three years were gloomy for the carrier as traffic actually declined (see Table 2). This represented the first time in the airline's history that traffic had diminished significantly, dipping to pre-1979 levels and this, despite the increasing variety and availability of discount fares. Stringent cost-control measures were introduced in all areas in the early 1980s and staff reduction programmes were implemented as part of an overall strategy to cut labour costs. The marketing of technology and services continued to be a significant source of additional revenue. The company registered profits in 1980 and 1981, but suffered a loss in 1982, followed by a small profit in 1983 (see Table 2).

Fleet renewal and modification programmes initiated in the late 1970s to improve fuel efficiency were continued during the early 1980s. In 1981, the company took delivery of its first L-1011-500 extended range aircraft, capable of travelling at a speed of approximately 550 miles per hour and carrying 214 passengers, to complement B-747 equipment. In addition, the first 201 passenger medium-range B-767 jetliner, with a cruising speed of approximately 530 miles per hour, was put into service early in 1983 to replace the remaining passenger DC-8s on North American routes. The latter jetliners, once the backbone of transcontinental and international services, were converted to all-cargo configuration. The B-767, with its state-of-the-art technology, fuel efficiency

and wide-body features, was the most advanced airliner of the time. Because no suitable airplane existed as an alternative to the DC-9s, the company modified the engines to improve fuel efficiency and converted most of these jets to wide-body configuration in an attempt to upgrade passenger comfort. This refurbishment programme was expected to adequately meet Air Canada's requirements until the mid-1980s when replacement aircraft would become available. The company's L-1011 and B-727 equipment was also modified to reduce fuel consumption.⁷⁰

The carrier continued to realign its fleet to ensure greater operational efficiency. It made use of L-1011 aircraft on many transcontinental and transatlantic routes instead of the usual B-747 due to the economics of operating this equipment in the context of significantly reduced passenger traffic. Throughout the early 1980s, the airline pursued its policy of flexible scheduling introduced in the late 1970s which allowed it to quickly adjust to fluctuations in the travel market by matching seat capacity to passenger demand.⁷¹

During the early 1980s, competition grew on high-density short-haul and some long-distance transcontinental routes, with Air Canada's rivals launching new services and augmenting frequencies. Shrinking markets, however, meant that several routes were barely capable of supporting one airline. This resulted in overcapacity for most fleets. The expansion of CP Air, the regional carriers and Wardair Inc. at a time when markets were retrenching was at the expense of Air Canada.⁷²

The airlines' struggle to increase, or at least maintain, their respective market share, concomitant with the Canadian Transport Commission's gradual relaxation of controls on fare discounts, led to fierce price wars in Canada. The experiment with

discount fares, which had begun in early 1978 and was slated to end in late 1980, continued indefinitely. Seat sales were heavily promoted during the early 1980s. In 1982, Air Canada introduced, for the first time ever, deep-discount fares during the peak summer period, a move which produced traffic volumes above expected levels. In addition, unprecedented discounts were offered as part of spring and fall seat sales and, in 1983, the company announced its first system-wide seat sale. In 1982, the carrier also began advertising a one-way Skysaver fare in response to CP Air's expanded use of its Skybus fare initiated in 1979. This service operated overnight between selected city pairs and featured one-way tickets at approximately 50 percent of the regular cost with no advance booking and minimum stay requirements.⁷³ For passengers, major fare discounts greatly lessened the negative effect of tariff increases. For airline companies, however, revenue growth was constrained by these pricing initiatives which were designed to stimulate traffic. Since fences restricting access to low fares were gradually removed, the proportion of passengers who paid regular fares diminished.⁷⁴

While leisure travellers enjoyed deep-discount fares, business travellers became disgruntled over the fact that they had to pay the full ticket price because they were unable or unwilling to meet the restrictive conditions attached to the low fares such as having to spend a weekend at their destination, leave at specific times and fulfill advance booking and payment requirements. In order to appease full-fare passengers and also retain and attract customers following the lifting of the last restrictions on CP Air's transcontinental capacity in 1979, Air Canada launched a *Connaisseur* programme on selected international routes in 1980 and extended this service to domestic and transborder flights in 1981 and 1982. *Connaisseur* service, which was comparable to CP

Air's Empress service also introduced in 1980, featured upgraded in-flight service amenities (including a complimentary bar and a choice of meals) dedicated check-in counters and special boarding sequence. In 1983, first-class and full-fare passengers were provided with advance seat selection. In addition, Air Canada offered more non-stop services and greater flight frequencies on certain routes to meet the daily demands of the business community.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the greater availability of low-cost fares and the removal of a number of restrictions on their use resulted in some diversion of full-fare traffic as business travellers structured their plans to take advantage of favourable rates.⁷⁶ Government regulation of air fares had been relaxed to the point where airline companies were no longer protected against the worst effects of competition. In order to rectify this situation, the federal government ruled, in August 1982, that deep discounting of fares without sufficient restrictions to limit the diversion of full-fare traffic was detrimental to the health of the airline industry. It thus instructed air carriers to restructure their deep-discount fares.⁷⁷

During the early 1980s, Air Canada faced intense competition, not only on the domestic front, but also on international and transborder routes. Concessions awarded to foreign competitors under bilateral air agreements cut into Air Canada's market. Of considerable concern to the carrier was the granting to British Airways, in 1980, of immediate access to destinations in western Canada, a privilege the latter company had long sought. In return, Air Canada acquired the right to eventually develop and extend its services on routes through London, England to the Middle East, India and Southeast Asia. Air Canada also gained expanded rights to other countries. A bilateral agreement

reached in 1981 between Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany gave a German carrier access to western Canada and, in return, Air Canada was granted additional rights to Germany and unlimited access to all destinations beyond that country. A revision to the Canada-France air agreement in 1982 provided Air Canada with access to Southeast Asia through France. That same year, following the conclusion of a bilateral agreement with India, the carrier obtained traffic rights from certain Middle East countries to India and local traffic rights beyond to points in Southeast Asia.⁷⁸

Price wars amongst American carriers, brought on by increased competition following the introduction of deregulation of the air transport industry in the United States beginning in 1978, resulted in lower fares for transatlantic travel which attracted traffic that may otherwise have been carried by Air Canada or another Canadian company. The existing scheduled transborder route structure, which created an imbalance in favour of American carriers, aggravated the problem. Air Canada, along with CP Air, urged the Canadian government to attempt to redress this situation during bilateral negotiations which opened with the United States in 1981. In order to repatriate traffic from American carriers and charter operators, Air Canada introduced Sun Charters which offered inexpensive vacations to destinations not included in the company's scheduled services.⁷⁹

The United States' experience with the deregulation of its air transport industry in the late 1970s attracted the attention of Canadians who began to view less regulatory control as the panacea that would ensure enhanced competition and bring down the cost of air travel. A report produced by the Economic Council of Canada in 1981, which advocated the deregulation of Canada's airline industry, received much favourable media

attention. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Consumers' Association of Canada both strongly favoured airline deregulation. A Gallup poll commissioned by the latter lobby group released in early 1984 reported that three out of every four Canadians supported deregulation.⁸⁰

In the early 1980s, Canadian scheduled airlines took a cautious approach to deregulation.⁸¹ Air Canada agreed that a degree of regulatory reform would be beneficial to the Canadian air transportation industry, but warned against the potential dangers of applying a foreign formula to a fundamentally different geographic and economic context and argued for a more gradual and controlled approach to deregulation in Canada.⁸² For its part, Wardair Inc., which supported deregulation in the industry, sought and eventually obtained a transcontinental licence for scheduled service in 1986.⁸³

Deregulation of the airline industry became an important issue in the electoral platforms of Canadian politicians starting in the late 1970s. During the Conservative Party's short stint in power in 1979-1980, it advocated greater competition in the transportation sector and pledged to relax some of the restrictions under which airlines operated. The Liberal government followed through with its predecessor's promise and in the latter part of 1981, released a discussion paper on the structure of the industry. The document was referred to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport which held public hearings in 1982. Agreement could not be reached on the recommendations of a report released by the Committee and attempts to reform domestic air transport policy were temporarily abandoned.⁸⁴

Amidst the clamour for more competition and cheaper air travel, the Canadian

Transport Commission held public hearings on air fares early in 1984. Deregulation often surfaced even though the subject was not within the terms of reference of the enquiry.⁸⁵ Based on the results of the hearings, the government issued a policy statement in May 1984, entitled New Canadian Air Policy, which was intended as a first step to complete deregulation within the industry.⁸⁶ The Liberal government, however, failed to introduce deregulation legislation because it was defeated by the Conservative Party in the 1984 election. The release of a white paper in July 1985, entitled Freedom to Move: A Framework for Transportation Reform, continued the in-depth review of the regulation and control of Canadian civil aviation.⁸⁷ Public hearings were held following the publication of the white paper which dealt with all modes of transportation and represented the first major overhaul of legislation in this area since the adoption of the National Transportation Act in 1967. By this time, Air Canada had modified its position on domestic regulatory reform and now viewed deregulation in a more positive light.⁸⁸

Legislation to incorporate proposals contained in the Freedom to Move document was initially introduced in June 1986 and on January 1, 1988, the new National Transportation Act came into force, thereby establishing an industry largely free of government economic regulation.⁸⁹ The new legislation abolished the Canadian Transport Commission, the body that had been largely responsible for the economic regulation of the transportation industry, and replaced it with the National Transportation Agency which was granted significantly less authority. The organization was stripped of its research function which had been important in assisting the government in making decisions on transport issues. As well, it was left with virtually no control over entry and exit, fares, routes and certain aspects of service related to aircraft.

While air carriers operating within, to and from northern Canada were still subject to certain forms of regulation, those operating in southern Canada enjoyed almost total economic freedom. For services in southern Canada, the agency was now required to grant an operating licence if the applicant was certified by Transport Canada as fit, willing and able to conduct a safe operation, was Canadian and had prescribed liability insurance coverage. Air carriers usually had to give 120 days notice to discontinue or reduce the frequency of a domestic service, whereas previously, airlines had to obtain approval before withdrawing or reducing a service. Furthermore, airlines no longer had to file fares and rates with the regulatory agency for approval before they came into effect, but were simply required to publish them with accessible records kept at their offices for three years. Finally, subject to possible Transport Canada requirements, holders of a southern Canada licence were now able to operate anywhere in southern Canada on a scheduled, charter or part scheduled/charter basis with any size, type and number of aircraft. The process for obtaining licences for international services remained unchanged, with bilateral air agreements between nations and domestic government policies continuing to provide the framework for decisions in this area.

With ongoing changes in the air transport regulatory environment, arguments in favour of the privatization of Air Canada became quite persistent. In April 1988, the Conservative government announced its intention to sell 45 percent of Air Canada shares to the public. Approval for the sale was given by the House of Commons in July 1988, and active trading began in October of that year. In the summer of 1989, the remaining shares were sold and Air Canada was fully privatized.⁹⁰ This ownership change was part of a worldwide trend towards the partial or full privatization of government-owned

airlines.⁹¹

The Mid- to Late-1980s and Early 1990s

During the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s, competitive pressures resulting from gradual deregulation increased dramatically and led to price wars. Despite the fact that a high proportion of seats were discounted, no significant market broadening was achieved. Even with the economic recovery of the mid-1980s, overcapacity continued to plague the airlines. The onset of a recession in 1989 as well as the Persian Gulf War in 1991 affected traffic growth. In addition, businesses, which represented an important source of revenue for air carriers, began slashing their travel budgets. In the context of these dismal economic conditions, Air Canada registered substantial losses in 1985, 1990, 1991, 1992 (see Table 2) and in the first quarter of 1993.⁹² In 1991, in an attempt to generate funds for the purchase of equity in other airline companies so as to strengthen its position in the global air travel market, the air carrier sold Place Air Canada, its corporate headquarters office complex in Montreal, and consolidated staff at its technical centre adjacent to the airport in Dorval.⁹³ As well, Air Canada sold its enRoute credit card operations to Citibank Canada in 1992.⁹⁴ In addition, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the company undertook the sale and leaseback of aircraft.

With deregulation and growing competition in the Canadian airline industry, the major carriers sought innovative strategies to ensure their position in the marketplace. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the industry was characterized by increasing concentration which resulted from acquisitions, mergers and commercial alliances. Although Air Canada established a connector network through the partial or total acquisition of smaller

carriers in order to enhance its domestic position, its main rival also made use of this strategy to form a strong alliance network. This unprecedented change in the ownership structure of Canadian airlines formed strengthened opponents, a situation that greatly benefitted consumers of air travel due to cutthroat price competition.

In 1986, Air Canada purchased 24.5 percent of Air Ontario Ltd.⁹⁵ and, in early 1987, with the creation of Air Ontario Inc. through an amalgamation of Air Ontario Ltd. and Austin Airways Ltd., increased its equity in the new company to 75 percent.⁹⁶ In 1986, it purchased 49 percent of Air Nova Inc.⁹⁷ and, in early 1991, secured the remaining 51 percent interest in the carrier.⁹⁸ In early 1987, Air Canada acquired 100 percent of AirBC Ltd.⁹⁹ and, in early 1988, established Air Alliance Inc. as an addition to the connector network, an airline in which it held a 75 percent interest.¹⁰⁰ That same year, it achieved 90 percent ownership of Northwest Territorial Airways Ltd.¹⁰¹ and, the following year, purchased the remaining 10 percent interest.¹⁰² Air Canada also entered into a commercial alliance with Air Toronto Ltd. in 1987, but did not hold equity interest in the connector airline.¹⁰³ However, in 1991 it lost the commuter carrier to its main rival.¹⁰⁴

In 1984, CP Air acquired 100 percent of EPA Ltd. and its affiliate Air Maritime Ltd.¹⁰⁵ In 1986, it participated in the establishment of Air Atlantic Ltd. and held a 22 percent interest in the company.¹⁰⁶ In 1985, CP Air purchased 52 percent of Nordair Inc.¹⁰⁷ and, in 1986, increased its holdings to 100 percent.¹⁰⁸ This followed the sale by Air Canada in 1984 of the 87 percent share it had acquired in Nordair Ltd. in January 1979.¹⁰⁹ In 1986, Nordair Inc. purchased 35 percent of Québecair Inc.¹¹⁰ The following year, Québecair Inc. and Nordair Metro Inc., a commuter carrier formed by

Nordair Inc. in 1985, merged to form Inter-Canadien Inc.¹¹¹ In January 1987, Nordair Inc., EPA Ltd. and CP Air were amalgamated and continued business as CPAL Ltd.¹¹²

In early 1987, PWA Corp., parent company of PWA Ltd., purchased 100 percent of CPAL Ltd. and, in April of that year, the two carriers were integrated and continued business under the name Canadian Airlines International Ltd. (CAIL).¹¹³ In 1983, PWA Corp. acquired 40 percent of Time Air Corp.¹¹⁴ and, by 1987, had increased its equity investment to 46 percent.¹¹⁵ Finally, in 1991, it bought the remaining 54 percent of the feeder airline.¹¹⁶ In 1986, PWA Corp. purchased 24.5 percent interest in Air Ontario Ltd. which was subsequently sold to Air Canada in early 1987.¹¹⁷ In 1987, PWA Corp. increased its share of Air Atlantic Ltd. to 45 percent.¹¹⁸ In 1987, it purchased a 45 percent and 49 percent ownership position in Calm Air International Ltd. and Ontario Express Ltd., respectively.¹¹⁹ In 1991, it increased its share of the latter carrier to 100 percent.¹²⁰ Finally, in 1989, PWA Corp. acquired 100 percent of Wardair Inc.¹²¹ Also during 1989, Inter-Canadien Inc. split from CAIL and began operating as an independent carrier under the name Intair Inc.,¹²² but in 1991, PWA Corp. took over its former subsidiary in which it thereafter held 70 percent equity.¹²³

The extensive industry consolidation resulted in the altering of traditional route structures. Through its connector network, Air Canada realigned its domestic schedule and rationalized its route structure. It withdrew service from many small and medium-sized communities and transferred operations to partner airlines. A hub-and-spoke system developed, whereby regional partners fed traffic into Air Canada's main operations. The latter's chief competitor, CAIL, also adopted similar strategies. The consolidation of a connector network allowed Air Canada to implement a major fleet

redeployment programme to ensure a more efficient utilization of its equipment.¹²⁴

During this period of intense competition, Air Canada launched a variety of deep-discount fare programmes which tended to reduce the effect of tariff hikes.¹²⁵ With the year-round availability of seat sales, which allowed business travellers to structure their plans to take advantage of lower-cost travel, the proportion of full-fare passengers continued to shrink, a trend that had begun in the late 1970s. Moreover, facsimile machines and video-conferencing were becoming popular alternatives to air travel for companies aiming to reduce their business travel expenses. To counter the impact on their balance sheets, airlines increasingly focused on business travellers. In 1984, Air Canada and CP Air both launched frequent flyer programmes modelled after those of major American carriers to build customer loyalty. These highly successful incentive schemes offered frequent travellers awards such as free flights. Like other large carriers, Air Canada offered the business travel market improved products and services such as separate sections on airplanes, wider seats, seat telephones, an enhanced wine list, deluxe meals, the provision of meals at the most convenient time for passengers (for long-distance flights) and the use of private airport lounges. The latter were redesigned and upgraded to meet business travellers' needs. Amenities included facsimile machines, photocopiers, banking machines, personal computers and mini-workstations.¹²⁶

Throughout the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, fleet management remained a high priority for Air Canada. The variety of aircraft types was reduced, thereby simplifying maintenance and crew training. In addition, a major project was undertaken to standardize the seating arrangements of the wide-body fleet. Cost cutting was achieved by facilitating the interchangeability of aircraft between routes and by

minimizing the need for seasonal reconfiguration.¹²⁷

Air Canada introduced the B-767 on North Atlantic services in 1985, following modifications incorporated by the manufacturer which rendered the aircraft capable of extended overwater flight.¹²⁸ In 1990, Air Canada began flying the A-320 aircraft to replace its B-727 equipment on North American routes. These comfortable, spacious and fuel-efficient airplanes carried 137 passengers at a speed of approximately 515 miles per hour.¹²⁹ In 1989, the company placed orders for B-747-400 passenger/cargo combination aircraft for service to major international destinations and on planned routes to the Pacific Rim. This equipment could carry 277 passengers and up to fourteen cargo pallets at a speed of approximately 585 miles per hour. That same year, the carrier ordered B-767-300 extended range aircraft capable of carrying 217 passengers to replace its fleet of L-1011-500 jetliners.¹³⁰ When the carrier took delivery of the first three B-747-400 airplanes in mid-1991, it was compelled to temporarily store them due to the recessionary climate and its inability to sell the equipment.¹³¹ The jetliners were, however, put into service in the spring of 1992.¹³² Moreover, in 1993, when the company took delivery of the first two new B-767-300 aircraft, it put them up for sale.¹³³

During the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, fundamental transformations in the airline industry on an international scale created serious problems for Air Canada. Increased deregulation of air transportation worldwide resulted in less restrictive air bilateral agreements between nations. As well, the emergence of mega-carriers on the international scene presented major challenges to smaller airlines. In this context, Air Canada sought to enhance its world presence by entering into commercial alliances with

international carriers, a strategy which provided for mutual passenger exchange, improved connections and the extension of its network to a growing number of world destinations.¹³⁴ Moreover, in order to compete effectively and tap into foreign markets offering significant potential, Air Canada stepped up efforts to broaden its international route structure. With the Canadian market not expected to grow substantially during the second half of the 1980s and beyond, and with intense competition being experienced on all domestic, transborder and international routes, Air Canada pressed the federal government to support its attempts to seek opportunities for global expansion. When the federal government amended the air policy on the allocation of international scheduled-service routes in 1987, Air Canada was granted the right to serve a number of new and potentially lucrative destinations.¹³⁵ Following the conclusion of a series of bilateral agreements between the federal government and authorities in other countries, Air Canada obtained the right to extend services and inaugurated routes to European and southern destinations. In addition, bilateral air agreements allowed Air Canada to initiate service, in early 1985, from Toronto to Singapore and India through London, thereby tapping rapidly growing Asian markets. Further bilateral agreements between Canada and other states facilitated the development of a second corridor to Southeast Asia, linking Frankfurt, New Delhi and Bangkok. The Canadian government also signed bilateral agreements with a number of countries of the Far East, following which it gave Air Canada the right to open routes over the Pacific. It nonetheless denied the carrier access to Japan, a route actively sought by Air Canada and which was already served by CAIL.¹³⁶ Although Air Canada extended its global reach during the second half of the 1980s, it was unable to compete with the larger international mega-carriers. By 1990,

it began retrenching, with the suspension of service to Bombay and Singapore as well as the cancellation of other international routes.¹³⁷ New services were, however, inaugurated to European destinations in 1992.¹³⁸

The early 1990s were tumultuous times for Canada's two major airlines as they strove to position themselves for increased global competition. Each fought to secure a greater share of the domestic market while at the same time attempting to gain access to American and international markets. In the context of the free trade pact between Canada and the United States, one of Air Canada's objectives was to strengthen its participation in the North American market. The airline lobbied the Canadian government to ensure that negotiations to renew bilateral air agreements between Canada and the United States, which started in the spring of 1991, would provide it with this opportunity.¹³⁹ The renegotiation of the air agreement, which had not been updated since 1974, was intended to bring about free trade between the two countries' air services. These talks, dubbed 'open-skies', were occurring in tandem with similar discussions taking place between countries in Europe in the context of the move towards a single European market. Notwithstanding the fact that a number of meetings were held throughout 1991 and 1992, no agreement had been reached by the summer of 1993.

In order to improve its market position domestically and internationally, and effectively compete with its Canadian rival, CAIL, Air Canada began negotiating a commercial alliance with USAir Inc. in the summer of 1991.¹⁴⁰ By the summer of 1992, little progress had been made and when British Airways reached an agreement to buy a stake in USAir Inc., talks between Air Canada and the latter airline ceased.¹⁴¹ (The American-British deal was never finalized.)¹⁴² In addition, in the summer of

1992, Air Canada negotiated a commercial alliance with United Airlines Inc. (the second largest U.S. carrier and one of world's biggest), a partnership aimed at considerably improving the Canadian carrier's access to key American and international markets.¹⁴³ In early autumn 1992, Air Canada established a strategic alliance with Air France (the largest European carrier in terms of sales) whereby the Canadian carrier obtained better access to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia while Air France gained an additional gateway to the North American market.¹⁴⁴ In November 1992, Continental Airlines Inc. accepted a bid made a few months earlier by Air Canada and Air Partners L.P., a Texas investment group, to buy a controlling interest in the ailing American carrier which had been operating under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Act since December 1990.¹⁴⁵ The takeover proposal was tentatively approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation in January 1993,¹⁴⁶ and the deal was finalized in April when Continental Airlines Inc. emerged from bankruptcy protection.¹⁴⁷

Like Air Canada, CAIL was also trying to improve its overall position in the international air travel market through a partnership with AMR Corp., the parent company of American Airlines Inc., the largest U.S. carrier. Although an agreement was reached in the spring of 1992 whereby the American carrier was to purchase an equity stake in CAIL and provide the latter with marketing and management services,¹⁴⁸ negotiations were terminated in July after the board of directors of PWA Corp., the parent company of CAIL, decided that the airline could not meet the closing requirements set by its American counterpart. PWA Corp. announced it would resume merger discussions with its rival, Air Canada.¹⁴⁹

Early in 1992, Air Canada had indicated that it wished to merge with CAIL or

acquire its transpacific routes, and preliminary talks had been held between the two Canadian carriers.¹⁵⁰ Air Canada's formal merger offer, which was made to PWA Corp. in August, was later rejected.¹⁵¹ In September, Air Canada made a slightly improved proposal to PWA Corp. which would nonetheless give the former effective control of CAIL.¹⁵² Although the deal was initially accepted and both companies signed an agreement establishing the principles governing the proposed merger, their respective board of directors rejected the package in late October.¹⁵³ This turn of events prompted new alliance talks between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp.¹⁵⁴

Throughout these merger discussions, an employee council representing the different groups of workers at CAIL pressed ahead with a campaign to secure sufficient financing for the revival of alliance talks between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp. All unions except for the CAW accepted a share-purchase plan for their members through payroll deductions of between 5 and 15 percent. A package of labour contract extensions and wage settlement principles through the end of 1995 was also devised.¹⁵⁵ In late 1992, the CAW reluctantly agreed to concessions that required workers to put 5 percent of their wages in a stock-option plan. In exchange, the carrier guaranteed that, in the event of a merger with American Airlines Inc., 900 reservations agent positions previously slated for transfer to the United States would remain in Canada until 1995.¹⁵⁶ The federal and some provincial governments came through with loan guarantees sought by PWA Corp. which would allow the latter to continue operating until a longer term solution was found.¹⁵⁷ In late December 1992, PWA Corp. signed a tentative agreement with AMR Corp. whereby the latter would invest \$246 million in CAIL in exchange for a twenty year contract to provide the Canadian carrier with a

package of services including a computerized reservations system.¹⁵⁸ In late May 1993, the National Transportation Agency approved the sale of part of CAIL to AMR Corp.¹⁵⁹ Even though Air Canada petitioned the federal cabinet to overturn the decision,¹⁶⁰ the latter let the National Transportation Agency's ruling stand.¹⁶¹

One of the main obstacles to the deal between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp. revolved around computerized reservations systems. In early November 1992, following a request by PWA Corp. and AMR Corp., the director of investigation and research of the Bureau of Competition Policy applied to the Competition Tribunal to allow CAIL to break its contractual obligations to the Gemini Group Automated Distributions Systems Inc. - a computerized reservations system it shared with Air Canada - and join American Airlines Inc.'s Sabre system.¹⁶² A series of lawsuits ensued as the different parties attempted to protect their interests concerning reservations systems.¹⁶³ In early April 1993, the Ontario Court of Justice rejected PWA Corp.'s bid to have Gemini declared insolvent, which would have dissolved the partnership and released the air carrier from its obligations.¹⁶⁴ PWA Corp. appealed the ruling.¹⁶⁵ In late April, the Competition Tribunal ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to void CAIL's contract with the Gemini Group, but remarked that it would have modified the agreement had it had the power to do so. It argued, however, that CAIL would fail without the investment from AMR Corp. PWA Corp. appealed the ruling to the Federal Court.¹⁶⁶ In late July 1993, the Court ruled that the Competition Tribunal had the power to order the complete breakup of the Gemini Group, but that it could not modify the partnership structure.¹⁶⁷ Throughout this legal wrangling, PWA Corp. attempted to buy out CAIL's contractual obligations with the Gemini computerized reservations system partnership, a move strongly resisted by Air

Canada.¹⁶⁸

During this time, CAIL and Air Canada continued their cutthroat competition, a strategy that resulted in overcapacity in the domestic market. This situation prompted the federal government to threaten to 'recalibrate' the industry if the carriers did not cut capacity.¹⁶⁹ Despite the fact that the carriers did reduce capacity somewhat, the industry still faced enormous financial problems. Moreover, given the trend towards closer partnership arrangements between Canadian and American air carriers, the continuing existence of an autonomous Canadian airline industry remains in question.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the development of TCA/Air Canada, locating it within the broader political economy of the airline industry. I have demonstrated that, following rapid growth and relatively stable conditions which characterized its formative and consolidation years, Air Canada encountered numerous obstacles during the entire period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, in the context of the crisis in the airline industry and in the economy generally. Throughout this period, the carrier underwent a series of changes which made it into a significantly different airline than the one created in the late 1930s. Specific indicators such as passenger volumes, financial performance, products and services, fare structures, route expansion and aircraft technology have been used to tell the story of the creation, growth and transformation of TCA/Air Canada. In addition, as I have shown, the state has played a significant role in the development of the airline industry. This massive intervention, especially in terms of economic regulation, has greatly influenced the level of competition between air carriers and thus

the shape of the industry.

Those interested in political economy will readily recognize that many of the dominant patterns in the development of the airline industry are not unique to that sector, but parallel trends that have emerged throughout the industrial world since the Second World War. Despite the fact that TCA/Air Canada was a crown corporation for most of its history and part of its mandate focused on nation-building, its evolution has not followed a radically different path than that of many large private sector enterprises. In his in-depth study of the politics of Canada's airlines, Garth Stevenson¹⁷⁰ concluded that TCA/Air Canada was an actor in its own right with distinct objectives and generally wished to maximize its own profitability, partly because the achievement of a sound financial position would decrease its dependence on the government and thus reduce its vulnerability to political interference.

The overview of the development of TCA/Air Canada presented in this chapter serves as a backdrop for an understanding of the historical transformation of the labour process of passenger agents employed by the major Canadian air carrier. Modifications to the work of passenger agents did not occur in isolation and therefore cannot be explained without a general knowledge of the major changes experienced by TCA/Air Canada and of overall industry trends. In the chapters that follow, I analyze transmutations in the nature, conditions and relations of the white-collar work of passenger agents. By locating these changes within the political economy of the airline industry, I expose the dynamic relationship that exists between the immediate point of production and the larger structural context.

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4. THE LABOUR PROCESS OF PASSENGER AGENTS: THE LATE 1930s TO THE LATE 1960s

This chapter provides an analysis of major changes in the labour process of passenger agents since the formation of TCA in 1937 until the late 1960s. In discussing the important features of the work of passenger agents, I demonstrate that the job was initially highly labour intensive and characterized by a limited division of labour and a low level of automation. I show that an increasing division of labour occurred with the development and growth of the airline industry and the consequent spread of passenger handling functions. Despite the fact that the air carrier introduced new forms of technology in its attempts to improve productivity, efficiency and service to customers, the work process of passenger agents remained labour intensive throughout the entire period under investigation. I analyze the effects of the first wave of computer and communications technologies on the organization of work and on the job security of passenger agents, and show that in the wake of these changes, the union began adopting a more militant stance and union-management relations became more confrontational. In this chapter, I also discuss certain problems faced by the growing number of women holding passenger handling jobs.

The Establishment of the Labour Process

When TCA began the carriage of passengers in 1937 on the Vancouver-Seattle route, arrangements were made with Canadian National Railways whereby airline agents in Vancouver and Seattle were assigned space in railway offices to sell tickets to customers. When TCA agents went off duty, tickets were sold by railway staff.¹ With the inauguration of additional routes during the first few years of operation, the company

began building its traffic organization. Traffic representatives, who usually had previous travel industry or sales experience, were hired to promote air transport and solicit clients. Given the novelty and widespread apprehension of air travel, TCA employees were called upon to sell, not only tickets, but also the whole idea of air travel, with savings in time being used as the main argument to entice people to make use of this emerging mode of transportation. Traffic representatives drew up lists of potential customers and contacted these individuals in an attempt to convince them to fly TCA.²

City traffic offices were opened, usually on Canadian National Railways premises, and airport stations were equipped to accommodate passengers. Passenger handling procedures were developed, regulations were drafted, tariffs were determined, forms were designed, connections were established with travel agencies and interline agreements were entered into with other Canadian and American operators. New employees were trained and assigned to handle reservations, ticketing and other passenger services at airports and city offices. Because the industry was in the early stages of its formation, rules and procedures were continually being tested and modified. Initially, the division of labour was limited, with a few agents in each station responsible for all tasks related to the selling of tickets and the servicing of customers.³ However, a more complex division of labour gradually emerged as the airline developed new routes and services and hired extra people to cope with the growth in traffic.

In the early days, the process of making a reservation was time-consuming and cumbersome. Customers were required to call or present themselves at a city traffic or airport office to book a seat. Messages relating to space needed were relayed from one office to another by radio operators and confirmation of a seat sale could take up to

several days.⁴ By the summer of 1940, congestion of radio circuits between the heavy traffic centres of Toronto and Montreal was hampering TCA's reservations operations. In order to reduce these pressures and improve service by significantly increasing the speed of message handling, the company, in cooperation with Canadian National Telegraphs, installed teletype circuits connecting Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa city traffic and airport offices. Gradual installation of teletype circuits in other locations ensured prompt communication and greatly assisted in the handling of reservations.⁵ Teletype operators were responsible for the relaying of messages concerning requests for reservations received from city traffic and airport offices throughout the system and for the forwarding of various types of messages to other company departments. By 1943, over 10,000 messages a day were passing through the teletype system.⁶ Operators were obviously kept very busy and attention to detail was of utmost importance. In response to the growing congestion of teletype circuits and the resulting loss of revenue due to the inability to confirm space promptly upon notification of late cancellations, the company began replacing its manual teletype machines with automated models in the spring of 1944. The implementation of this new technology, which increased the traffic efficiency of circuits by nearly doubling their potential, greatly improved the company's ability to handle reservations more quickly and thus speeded up the work of teletype operators.⁷

Not only was it necessary for air carriers to process bookings quickly and efficiently, but they also had to ensure that airplanes departed with full loads. From the early years, TCA, like other airlines, attempted to ameliorate the handling of reservations and reduce the number of no-shows (those who made reservations then failed to show up by departure time) and last-minute cancellations. New reservations procedures initiated

in the early 1940s to alleviate these problems involved contacting passengers at a predetermined time before flight departures in order to confirm reservations. The seats released by this early validation process were sold to 'waitlist' passengers, thereby increasing load factors and revenue.⁸ The reconfirmation procedure was eventually discontinued.

In order to speed up and better coordinate the reservations process, TCA established, in early 1941, a space control centre in Toronto from which all space required by offices in the central region was requested prior to confirmation to passengers.⁹ Shortly thereafter, a second centralized space control facility was set up in Winnipeg to oversee the assignment of space for stations in the western region (moved to Edmonton in 1944, then back to Winnipeg in 1949).¹⁰ In the summer of 1942, a third control centre opened in Halifax to receive requests for seats from offices in the eastern region (moved to Moncton in 1947).¹¹ With the creation of these offices, a greater division of labour was introduced in the reservations function. Space control agents in these centres assigned seats from master charts, maintained all records in connection with the allocation of reservations, handled all matters pertaining to reservations originating in offices or stations within their regions, liaised with flight dispatch and other operations personnel on matters concerning reservations and supervised the overall disposition of passenger accommodation to ensure maximum utilization of aircraft. The work of space control agents, which demanded a high level of attention, accuracy and speed, was often carried out under extreme pressure. Agents nonetheless exercised discretion and control over their immediate work process and participated in decisions concerning procedures.¹²

In the spring of 1941, TCA set up a centralized telephone inquiry service in the Toronto space control office and hired switchboard operators and telephone operators. Under this new system, when customers called TCA in Toronto, they reached the control centre instead of a city traffic office. With these new procedures airport and ticket office workers were relieved of telephone answering duties and a greater specialization of tasks ensued. Telephone operators responded to all queries about routes and schedules, fares and rates, rules of carriage, baggage regulations, international travel requirements, ground transportation services, flight forecasts and weather information. A forecast board located in the telephone room provided operators with an overview of system-wide flight operations in progress and those planned within the next twenty-four hour period. An attendant updated the board as flight information and other essential data were received from the chart room or by teletype from other stations. Telephone operators channelled requests for reservations to space control agents in the chart room. The latter relayed the reply on availability back to the operators who in turn transmitted the information to customers. Completing a reservation involved the establishment of a passenger file by telephone operators. Within a few years, conveyor belts, which operated between teletype, telephone and space control positions, were installed so that messages and files could be handled without delay.¹³

In other communities served by the airline, reservations were usually handled by agents in city traffic offices. These offices were typically staffed by ticket agents, telephone operators, teletype operators and reservations agents, with functions often combined depending on the size of the location. When customers called or presented themselves at these offices to book a seat, their requests were relayed by teletype to the

regional space control centre.¹⁴ Telephone and teletype operators generally fulfilled the same duties as their co-workers in space control centres. Reservations agents were required to monitor the overall local disposition of passenger reservations and maintain records in connection with such work. Ticket agents served the public at city traffic counters by giving information on TCA services, planning passenger itineraries, recording and handling reservations requests, calculating fares, preparing tickets, issuing ticket refunds, reporting daily ticket sales and dispatching limousine services. The preparation of tickets was a complex task because coupons for each flight leg had to be filled out manually. For long-journey flights, the process of fare determination and ticket preparation could consume a significant amount of time and would be further complicated when some legs were to be travelled on another airline. In these cases a different ticket form had to be used, given the lack of worldwide uniformity in ticketing procedures at the time.¹⁵

Like their counterparts in reservations and city traffic offices, agents at airport locations were involved in many aspects of the overall labour process and exercised some control over their immediate work. Airport agents were required to provide reservations and ticketing services. They thus mastered fare calculations and tariff rules and regulations. In addition to these duties, which were in many ways similar to those of agents in city traffic offices, they were responsible for rebooking deplaned passengers, calculating excess baggage charges, checking in passengers and baggage at airport counters, handling standby passengers and dispatching limousine services. When checking in passengers, agents endorsed tickets, filled out customs and immigration forms, examined travel documents, checked baggage to the right destination, verified

passengers' reservations against manifests, assigned seats and lifted flight coupons. They made public address announcements on such matters as flight departures and delays, rendered special services to customers and offered boarding assistance to passengers seeking such help. Airport agents also performed pre- and post-departure recording and reporting duties and liaised with agents in traffic and central reservations offices for post-flight reconciliation purposes as well as with company employees from other departments as required.¹⁶ In the event of irregular operations, or in cases of deplanement, airport agents were responsible for tending to inconvenienced and occasionally irate passengers. This called for diplomacy, patience and an ability to work under extreme pressure. When flights were delayed, agents were assigned to handle passengers by individually informing them of the reason for the delay, keeping them advised of estimated flight departure time and looking after their welfare during the delay.¹⁷

During the early years of operation, agents working in city traffic, airport and space control offices provided customers with much individual attention. Because making a reservation usually involved several contacts between airline employees and customers, workers often spent much time talking to clients and thus got to know many of them individually. The small number of passengers carried on each flight made it possible for employees to take a personal interest in the well-being of each customer. The company promoted the importance of personalized service to clients¹⁸ insisting that "our code in Passenger Service must be based on the positive belief that we can always do a little more than our Best for our customers."¹⁹ Customers at times took advantage of this personal service approach. Indeed, in smaller centres, regular passengers who became familiar with agents did not hesitate to call workers at home at any time of the

day or night to inquire about the status of flights or obtain other information on the company's services.

Women's Employment in TCA During the Early Years

Before the Second World War, TCA hired women only in the flight attendant category (then called stewardess).²⁰ This changed dramatically during the war period. With the outbreak of hostilities, a significant portion of TCA's workforce was released for war service and the labour pool from which the company drew was also being rapidly depleted.²¹ Given this state of affairs, the air carrier, like most other businesses, hired women to fill many positions from which they were previously barred. Indeed, women took on jobs as passenger agents, reservations agents, ticket agents, space control agents, telephone operators, teletype operators, switchboard operators, clerks, radio operators, cargo handlers, stockkeepers, chauffeurs and shop and hangar workers.²² The company nonetheless made it clear that "all female personnel so engaged are given to understand that their employment is on a temporary basis for the duration of the war."²³ By the end of 1943, the proportion of women employees peaked, reaching 35 percent of the total workforce.²⁴ This was up from 7 percent in December 1940 and 18 percent in April 1942.²⁵ However, by December 1945, this proportion had dropped to 23 percent, with women being displaced especially by returning ex-servicemen.²⁶

While detailed statistics are not available on the number of women hired in passenger handling functions during the war period, evidence indicates that they were overrepresented in these types of jobs. When the company experienced a loss of reservations, city traffic and airport passenger handling personnel to the armed forces,

the majority of these men were replaced with women and most of the subsequent staff additions during the war years were women. In December 1941, women held virtually all teletype operator and telephone operator positions.²⁷ In June 1942, women accounted for 60 percent of passenger agents working at airport locations.²⁸ By March 1943, women represented over 60 percent of city traffic office employees throughout the system.²⁹ In November of that year, twelve of the sixteen staff members in the Montreal traffic office were women.³⁰ In January 1945, seventeen of the twenty-one employees in the Ottawa city traffic office were women.³¹ In August 1943, it was estimated that women occupied over 90 percent of the positions in the central space control office, which included the telephone answering service.³² There is also evidence that women filled most of the openings in training courses for passenger agents, reservations agents, ticket agents, clerks, teletype operators and telephone operators.³³ In late 1945, when the company paid tribute to employees with five years of service, it noted that women were beginning to appear in these listings and remarked that "a plague take anyone who says that a large part of TCA has not been built by feminine hands!"³⁴

Despite the fact that women were becoming an important part of the workforce in the field of passenger handling activities within TCA, they nonetheless faced explicit sexist attitudes. Excerpts from a company publication illustrate the situation:

The Central Control, is staffed by 28 charming ladies. This department is often referred to as "The Honey Pot" - busy little bees with sugary tongues and oh, such sugary dispositions.³⁵

[Woman's name] was recently voted "Oh, Cuddly One" by the boys. I like her because she laughs at my jokes... Our oomph-plus girl is [woman's name]. Girls - you should see the clothes she has! Boys - you should see what she has to put into the clothes!³⁶

The suggestion has reached our ears that if the war continues very much longer, TCA will come to be known as "Petticoat Line".³⁷

Women were also confronted with a sex-based double standard as illustrated by the following account:

[Man's name] Born and studied in VI. Educated at St. Andrews, YZ. "Old Schoo! Tie," sportsman; long and rangy. T.C.A.'s first traffic employee; sold "Air" back in 1928. Merciless poker player, orchestra leader and party speaker... [Man's name] To Toronto, the credit for him; born, educated and married there. A transportation man through and through, including a round-the-world cruise and an air raid in Shanghai... [Man's name] Traffic clerk. Born YZ, 1917. Educated at Upper Canada College. Joined T.C.A. in July, 1942. Prominent in sports: swimming, golf and curling. A member of Imperial Banking firm prior to entering T.C.A. A real guy... [Woman's name] Glamorous and charming gift to T.C.A. from Lever Brothers. Happy traffic clerk for the past year. A Torontonian with a flair for riding, skiing, dancing and blond paratroopers. [Woman's name] If you see a blonde with a peaches and cream complexion, who sings a tricky Southern Blues, rides western style, skies like a Swiss mountaineer, and does a mean Xavier Cugat Conga, that will be our Calgary Bombshell. Plenty of grey matter. [Woman's name] A flashing dark-eyed brunette from Abernathy, Saskatchewan. A banker before bringing her gypsy-like charms to T.C.A. Has one big fault, an unhappy faculty of achieving "oversales" with her many "dates". Our little ray of sunshine... [Woman's name] Latest addition to the RK Sorority. Hails from Galt, and formerly employed by the Canadian Acceptance Corporation. Hobbies: skating, dancing and the Air Force. Big blue eyes and a sweet, deceptive smile. Passengers beware!... [Woman's name] "Bobby," the human dynamo of RK. Born in Prestatyn, Wales. A chic little thing with expressive blue eyes, a figure designed by Maxine, and tiny feet that make one's arches ache watching her galloping around. [Man's name] The hard-hearted business man of RK. Ticket agent. Born in VI. Educated U. of B.C. Married and came to T.C.A. in 1940 at VI. Worked at VT. Lots of experience and plenty since. Takes relaxation in tennis, badminton and golf. We have to be nice to him... [Woman's name] The Orillia Flash, and personification of the "New Voice for Mr. X." A voice that is known to our passengers as one that makes old men young, and young men come in to buy their tickets...

In addition, stereotypes about women's caring attributes were reinforced, as gleaned from statements such as the following:

The travelling public has accepted our girls with right goodwill; a trim young miss in a natty uniform brightens up the atmosphere, Eh! what soothes the feelings of the occasional ruffled passenger.³⁸

The following excerpts from the company's employee publication are interesting statements concerning women's 'proper place':

Women are doing men's work, which only proves that woman's place is not necessarily in the home, but where she is needed. She is needed to help keep the planes flying.³⁹

And,

As in other industries Trans-Canada finds many of its employees in the fighting services. In many instances they have been replaced by women who have given excellent service even in technical shop assignments where the work is of an exacting nature.⁴⁰

With the end of the war, women working as radio operators and in various shop and hangar job categories were displaced by men, with very few women continuing in these functions. Women did not, on the other hand, lose their jobs as clerical and secretarial workers and permanently replaced men in these positions. The majority of teletype and switchboard operator jobs also remained staffed by women.⁴¹ Although detailed statistics on the sex composition of the categories of telephone operators, ticket agents, reservations agents, space control agents and passenger agents are not available, there are nevertheless indications that immediately following the war, many of the women in these passenger handling functions were replaced with men, while others retained their employment with the company.⁴² In the context of the immediate post-war expansion, women continued to be hired in these categories, but a large number of the new employees were men. Reports on newly hired staff and summaries of training courses reveal that during the immediate post-war period, men represented the majority of new

workers.⁴³ By the mid-1950s, however, the training classes tended to be more equally divided between women and men.⁴⁴ Company labour turnover reports for the mid- to late-1950s indicate that women occupied approximately 50 percent of sales department positions and approximately 23 percent of the company's total workforce.⁴⁵

Clearly, TCA, like other employers, was able to tap into the female labour reserve during the war years and dispose of much of this labour immediately following the conclusion of hostilities. Nonetheless, women were called upon to fill the growing number of new jobs created by the tremendous expansion of the airline industry, a situation similar to that prevailing in other industries.

The Post-War Development of the Labour Process

During the post-war period, the introduction of larger, faster and more comfortable planes, the development of routes and the concomitant growth in passenger traffic made possible by strengthening economies and higher levels of disposable income resulted in a dramatic expansion of reservations and other customer sales and service related duties. Following the war, one of TCA's most urgent tasks was to build its traffic department. A review of all phases of solicitation, reservations, ticketing and airport check-in revealed that some passenger handling tasks were being carried out by the traffic department while others were being performed by the operations department. The traffic department oversaw city traffic offices where passenger solicitation, reservations and ticketing duties were performed. The overall control of reservations was the responsibility of the communications branch of the operations department. Finally, the passenger service branch of the latter department held jurisdiction over

reservations, ticketing and passenger check-in at airport locations. This situation, which generated much confusion and overlapping of tasks, rules and procedures, needed to be addressed because of the expected rapid growth in passenger traffic. In an effort to increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve service to the public, the company consolidated all the above-mentioned passenger handling functions in the traffic department in the fall of 1946.⁴⁶ Placing workers in the same department achieved economy in staff as management could more easily shift workers from one job to another and combine vacation, sick leave and other relief requirements.⁴⁷ Traffic department workers were now responsible for the handling and servicing of customers from the moment of initial contact with the air carrier to the time the airplane was boarded.

In order to attract qualified candidates for sales and passenger handling positions, TCA applied to the Wartime Labour Relations Board in June 1946 to obtain approval for salary increases for these categories of workers. The company sought to attract high school graduates with experience in dealing with the public. As part of the proposal to the Board, TCA indicated its intention to narrow the gap in wage rates between women and men working as passenger agents, reservations agents and ticket agents because it felt that women employed in these classifications performed the duties "almost equally with males, subject to certain physical limitations."⁴⁸ Under the scheme, which was approved by the Board, women in these classifications were paid \$5 less a month (at each step in the pay scale) than male co-workers. Previously, men in these job categories had been receiving up to \$15 more a month to perform the same duties. Monthly salaries for women employed as ticket, reservations and passenger agents now ranged from \$120 to \$150 (after a training and probationary period during which they received \$80 a month).

This was in comparison with a previous range of \$101 to \$140 for women and \$107 to \$155 for men. All agents occupying in-charge positions were now compensated to a maximum salary of \$170 a month, whereas in the past, women received only up to a maximum of \$155. The company also abolished the existing wage rate ranges covering women assigned to the classification of space control agent and integrated them into the range of wage rates paid to men. This meant that women working as space control agents now earned between \$130 and \$175 a month, and up to a maximum of \$190 a month for in-charge positions, as compared to between \$130 and \$160, and up to \$170 respectively. For their part, telephone and teletype operators (the vast majority of whom were women) obtained only a slight increase, as their monthly base pay level rose from \$101 to \$105 while the top level remained at \$130, with a maximum of \$140 for in-charge positions. This remained well below the pay scale of workers in the agent categories.⁴⁹

In November 1946, salaries rose once again, this time as a result of negotiations for the first collective agreement between TCA and the TEA, which represented workers in the above categories. At this time, the ticket agent classification was absorbed into the passenger agent category.⁵⁰ In 1949, workers in the classifications of reservations agent and telephone operator became known as passenger agents (all agents were now known as passenger agent - counter, reservations or telephone),⁵¹ but pay differentials remained until 1953.⁵²

Immediately following the war, the company effected changes to the reservations process because of the importance and complexity of the control of space. These modifications gave rise to a more extensive division of labour. At most points in the

system, the traffic department arranged for the physical separation of ticket office employees from telephone answering and local reservations staff. Telephone answering services in the larger offices were greatly expanded and visual indicator boards, which provided an overall display of the space available as well as flight information, were installed to ensure more accurate, rapid and easier reservations procedures. In the Toronto reservations office, the space indicator board was twenty-seven feet long and six feet high. In addition, files sections in local reservations offices were established as separate work functions.⁵³

The difficulties encountered in handling the growth in traffic through the existing system of space allotment prompted TCA to introduce new reservations procedures called the sell and record method in the fall of 1945. Under this system, agents could usually, on first contact with passengers, immediately confirm a seat on any flight operating within the confines of predetermined areas without having to refer the request to the space control office. Only after the sale was made would a teletype message recording the reservation be forwarded to the control centre. Once a flight was sold out, a 'stopsale' teletype message was sent to the local offices concerned. Seat availability information was posted on visual space indicator boards by means of coloured tags under the appropriate flight and date. If no tag was affixed, this meant that the flight had open seats and bookings could be accepted. Because messages selling space were being received by the space control offices after stopsale messages had been sent to local offices, a buffer of seats was withheld to reduce oversales. These new simplified procedures, which were modified and improved over the course of the next fifteen years, accelerated the reservations process, eliminated much paperwork and minimized teletype

activity between traffic offices and space control centres.⁵⁴ During interviews, agents recalled working in the sales section of the Toronto reservations office during the 1950s:

The visual indicator boards, when you were sitting in reservations, ran down one side of the wall and ran down the other. And there was a little catwalk, and there were a couple of agents there whose specific function was to put up where the flight was 'stopsold'. And you had different colour-coded things for different meanings. When you had a red disk, that meant the flight was full, no more sales. If it had a half-moon, depending on the colour, it indicated the flight was almost three quarters full. And all you had to do was glance up at the day, the board was for a whole month, you'd look up and you'd look at the flight numbers that were all above it. You'd say, "okay, that flight's wide open for sale, no I can't give that reservation. However, I can give a reservation for the next flight about three hours later, and I'll 'waitlist' you on that." There was another disk for 'waitlist' only.

Oh, the fun and games in Church street. That old building we were in, it was not air conditioned. Sometimes we opened the windows up. When we got a windy day, could you see the catastrophe of all 'stopsales' blowing off the board? And you had to go back to the chart book again and see what was open and what was not open. That happened often. But I can tell you a funny story. We had this girl, and the supervisor gave her two weeks notice to go. So, on her last day, the supervisor on duty didn't realize that she was on her way to go out, so she turned around, she 'stopsold' every flight that was open and opened every flight that was 'stopsold'. And payload control at the other end gave one hell of a roar, we could hear them on the other side, "stop!" Yeah, a fifty pax North Star with eighty seats sold on it. What do you do with all these oversales, you know, out comes whatever extra equipment we've got to protect these people. How many 'dupoffs' [overbookings] do we have. Oh lord! She made a mess of that thing.

In order to further improve the reservations process, TCA introduced more advanced telephone circuits to supplement the teletype system.⁵⁵ It also consolidated space control functions in Toronto in the spring of 1954. Centralization was made possible because of improvements in communications facilities. Agents working in the new centre, renamed reservations payload control, exercised complete control over space inventory. Because reservations transactions initiated at all points on the system were

now funnelled into the payload control office, agents in other communities served by TCA were no longer required to determine which control centre was to receive messages. Simplified procedures for the routing of information resulted in faster reservations handling, a decrease in teletype traffic and a significant reduction in the number of errors because transactions passed through fewer hands. Under consolidated space control, communication was greatly improved between traffic department offices, as well as between the control centre and flight dispatch offices. The centralization of space control facilitated the maximization of system-wide fleet utilization for both scheduled and irregular operations, thereby substantially improving passenger service and reducing labour costs.⁵⁶ However, the reorganization of space control functions inconvenienced a small number of agents and their families who transferred to Toronto from either Winnipeg or Moncton to maintain a similar position with the company. Other agents remained in their home base, but were reclassified to other positions.⁵⁷ With the closing of the eastern and western space control offices, some of the more highly skilled and better paying jobs were eliminated in these centres. In addition, space control agent positions were integrated into the reservations control agents. The latter category had been established in 1950 and workers assigned to fill the new positions had assisted agents in space control offices.⁵⁸ At the time of consolidation of space control centres, space control agents were receiving a \$35 monthly pay differential (regardless of their pay rate) for the first year in the job and \$50 for the second year, whereas reservations control agents were only receiving a \$20 monthly differential. The monthly pay scale for passenger agents ranged from \$190 to \$297, while reservations teletypists (previously called teletype operators) earned between \$180 and \$275, and switchboard operators

(who were included in the bargaining unit in 1951) earned between \$150 and \$225.⁵⁹

The Computerization of the Reservations Process

Following the war, the ever-increasing volume of passenger traffic and the corresponding flood in recording led to mounting labour costs for the air carrier. Because the work of agents was labour intensive, the swelling of passenger handling activities was inevitably accompanied by the need to hire additional workers to carry out the necessary functions. The development of safer, more comfortable and efficient state of the art aircraft had always been given a high priority, but by the mid-1950s, air carriers around the world began focusing to a greater extent on improving the productivity of the customer sales and service aspects of their operation. Computer technology was seen as a means to this end.

TCA had begun experimenting early with the automation of the reservations process. In the mid-1940s, a prototype automatic reservations system had been developed, but was quickly abandoned because the computer technology available at the time proved too costly.⁶⁰ The reservations function was to remain a highly labour intensive operation for over a decade. Over the course of the years following TCA's initial foray into automation, important advancements were registered by the electronics industry. The carrier's ambitious project of incorporating electronics into the reservations process was revived in 1954 when the company's communications department, in collaboration with the traffic department, conducted a full-scale study on the possibility of developing an automated system which would enhance the efficiency of reservations procedures.⁶¹ The company's president stated that the objective of

implementing an automated system was:

- (a) A reduction in operating expense by the elimination of a large proportion of the personnel which is and would be required with the continued use of a manual reservations system.
- (b) The elimination of human errors other than those which might be made at the time of the original customer contact, from reservations work.⁶²

The initiative culminated, in the early 1960s, with the introduction of an electronic reservations system called ReserVec, which stood for reservations electronically controlled.⁶³

The ReserVec system consisted of transactors (typewriter-size input-output card devices) located in reservations, city sales and airport offices which were linked by teletype lines to a central registry in Toronto. At the heart of the system was a general purpose computer and a number of magnetic memory tapes and drums where the flight inventory as well as flight arrival and departure information were recorded and stored. Local distributors, which allowed for messages to pass between the central registry and the transactors, were installed in ReserVec equipped offices.⁶⁴

ReserVec marked the first major step in a series of technological innovations that were to have a fundamental impact on the labour process of agents at TCA. The two groups of employees whose jobs were most affected by this initial computerization were reservations control agents working in the Toronto payload control office where the flight inventory was maintained, and passenger agents working in the telephone answering service function where the bulk of the demand for reservations occurred.

ReserVec's central registry largely replaced the payload control office as the nerve centre handling seat availability. Paper records for the space inventory of each flight were no longer required as all the information was maintained in the computer.

Reservations control agents, once needed to keep inventory charts updated, were rendered obsolete because the computer automatically revised the stored information as the operation took place by adding seats to, or subtracting them from, the inventory. When payload control was converted from a manual to an electronic procedure, the responsibility for the smooth functioning of the reservations process was removed from workers and incorporated into the computer. This resulted in the loss of the highest paid job category as reservations control agents' maximum monthly salary was approximately \$19 above that of any other SEA classification at the time of the changeover. With the disappearance of these higher paying jobs, the company experienced savings in labour costs. Computer controllers were needed to ensure the proper operation of the system and take remedial action should problems arise, but these jobs were generally not available to displaced passenger agents.

The implementation of ReserVec caused conflict between the union representing passenger agents and the company. During the late 1950s, the issue of automation and its effects on job security was raised by the SEA. Concern was expressed that agents employed in the payload control office would lose their jobs once the centralized computer system was installed.⁶⁵ Management informed the SEA that, though there would be a requirement to transfer payload control staff to vacancies occurring in other sales offices, there should be no loss of employment. In May 1959, a procedure was worked out whereby the Toronto reservations office would accept a minimum of four payload control agents a month, and the employees hired to replace agents transferred out would be brought in on a temporary full-time basis only and would be advised of their status upon employment.⁶⁶

ReserVec was originally scheduled to go into service in the spring of 1961, but a series of unforeseen programming problems and malfunctioning of hardware components forced TCA to delay the introduction date.⁶⁷ The system was implemented in 1962 and became fully operational in January 1963, providing complete electronic reservations control for all flights across the system.⁶⁸ By the time the manual payload control was dissolved, permanent employees had been absorbed into other sales positions within the company. Some of the temporary replacement workers had also transferred into permanent jobs when vacancies occurred.⁶⁹ Others did not fare so well. Indeed, when ReserVec was finally ready to be put into full operation, the approximately seventy passenger agents remaining in the payload control centre received notice of termination.⁷⁰ A spokesperson for the group wrote to the president of the SEA requesting that the union intervene to secure jobs for the displaced agents who were being replaced by a machine the company had been trying to make operational for over a year.⁷¹ Although the SEA decided to make representation to TCA on behalf of these temporary employees in view of the length of their service,⁷² the following statement by a union officer reveals a sexist assumption about women's attachment to the labour force:

We are aware of the complaint of the TFT [temporary full-time] employees, or at least some of them, as I am not too sure in my mind that many of them are too perturbed, as a matter of fact the initial total of TFT employees included a large percentage of females of whom many were married... I have by no means given up the fight, even though I do not in my mind feel that they have any real legitimate complaint, they all needed no reminder of their terms of hiring and the arguments they put forward to me at the meeting, were in many instances only examples of letting off steam, and showed that in many cases they lacked the real initiative. They do not realise that I was once employed in PC [payload control] and I saw 6 years ago the writing on the wall and made efforts

to get out. They quite obviously made but futile efforts. I will battle this for them, but I cannot shed too many tears for them.⁷³

The union argued that the company should shoulder part of the responsibility for the problem which had been brought about by the repeated postponement of the full implementation of ReserVec. Had ReserVec been introduced in the spring of 1961 as planned, dispensing with temporary agents would have been unnecessary as the latter could have been absorbed into permanent positions through summer season hiring.⁷⁴ In response to the SEA's request that senior management become involved in resolving the issue, the assistant vice-president of sales directed management in Toronto to identify temporary agents qualified to be employed in other sales positions on a permanent basis. These workers were then laid off and allowed to state their preference as to a location for recall. Temporary agents not deemed suitable were dispensed with, but their records were turned over to the personnel office in Toronto for possible reemployment elsewhere with the company.⁷⁵ As a result of the union's intervention, some of the temporary passenger agents were eventually rehired by TCA. In October 1966, the union formally requested that the service period of these workers, who had only been out of the company's employment for a short period of time, be backdated to their original hiring date in the payload control office to allow them to receive certain rights and privileges associated with service credits.⁷⁶ Management refused to grant this request.⁷⁷

While ReserVec did not result in the layoff of permanent passenger agent staff, a union officer remarked that "if the employees in Payload Control had been permanent employees, the fiasco there would have hit home much harder to the members of the SEA I am sure."⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the SEA feared that further technological changes

looming on the horizon would threaten the job security of passenger agents. Because of these growing apprehensions, the union pressured the company to apprise it of future automation plans.⁷⁹ Clearly, the union's concerns focused on job security rather than changes to the labour process of passenger agents. In the face of this first major round of job threatening automation, the union began adopting a more confrontational stance towards the company.

As previously mentioned, passenger agents working in telephone sales were also affected by the introduction of ReserVec. While these workers did not witness the disappearance of their job category as was the case with reservations control agents, they nevertheless experienced some modifications to their work. When a customer called to make a reservation, telephone answering agents were no longer able to search for the requested information on visual display indicator boards. Because all data pertaining to space inventory and flight arrival and departure times stored in the central registry were readily available to agents through transactors, indicator boards were rendered obsolete and removed from all local offices. Agents now indicated, by drawing lines on a preprinted card, details concerning a passenger's request for flight information or for airline seats. Each card contained data such as flight number, point of origin, point of destination, date of flight as well as type and amount of space requested. Agents then inserted the card into a slot in the transactor which, by means of a clamp-sensing device, automatically scanned and read the pencil marks and sent the information to the central registry. The computer searched the reservations inventory and returned the response to the originating transactor. The reply was punched directly into the card in the form of a half-circle mark in the right hand margin. The transaction card containing both the

question and the computed answer was then released to the agent, with the entire process taking only a few seconds to complete. Keyboards or other controls were not required nor was human intervention needed between the transactor and the central registry because the operating instructions were received by the machine from the pencil marks made on the cards by agents. When a reservations-type transaction was completed, details relating to passengers, such as names, telephone numbers and special remarks were manually entered on the same reservations transactor card which was then transmitted by conveyor belt to the reservations records section where passenger files were maintained.⁸⁰ Because the transactions handled by the high-speed data processing system pertained to the turnover in seat space for many millions of passengers and not directly to the passengers themselves, the reservations records functions remained, for the time being, highly labour intensive.

The ReserVec system was designed to police some types of errors. Should an agent request space on a nonexistent or inoperative flight or omit to pencil in information on the query card, the transactor automatically rejected the card and a red light would flash to indicate an error was being committed.⁸¹ A computer-based control, though relatively limited, was a new reality for passenger agents, as is evidenced by the following excerpt from a TCA employee magazine:

The rigorous demands of the machine on the operator for correct input information and its ability to immediately turn on the RED LIGHT comes as a shock to most operators. They very soon develop an appreciation for this feature however, and welcome the fact that at long last human errors will practically vanish.⁸²

And,

This is the case of big brother (the computer) always watching to see that

things are being done properly.⁸³

Even if this feature of the system substantially reduced the possibility of errors, costly mistakes resulting in the misplacing of passengers' itineraries could still be made.

With ReserVec, TCA initiated a trend towards a more capital intensive labour process and achieved greater efficiency and increased productivity. An evaluation conducted by the company in 1963 indicated that, while there had occurred a slight increase in the length of the initial telephone contact (when compared to the manual system), fewer follow-up calls to or from customers were necessary, thus reducing the total telephone time per passenger. During the first contact, an agent could often confirm or 'unable' space or offer a reservation on an alternative flight, and the customer would usually be assured of greater accuracy of information. Under the manual system, an average of three-and-a-half telephone calls had been required for each passenger boarded, and in some cases the number was as high as seven. Under ReserVec, because bookings were firmer with fewer follow-ups and transactions needed to board passengers, customers' files and reservations records were handled less frequently. This led to a reduction in discrepancies between passenger records and load control records.⁸⁴

Although the company had no accurate way of measuring what the load factors would have been without the ReserVec system, especially in the context of a huge growth in traffic, space handling was unquestionably improved. The passenger seat, a perishable product, represented the main source of revenue for the airline. 'Unabling' a request when the space was available could therefore be costly. Because the system facilitated the maintenance of an up-to-date inventory of all space, buffer seats no longer had to be withheld from immediate sale. Space cancelled or released due to no-shows could be put

up immediately for resale. Moreover, the accuracy of arrival and departure information, a long-standing problem for the carrier, was greatly enhanced.⁸⁵ The technology thus afforded the company with more control over its product and eliminated workers' discretion over some aspects of the job.

Local management reported that the ReserVec system was very well received by customers who benefitted from improved services. According to company managers, employee acceptance of ReserVec was good.⁸⁶ However, union district chairpersons reported that some agents were dissatisfied with ReserVec, especially when it was only partially operational, and that they were looking forward to the day when it would operate correctly.⁸⁷ A Montreal district union officer remarked:

Although it is appreciated that the computer is, in theory, a masterpiece, it is not a system, at least at present, which is serving either agents or the travelling public, effectively. The information it has to be fed and the subsequent clerical work involved create their own delays, quite apart from the fact that it has had numerous malfunctions already, resulting in dupofs, oversales and a general lack of confidence in its efficiency. In any event, agents are increasingly slaves to the machine instead of the other way around. Had there been any TCA Headquarters appreciation of the job an agent performs, their approach to a new system could not have failed to be very different.⁸⁸

During interviews, a passenger agent recalled working with ReserVec, which many dubbed the 'toaster':

It was chaotic at the start, because there were so many bugs in it. The machine was sitting on the desk and we would put these little cards in. We used to have to look at the wall first of all, before the ReserVec came out, and see these dots that were on the wall to tell you whether to sell a flight or not. But when this other thing came in, it used to take little snips out of the card. And it seemed like it took years getting it perfected. That was a real bother, that was awful. It didn't make the job harder, but sort of frustrating at times. Anyway, when it worked perfectly it was fine, but it never seemed to work perfectly. It took years to go right. And then the technology of the bigger planes moved along

too, so it couldn't handle it. It was sort of an interim thing that was a bit of a lost cause. We were beyond it by the time it got working. It was a nuisance of a thing. You'd draw thirteen lines on these cards and if you didn't get the thirteen lines in exactly just right, it wouldn't take it. And you had the passenger on the line all the time, they wondered what you were doing.

During the 1960s, automatic call distributors, another technological innovation affecting the job of telephone sales agents, were introduced. With this change, workers lost the ability to control incoming calls. Under the manual system, sales agents could, using a key on the telephone, signal the switchboard operator whenever their position was too busy to accept further calls. With the electronic device, calls were automatically directed in the sequence of their arrival to available telephone lines. The automated switchboard allowed calls to be processed at a high speed, with customers connected to telephone sales agents in a matter of seconds without having to go through a manual switchboard.⁸⁹ The union reported that this new mechanism added much pressure to the work of agents.⁹⁰ The automatic call distributor, first installed in the Montreal office in 1961, eventually phased out the need for switchboard operators as it was introduced in reservations offices across the system.⁹¹ This resulted in the elimination of the lowest paid SEA/CALEA classification where women predominated.⁹² Indeed, the difference between the maximum monthly salary of passenger agents and the maximum monthly salary of switchboard operators was \$231 in 1970, the last year the latter group was included in the collective agreement.⁹³

Workplace Changes: Telephone Sales

Modifications to the job of telephone sales agents, however, were not brought on

only by automation. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the introduction of new routes, services and products as well as the implementation of new type of fares resulted in an increased workload. With the growth in passenger traffic, telephone sales agents sometimes worked under considerable pressure.

Even though many calls received in the telephone sales section were of a simple and straightforward booking or information type, agents had to be well prepared to respond to a wide variety of enquiries from the public and deal with potentially complicated queries and itineraries which necessitated more time and knowledge to complete. Listening attentively to the travel requirements of customers allowed telephone sales agents to immediately identify callers' needs. Agents skilled at managing conversations were able to keep the length of calls to a minimum while supplying customers with all the necessary information in an effort to sell the product. A simple sales call could be finalized following a short discussion during which the customer's needs were outlined and the passenger agent obtained the required information to make a reservation, such as date and time of flight desired, class of service, number of persons in party, names and contact numbers. The agent would confirm the space, provide a fare quotation, explain relevant regulations, and inform the customer of the deadline for ticket purchase and flight departure time. Complicated bookings involving any combination of requests such as interline and offline connections, several stopovers, additional services such as hotel reservations, car rentals and special meals, and tours and charters, took longer than a simple city-to-city online non-stop booking. For more complex reservations, passenger agents would likely have to put customers on hold or call them back once all necessary information had been obtained. Because many services such as

hotel bookings, car rentals and interline space reservations were externalised, agents had to contact these suppliers by telephone or teletype, wait for a reply and then contact the customer with a definite answer. In the larger reservations offices, where a greater division of labour existed, some of these services were handled by specialized agents in separate work functions.⁹⁴

The ability to assist passengers by answering their questions quickly and correctly, and knowing where to find information were signs of an experienced and capable worker. Agents were also expected to be articulate, well-spoken and demonstrate initiative. In addition, they were called upon to be friendly, courteous and generally helpful. The following description of telephone sales work put forth in the late 1960s summarizes well the nature of the job:

Telephone Sales is a very demanding occupation as the first customer in the morning and the last customer eight hours later demands the same attention. For eight hours one has to listen, give advice, pacify, and sell. You may be talking to a first time caller or a veteran air traveller, but they have one thing in common; we want them to fly Air Canada in the future. To sell, one has to be polite, courteous, and show confidence in what he is selling. Confidence, the key, is gained through the sales agent's knowledge of his product and experience in handling the many duties he is called upon to perform.⁹⁵

Dealing with customers could involve time-consuming searches through various manuals as agents hunted for information to sell the basic product, the airline seat. Some of the most important and frequently used reference material included sales guides and official airline guides which contained itineraries for every air carrier in the world. Manuals were also available which described various aspects of flight operations, including length of in-flight time, stopovers, departure and arrival times as well as time changes. Tariff books, which listed rates, regulations, distances and carriers' routes, along with

instructions on how to calculate fares for complex journeys, were of particular use to agents. Other practical sales reference tools included manuals with worldwide information on hotels and ground transportation, as well as books listing the entry requirements for other countries and customs and immigration procedures. Tour catalogues and reference material containing destination information were also at the disposal of agents, as were maps indicating airport locations and distances between airports and city centres. Reference guides and manuals needed to be continually updated to reflect revisions to fare structures and tariffs as well as the ever growing variety of services being offered to travellers. In the 1950s, TCA attempted to publish and maintain an index of company manuals, but this endeavour failed because of the many hours of work required to update reference material. This was an indication of the growing amount of information that agents needed to complete their tasks. In the early 1960s, however, the carrier introduced a computerized keyword-in-context (KWIC) index developed by International Business Machines Corp. This first truly workable index of the vast quantity of information found in company sales publications enabled passenger agents to more easily locate the correct reference to detailed information contained in technical manuals.⁹⁶

In the smaller reservations offices, most sales agents handled all aspects of the telephone answering service function. However, in larger offices, a higher degree of specialization prevailed as a result of managerial decisions to divide the overall work task in light of the more varied type and greater volume of work. These offices were divided between a general reservations section where agents dealt with the general public, and smaller specialized desks responsible for providing support to reservations workers and

for handling specific customer groups and special tasks. The existence of specialized positions was a function of office size and local procedures. In larger offices, the more detailed division of labour meant that the majority of agents did not partake in some complex tasks and, consequently, their jobs were less diversified. Increasing specialization of tasks, which stripped work of its interesting and challenging aspects, reduced job satisfaction.

Travel agency service desks were established in the mid-1940s as one of the first specialized functions.⁹⁷ With the growth in business travel, corporate accounts were also eventually set up. Passenger agents working in these positions organized itineraries, made reservations for commercial clients and travel agents, and arranged to have tickets prepared and delivered to these customers. They were often called upon to help travel agents with fare construction and render other forms of assistance. A telephone number directly connected special accounts clients to the agency desk. Passenger agents assigned to this section of the reservations office would often deal with the same agency or commercial account representatives, thus making the work more personal.⁹⁸

Special desks were also created in the late 1940s to assist telephone agents with the construction of complicated fares and the interpretation of tariff regulations, especially for international travel.⁹⁹ In order to book passengers on both online and offline flights, agents working in these positions were required to possess a thorough knowledge of all matters pertaining to tariffs, including use of mileage to construct fares for complex journeys, currency conversions, taxation as well as stopover rules and regulations. They were also responsible for maintaining tariff books and informing telephone agents of new fares. With the introduction of new types of fares and tariff

regulations as well as the inauguration of new international routes, the job of agents working at the fares desk became more challenging.¹⁰⁰

With the growing popularity of group travel during the 1950s and 1960s, dedicated agents were assigned the responsibility for providing information to charter and group space applicants (such as conventions, sports teams, tours) and for handling all details in setting up charter flights and group space assignments. Agents working the group and charter desk dealt with the client either directly or through a travel agency. Because the charter business was highly regulated, passenger agents assigned to these specialized positions had to be completely familiar with government and IATA regulations covering the operation of charter flights and group movements. They thus closely monitored the reservations and ticketing process and ensured that the space was being used and all rules and deadlines were adhered to. Extensive knowledge of tours and package vacations was essential to these positions as was the ability to correctly compute special fares.¹⁰¹

In the larger offices, a few agents worked as coordinators or expeditors. These employees were responsible for the handling of a variety of tasks including problem flights and files that required follow-up, block space for other airlines, special meal requests and medical clearance requests involving stretcher cases, incubator infants and other special circumstances. Moreover, they responded to other types of problems that arose. Because of their involvement in various aspects of the labour process, agents working as expeditors or coordinators developed well-rounded skills. They also exercised some discretion over their work and enjoyed a degree of autonomy.

Workplace Changes: Reservations Records

With the growth in passenger traffic over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the records sections in reservations offices were significantly expanded. Passenger agents working in these sections were responsible for the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date records of passenger itineraries. These workers had little direct contact with the travelling public, but were in constant communication with the telephone sales sections and with airport and city sales offices. Much activity was associated with passenger records as each file could be actioned several times during its lifespan for such purposes as original entry of the record, ticketing, cancellation, detail changes, manifesting and check-in. In 1966, for example, over 10,000 separate filing actions took place each day in the Montreal office.¹⁰² Filing was carried out manually and extreme caution had to be taken to prevent errors.

Depending on the size of the office, the work could be subdivided into more specific tasks. Some offices introduced a rotation system that allowed reservations agents to become involved with different aspects of the records function. A number of agents were responsible for promptly sorting, distributing and filing reservations cards originating from the telephone answering service section by way of conveyor belts. Filing was done alphabetically, according to flight number and date. These agents would check the records regularly for misfiling or other errors. It was crucial that records be filed quickly and correctly and that changes be immediately actioned in order to ensure the accuracy of the reservations request and to coordinate passenger records with the seat inventory. Misfiling as well as neglect to make changes resulted in disservice to customers and could be very costly to the carrier. Records were nonetheless misfiled or

lost. With the increase in the number of cards for each passenger, filing errors became a major problem, and the company experimented with different methods in an attempt to rectify the situation. In addition, conveyor belts were a source of frustration as they would jam and damage or eat up reservations cards on their way from the general sales office to the records section. After an unsuccessful search for a lost file, an effort would be made to rebook affected passengers on the desired flight or offer alternative accommodations.¹⁰³

Another group of agents was responsible for departures and day-of-flight duties. These agents worked all flights assigned to their position by preparing records in advance of flight departures. With the assistance of their telephone sales counterparts, they notified passengers when delays or other changes occurred. Once flight loads were checked, initially with the payload control office and later with the ReserVec computer, reservations records were sent to communications operators (called reservations teletypists until 1959) for manifesting. Completed manifests were then sent to the airport if the airport departure control system was used. If, on the other hand, the reservations departure control procedure, introduced in some stations for a brief period of time in the early 1960s, was used, files agents would pull the reservations cards for the upcoming flights, file them alphabetically in special boxes according to class and destination and deliver them to departures positions at a preset time before flight departure. Because the ticket of each passenger checking in at the airport counter had to be verified by telephone with the reservations records office before acceptance could be completed, departures agents handled a large volume of calls in the relatively short period between passenger check-in and flight departure. This system thus dispensed with the need for manifests

at airports.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of the departure control system in use, records agents were responsible for flight reconciliation which entailed updating passenger files by indicating those who had travelled as well as the no-shows and standbys. Once an airport agent called for a flight close-out, relevant traffic information was forwarded by teletype to the next downline station.

Communications operators who worked in reservations records sections saw their job enlarged over the years as they became increasingly involved in passenger agent work. They were called upon to transmit, receive and distribute teletype messages between offices across the entire system. They monitored all messages for correct procedures, codes and addresses and processed changes. It was essential for them to have a working knowledge of the activities of all departments so that they could accurately interpret and transfer all types of messages. Unsatisfied with their wages in light of their added responsibilities, a number of communications operators requested, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, either a reclassification to the passenger agent category or equal pay levels.¹⁰⁵ Salary gains for communications operators, the majority of whom were women, were finally registered in 1966 when the monthly salary scale for this group ranged from \$304 to \$449, whereas passenger agents earned between \$304 and \$514.¹⁰⁶ While the difference in maximum pay between both groups of workers did not change substantially, the first six pay scales were now identical. This marked an improvement over previous pay arrangements. Pay scales were equalized in 1968,¹⁰⁷ the same year that pay increases became automatic for all workers.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the category of communications operators was soon rendered obsolete by technological change.

During the 1960s, the handling of passenger records took on mammoth proportions, especially in the largest and busiest reservations offices. By early 1966, there could be as many as a quarter of a million passenger name records on file at any time. Faced with a tremendous increase in recording and manual filing which accompanied the growth in passenger traffic, Air Canada turned to automation as a means of improving the efficiency of the cumbersome reservations records filing process. In March 1966, after two years of planning and testing, the company introduced an electronic passenger name record system in its Montreal reservations office.¹⁰⁹ A duplicate system was installed in Toronto in November 1968 and became fully operational in January 1969.¹¹⁰ The electronic filing of passenger reservations information was a major productivity-enhancing technological innovation. Once the system became operational, all new reservations records were entered directly into the computer and existing files were stored on magnetic tape. Referring to the Toronto initiative, an Air Canada sales management bulletin indicated:

January 1969 will see a fully automated system - a filing system without files! There is great speculation as to how courageously one could touch a match to 20,000 files.¹¹¹

The new technology, which was designed to compile and store all details pertaining to passenger records, modified the labour process of agents working in the Montreal and Toronto reservations offices. Once they had received reservations cards by way of conveyor belts, workers in the records section (referred to as inflow operators) made use of a special teleprinter to enter into the computer information on passengers which had been manually inscribed on the transactor card by telephone sales agents. A modified transactor, which read and transmitted flight information off transactor cards already

filled in by telephone sales agents using ReserVec, was linked to the teleprinter so that data from these cards were incorporated into the teletype messages input by inflow operators. When a record was added, the computer carried out a number of checks and signalled errors to operators. Inflow operators, on request from any ticket or telephone sales office, could instantly recall reservations records in full detail by querying the computer through the keyboard. In addition, passenger manifests were automatically assembled in alphabetical order and by destination for a particular boarding point and date, and were then sent to the airport. Should there be any revisions to the manifest after it had been issued, the computer would forward updates to the airport. When the flight departed, the computer transmitted passengers' itineraries by teletype to the next boarding point. Messages to the ReserVec system and to other airlines were also automatically dispatched to appropriate communications circuits, thereby significantly reducing teletype work and resulting in the elimination of communications operator jobs.¹¹²

The automated passenger name record system could store and process vast quantities of reservations data at high speeds. It also enabled the company to administer passenger reservations more efficiently, improve reservations accuracy and reduce filing errors. Although it would soon become outdated by the next generation of electronic equipment, the system was capable of giving a service superior to a bulky manual process. The airline's customers therefore enjoyed faster and higher quality service.

Reservations records agents in the Toronto and Montreal offices, however, did not fare as well as customers under this new technology. Indeed, they experienced a loss of control over the pace and the organization of their work and saw the computer take

over some aspects of the job. This new labour-saving technology also eliminated a number of jobs in the records division of these two largest reservations offices. Staff requirements in records sections were expected to be reduced by as much as half following the introduction of the automatic filing system, thus causing fear of job loss amongst affected passenger agents. The company reassured the CALEA that staff reductions would be carried out gradually through attrition, thus eliminating the need to resort to layoffs.¹¹³ Despite the fact that computer controller jobs were created, these positions were generally not made available to displaced passenger agents. Indeed, when the automatic passenger name record system was installed in the Toronto reservations office, Air Canada management decided that the six computer controllers required would be chosen from the complement of supervisors which was being reduced from fourteen to six. The union raised concerns that the computer controller job included passenger agent tasks. It proposed that the position be recognized as a new CALEA classification, but the company rejected this suggestion, indicating that computer controllers would spend most of their time fulfilling supervisory duties and monitoring computer performance and therefore would not be carrying out passenger agent work.¹¹⁴ For their part, most communications operators, whose work was made redundant, were reclassified to the passenger agent category. Their experience with teletype machines made them readily adaptable as inflow operators.¹¹⁵

Workplace Changes: City Traffic Offices

Agents in city traffic offices worked in close contact with co-workers in reservations offices. Before issuing tickets, city traffic office agents verified with agents

working in the reservations records section to ensure that the passenger had completed a booking. If clients presented themselves to make reservations, city ticket agents either contacted co-workers in reservations offices in order to complete bookings; they later made use of the ReserVec system for such purposes. Because of the large volume of calls between city traffic and reservations offices and because of the need to transmit reservations information rapidly and accurately, short-line telefax machines were installed in some offices by 1954. This also had the benefit of reducing telephone contacts between company employees and making telephone lines available to the public.¹¹⁶ City traffic office agents were also responsible for issuing tickets by mail and for processing prepaid tickets. In addition, they prepared tickets and related documents and arranged for their delivery to travel agencies and commercial accounts. In some locations, however, dedicated positions were created in reservations offices to handle tickets-by-mail and prepaid tickets. Like their counterparts working at rates desks, city traffic office agents mastered tariff regulations and domestic and international rates. Fare construction, especially in the case of complicated itineraries, could be difficult and lengthy to complete. Because procedures and regulations were regularly changed, it was necessary for agents to keep tariff manuals up-to-date. City traffic agents also handled baggage claims and complaints. Airport agents working in ticketing functions performed similar duties, but often worked under more pressure because of last-minute customers wanting to purchase tickets. Work in these offices tended to be interesting, challenging and diversified. Agents newly employed by the carrier were generally not assigned to city sales and airport ticket counters because of the greater complexity of the job.¹¹⁷

Workplace Changes: Airport Counters

While no new major automation initiatives were undertaken at airport locations throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the growth in passenger traffic, compounded by the impact of heavy passenger loads due to the introduction of larger aircraft, resulted in increased workloads and congestion at check-in counters and gate areas. This led TCA/Air Canada to experiment with new ways of processing passengers at major airports across the country.

In the context of an expanding industry, passenger agents at airport locations experienced an increasing division of labour. Passenger handling procedures varied from airport to airport, generally as a function of the size of the operation. At the smaller airports, all agents were called upon to perform most duties such as ticketing, flight check-in, seat selection, boarding pass issuance, paging, flight announcements, standby clearance, baggage claims, service to customers requesting special assistance, lifting of flight coupons, boarding control and post-flight duties. At larger airports, there was a clear-cut division of labour, with the work usually broken down into the following functions: ticketing, specialized customer services, check-in, gates and terminal control. Local procedures dictated whether dedicated agents would be assigned to each function or if a rotation system would be in operation. The latter method involved agents in all aspects of airport work, thus making the job less routine and more challenging. Because of the lack of work complexity at the check-in counter, new agents were usually assigned to these positions.

In the late 1950s, with the growth in passenger traffic, TCA created the function of ground hostess to relieve congestion in check-in, ticketing, gate and lounges areas at

airports. Initially, women passenger agents were assigned to fill these positions, but men eventually took on some of these jobs. By identifying problems and following through with prompt action, ground hostesses minimized passenger confusion and helped reduce unnecessary customer contact with agents and supervisors, thereby speeding up operations. Hostesses offered a personalized service to passengers seeking special attention, such as boarding assistance.¹¹⁸ These workers also staffed Maple Leaf lounges introduced at several major international airports during the 1960s as part of a system-wide effort to improve service and convenience to first-class travellers. The first Maple Leaf lounge was opened by TCA in England in the fall of 1963, and similar lounges were installed at other international and domestic points soon thereafter.¹¹⁹

In the early 1960s, in order to accelerate passenger check-in, the company introduced a new procedure called reservations departure control which combined passenger check-in at the airport with a reservations load control up to flight time. This new method, established at locations that accommodated the larger DC-8 aircraft, permitted passengers to check in at any available counter position, thereby reducing the tendency towards queuing at gates. Previously, each flight was handled by one gate agent, but with the new system, all check-in agents were available to all customers. Flight coupons were verified by telephone with a departures control agent in the reservations records office prior to acceptance of passengers and their baggage at the airport counter. As customers checked in, agents selected the appropriate telephone key and were immediately connected to reservations departure positions. The airport agent advised the departures agent of the traveller's name, flight number, class of service and destination and received a check-in number to assign to the passenger. Flight coupons

were marked to indicate that verification had been completed.¹²⁰ Even though this procedure dispensed with the need for manifests and frequent revisions thereto and ensured an immediate update of reservations records, problems nonetheless emerged.¹²¹ The practice was eventually discontinued as airports reverted to the name check-in verification system using manifests.¹²²

With the growth in traffic over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the job of agents working at airport departure gates became more demanding. Gate agents' main responsibility was to ensure that all passengers with a reservation on a particular flight were boarded so that the aircraft could depart on schedule. Depending on load size, the gate agent could be assisted by one or two co-workers. Gate agents arrived at their position at a predetermined time prior to flight departure to prepare for the flight. They obtained flight forecast and passenger load information from the terminal control station and received instructions from ramp agents on when to begin loading the flights. Agents working in the gate area were usually responsible for passenger manifest verification and seat assignment, though these tasks were sometimes completed by agents at check-in counters. In addition, gate agents coped with a multitude of enquiries from all directions. They were responsible for making flight arrival, pre-boarding and loading announcements as well as pagings. They also had to determine the priority of boarding for standby passengers. During busy periods, agents were under extreme pressure to clear standbys in the correct sequence in order to fill available seats and still get the flight out on schedule. If overbooking occurred, gate agents had to deal with anxious deplaned passengers and direct them to the ticket counter for rebooking or compensation. Gate work could be extremely exacting because agents were required to close out the

flight on time, regardless of last minute arrivals or the deplaning of passengers. Should a flight be delayed, the gate agent was forced to stay with the flight and arrange for a replacement gate agent to handle the next flight. Once the plane had taken off, agents working the gate position completed all post-departure duties, such as supplying the load control office with final load advice; investigating and correcting discrepancies between the indicated passenger load and the actual number of passengers on the aircraft at the time of dispatch; providing the reservations office with the names of passengers with reservations who had travelled, of standby passengers checked in and of no-shows to allow the reservations agent to perform flight reconciliation and other post-departure tasks; recording and sorting lifted flight coupons; sending passenger service information of interest to downline points (such as wheelchair cases and connections) to the terminal control office; and, sending other appropriate messages after flight departure.¹²³

With the growth in traffic during the 1950s and 1960s, the job of passenger agents working in the terminal control office, the nerve centre of the airport, became increasingly demanding. These workers received all advance information on each flight, built a file on individual flights and provided gate agents with all data pertaining to operating times, anticipated passenger loads, flow of connecting passengers and seating assignments. Agents working in the terminal control office were responsible for monitoring flight operations and anticipating problem areas caused by close connections, misconnections, delayed flights and flight consolidations. Once the flight had departed, they would forward messages to the next downline station. In addition, they exchanged messages with interline carriers. They also handled special requests and ensured that all local policies were followed.¹²⁴ Given the higher level of complexity involved,

terminal control positions were usually filled by passenger agents experienced in overall airport procedures.

Clearly, during the early years, passenger agents at different locations partook in various aspects of the job and enjoyed a certain degree of independence and decision-making ability. As the company expanded and operations became more sophisticated, a growing division of labour, work reorganization, diminished autonomy and increasing mechanization characterized the jobs of many. Despite these many changes, passenger agents continued to view themselves as professionals working in a prestigious job for a highly reputable company.

The Centralization of Reservations Offices

During the 1960s, TCA/Air Canada, like other airlines worldwide, benefited from developments in communications technologies. In the mid-1960s, the company implemented an automated telephone switching system marketed by Bell Canada, called Telpak (which stands for telecommunications packages), that enabled the carrier to consolidate reservations operations. The installation of this system resulted in the closure of small reservations offices across Canada and the concomitant shifting of work to larger reservations locations in major cities.

Under Telpak, when customers called a local TCA/Air Canada number, they were automatically connected with a passenger agent working in the central office. The agent handling the call would hear a preprogrammed voice identifying the caller's originating city. Passenger agents in central reservations offices needed to be prepared to handle calls from different cities and give appropriate information and service.

The reservations offices in Windsor and London, Ontario were the first to be affected by this technology when they were consolidated with the Toronto reservations office in the spring of 1964. This initiative resulted in thirty-one agents being declared redundant at both stations. The announcement in mid-February 1964 concerning this move left the SEA in a somewhat embarrassing position because a few weeks earlier, the union president had reported that the company had advised him that Telpak was two years away.¹²⁵ Clearly, the union had been kept in the dark about major technological changes that affected the job security of its members.

The reservations consolidation programme gave rise to serious and difficult discussions between the SEA and TCA pertaining to layoffs and the issue of seniority. The contract clause dealing with staff reductions was based on seniority, but did not oblige the company to transfer laid-off employees between cities.¹²⁶ When passenger agents were to be laid off in London and Windsor, the union insisted that seniority be applied at the base level and not, as the company intended, at the location level. Following a headquarters meeting between TCA sales officials and SEA officers, it was agreed that seniority would be determined at the base level. In addition, the thirty-one redundant employees would be offered continuous employment with the company. Though the majority of laid-off workers were to be transferred to Toronto, an effort was to be made to offer them a job in the city of their choice. Management advised the union, however, that while it was willing to permit such relocations, it was not prepared to cover moving expenses.¹²⁷ Because this solution was unacceptable to the affected passenger agents, the SEA requested a meeting with senior management to resolve the issue. Following high-level discussions which involved the president of TCA,

management agreed to grant agents relocating to other cities half of the normal allowable expenses for a company-requested transfer. The union admitted this was a better settlement than originally expected.¹²⁸

Frustrated at not being kept fully informed throughout the Telpak implementation process, the union sought a company commitment to hold discussions pertaining to changes in plans or policies affecting the membership such as staff reductions, relocations and the introduction of new technology. It feared that the increased pace of technological change and the potential consequences of future innovations could leave passenger agents in a much worse predicament.¹²⁹ The union was especially concerned about the possibility that all locations would be reorganized into one huge central reservations office, given that carriers in the United States were following such a route.¹³⁰ In response to the union's query as to whether greater consolidation would occur, the company indicated that any plans in this direction would depend on telephone rates, the availability and cost of telephone equipment and the effect of the centralization on the level of service to the public and on employee welfare.¹³¹

The Telpak situation forced passenger agents, for the first time, to seriously examine the seniority language in their collective agreement. The matter was debated at the SEA's 1964 general meeting, where the negotiations committee was given a mandate to secure system-wide seniority.¹³² Following discussions with TCA later that year, an amendment to the contract established such seniority provisions, effective August 1964.¹³³ Henceforth, in the event of staff reductions in a base, agents were to be provided with a fourteen day notice of layoff. Agents who were laid off were to be offered available positions elsewhere in the system, with the company paying half of the

transfer expenses. If no vacancy existed, affected workers could exercise their right to bump the most junior agents in the system in Canada, but in such cases they were responsible for their own moving expenses. They also had the option of going on laid-off status and were subject to recall according to seniority. Agents holding laid-off status could select three other bases for recall purposes. (In 1966, however, a contract clause stipulated that employees lost their seniority when laid off for more than twenty-four consecutive months.)¹³⁴

This new clause, which strengthened the job security of passenger agents, was critical in the wake of subsequent Telpak situations. In the spring of 1965, the Quebec City reservations office was consolidated with the Montreal office and, one year later, the Victoria reservations office was telpaked into Vancouver. In the Quebec City case, eighteen agents were declared redundant and all were offered positions in Montreal locations, with a portion of transfer costs being absorbed by the company as per the new seniority clause in the collective agreement.¹³⁵ The requirement for additional agents in Montreal to handle the extra workload had been estimated to be less than the number of workers declared surplus in Quebec City. However, a few weeks after consolidation, following complaints of poor service from Quebec City customers, Montreal management increased reservations personnel to cope with the excess demand.¹³⁶ The Quebec City Telpak situation caused much less conflict than the southern Ontario move in 1964, but the union complained that the transfer of surplus staff could have been better coordinated.¹³⁷

When the airline announced that the Victoria reservations office would be consolidated with the Vancouver office in the spring of 1966, the union argued that the

company should cover all allowable moving expenses in view of the length of service of the dozen or so passenger agents affected. Management conceded to this request after the union insisted that such a decision would not create a precedent, given that all allowable expenses were being paid to IAMAW-scope employees transferring from Winnipeg to the company's new maintenance base in Dorval.¹³⁸

The company initially decided to introduce Telpak because it believed that keeping abreast of technological change was crucial for it to remain competitive in the growing air transportation business. It had examined the American experience where similar communications packages were being used, and concluded that savings in labour and facility costs were sufficiently substantial to warrant implementation. It also maintained that the system would ensure a higher degree of service to customers as the latter would benefit from the expertise and longer hours of operation of the larger reservations offices.¹³⁹

In an effort to deter management from pushing ahead with its consolidation plans, the union argued that closing local reservations offices would result in the deterioration of service to customers. Indeed, passenger agents working in ticket offices and airport locations in cities where reservations offices were closed reported deficiencies in customer service such as incidents of inaccurate information being provided by co-workers in centralized reservations offices. Apologies and time-consuming explanations took a toll, not only on agents at local ticketing and boarding points, but also on those in central reservations offices.¹⁴⁰ The Toronto district chairperson stated:

With the introduction of Tel-Pak, we are now in the world of ultra-rapid transit; one minute one is a Reservation Agent in Detroit, the next, Windsor or London. But this is progress and there is nothing one can do

to stop it. It does put pressure and tension on all of us, especially when you have to talk and think as a person who is not in Toronto, but as a person many miles away.¹⁴¹

Passenger agents believed that a busy signal or an apologetic recording was a disservice to customers attempting to get through to a reservations office. This situation increased tensions and affected employee morale.¹⁴² Some displaced passenger agents experienced personal hardship because they were compelled to sell their houses and find new accommodation in other communities. Difficulties also ensued when a partner was forced to quit a job. Leaving behind family and friends could be a major source of stress. Finally, because the moves occurred in the spring, they interfered with the school year of workers' children.

In the spring of 1967, one year after the Victoria-Vancouver consolidation, Air Canada announced, much to the relief of passenger agents, that no decision had been taken to introduce Telpak in other reservations offices across the system.¹⁴³ In December 1970, the company indicated, however, that the Ottawa reservations office would be considerably downsized and calls would be telpaked to Montreal, effective October 1, 1971. The federal government central travel service as well as the agencies and corporate accounts section were to remain in Ottawa in order to continue providing personalized services to such customers.¹⁴⁴ This consolidation raised much controversy because of the number of agents affected, but also due to the size and political significance of Ottawa as well as the issue of bilingualism.

Approximately fifty positions were expected to become surplus in Ottawa following the implementation of Telpak, thereby reducing the workforce by approximately one-third. Management assured the union that no agents would be

deprived of a job with Air Canada as a direct result of centralization and committed to protecting positions in other bases, especially in Montreal, for agents who became surplus to requirement and opted to relocate.¹⁴⁵ Although this announcement provided some relief to those who feared they might lose their jobs, the union nonetheless condemned the company for its Telpak decision, arguing that the move threatened to create chaos for many workers in Ottawa as well as for some agents beyond that city who could be affected by the seniority bumping process.¹⁴⁶ In criticizing Air Canada's consolidation project, the CALEA argued that the carrier had a responsibility to create employment in a community that generated over \$20 million annually in passenger revenue. The union also contended that Air Canada, as a government-owned airline, should provide the population of Ottawa with the same level of service offered in other major centres, given that the city was the country's capital and the headquarters for representatives of foreign governments.¹⁴⁷ In order to justify its decision, Air Canada invoked its bleak financial situation and the need to reduce costs through better utilization of personnel. Furthermore, it maintained that enhanced service to Ottawa customers would flow from the telpaking of telephone reservations facilities to Montreal because callers would benefit from a faster answering service and have access to more specialists for calls relating to such matters as international travel, group bookings, charters, tours and hotels.¹⁴⁸

While the company argued that its decision was based predominantly on economic considerations, the union strongly believed that the political question of bilingualism could not be divorced from this specific Telpak situation. Management acknowledged that the bilingualism issue may have influenced its decision given that the consolidation

of the reservations offices would facilitate compliance with the 1969 Official Languages Act, especially because most passenger agents in the Montreal centre were bilingual.¹⁴⁹ Since the early years, the carrier had been offering bilingual services in certain communities, but not to the extent called for by the new Act which required that, as a crown corporation, Air Canada ensure that customers be able to communicate in the official language of their choice. Prior to the Telpak announcement, the company had indicated a particular need to improve its bilingual capability in Ottawa, especially following complaints of rudeness to French speaking customers and criticism of its inability to offer services in French.¹⁵⁰ At the time, the company indicated its intention to hire bilingual workers in order to avoid shifting employees around to satisfy bilingualism standards, but soon thereafter announced that Ottawa reservations would be telpaked to Montreal.

In an attempt to pressure the company into reversing its decision, the union sent telegrams to federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as to local businesspeople asking them to intercede in the move. It bemoaned the prospect of job loss and argued that air travellers from Ottawa would become second-class customers.¹⁵¹ At a meeting of the Ottawa membership, it was decided that reservations agents would answer the telephone by saying 'Air Canada (pause) Ottawa' as a way of letting customers know they were speaking with someone in that city. If questioned by callers, agents were to mention the imminent telpaking. While it did not oppose Air Canada's objective to improve bilingual capabilities, the union refused to accept that the lives of passenger agents would be disrupted to achieve those ends. The CALEA, however, was cautious to avoid creating warring factions within its ranks and called for

membership solidarity on the Telpak issue.¹⁵² The union considered it important to fight this battle because it feared consolidation would eventually occur at other locations, leaving only a few central reservations offices across Canada.¹⁵³

Following the Ottawa-Montreal consolidation, the CALEA reported that workers in both cities were subjected to trying conditions similar to those that had arisen in the wake of earlier Telpak initiatives. Agents in Montreal were sometimes confronted by customers complaining about the slowness of service and the lack of accurate information concerning delays or cancellations. Passenger agents checking in travellers at the airport in Ottawa also faced criticisms about poor service.¹⁵⁴ Clearly, reservations office consolidation benefitted the company, but resulted in aggravation and hardship for workers.

Job Transfers

The ability to transfer between job locations and between classifications is crucial to workers because it strongly influences their employment-related decisions. Workers' transfer rights also affect company strategies to secure workforce stability and facilitate or prevent mobility. During the first decade of its operations, TCA had total discretion in the filling of vacancies and in the transferring and promotion of employees, a situation that was unsatisfactory to agents. In late 1949, language was included in the collective agreement which recognized the right of workers to request transfers to other locations within the same city and to appeal to a higher level should local management refuse to allow transfers.¹⁵⁵ The union did not succeed, however, in its efforts to include seniority in the clause.¹⁵⁶

Beginning in the late 1940s, agents became increasingly frustrated with the company's practice of hiring new employees or transferring workers from other departments into senior classifications falling within the collective agreement rather than into the entrance category of telephone operator because this resulted in the bypassing of telephone operators who had already proven their ability. Furthermore, while vacancies not filled locally were generally communicated to other district managers within the same region to encourage them to recommend employees for the available positions, agents complained that these announcements were sometimes ignored by management who wished to avoid temporarily reducing the number of experienced workers in their respective locations. In addition, contrary to company policy of granting employees' wishes whenever possible, agents' requests for transfers to other bases were not always taken into consideration.¹⁵⁷ These practices resulted in local management having much control over workers' mobility prospects within the company. In June 1950, following a series of headquarters meetings between TCA and the TEA, the company accepted the union's proposal that vacancies at airport, city traffic and reservations offices which were not filled by local promotion be publicly posted on a regional basis.¹⁵⁸ Management nonetheless retained decision-making power over intercity transfers and problems continued to arise.¹⁵⁹

Though the union had, since the late 1940s, endeavoured to regulate the handling of transfers, it was not until 1954 that it succeeded in negotiating a contract clause offering passenger agents greater ability to transfer between work locations within and between cities.¹⁶⁰ Agents wishing to transfer made their preference known to supervisors and such requests would normally be accepted, provided that the following

conditions were met: a vacancy was available; the agent had been in the location for at least one year (changed to twenty-six weeks in 1978);¹⁶¹ the agent's standard of work had been satisfactory; the interests of the office would not be jeopardized; and the applicant was accepted at the desired location. These stipulations obviously left much decision-making power in the hands of local management. Indeed, the company retained the right to control transfers and managers or supervisors were therefore not obliged to process employee requested moves. In spite of the fact that these arrangements were an improvement over previous practices, passenger agents remained dissatisfied with the lack of ability to easily transfer between work locations.¹⁶² In the early 1960s, passenger agents could use their transfer rights to move within and between the following cities where the company maintained offices: Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Fort William-Port Arthur, Sault Ste-Marie, Timmins, Sudbury, North Bay, Toronto, London, Windsor, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, Saguenay, Chicoutimi, Sept-Iles, Moncton, Saint John, Halifax, Sydney, Gander, St. John's. Some of the smaller bases were closed later in the decade.

Revisions to the clause in 1966 granted passenger agents stronger, seniority-based, transfer rights. The president of the CALEA later remarked that these provisions had not been easily obtained and "were only conceded by Air Canada in 1966 under the dual pressures of a Board of Conciliation and a membership militant enough to strike."¹⁶³ The company was now required to allow transfers if the first three previously mentioned conditions as well as language requirements were met. However, a passenger agent's request to move to another city was granted only after all local requests for transfer had been processed and there were no employees holding priority of transfer as a result of

staff reductions. Selections for transfer were to be made according to the seniority of the agents whose applications had been received at least thirty days prior to the job becoming available¹⁶⁴ (changed to forty-five in 1980).¹⁶⁵ This new clause helped ensure that the company would fill vacancies internally rather than hire new employees.

Fearing the possibility of a mass exodus of experienced personnel from reservations offices to the preferred airport locations, especially during the peak summer season when additional positions usually became available, the company insisted on the inclusion of a note granting local management discretion in the filling of staff requirements during the period of thirty days prior to, and fifteen days after, the introduction of the summer schedule. This meant that the company could hire new employees instead of transferring workers who had requested a move. Although CALEA agreed to this exception, it later requested that the note be removed because it allowed the company to accomplish much of its yearly hiring during the period under question, thereby diminishing employee transfer rights. The union believed that management was not using the note as per the intent of the agreement.¹⁶⁶ Other problems relating to negotiated transfer rights also surfaced. Especially controversial was local management's practice of reassigning employees for development and training purposes without regard to seniority or transfer lists. The union also fought local management's practice of actioning transfers out of sequence during the open period. Given these difficulties, the union accused management of negating workers' transfer rights.¹⁶⁷ The following CALEA correspondence speaks to this growing concern:

Since their legislation, as you well know, the Company in its anxiety to abolish employee transfer rights has mounted a variety of assaults designed to either redesignate employee transfers as a prerogative of

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

management or, alternately, develop a means of avoiding the restrictions so placed on management's prerogatives under the said Article 12. Also, in recent months it has taken the threat of arbitration action and my personal intervention with Air Canada's Chairman of the Board to preserve intact our members' contractual rights in this area.¹⁶⁸

For its part, management called for a return to the old system under which it exercised greater control over transfers.¹⁶⁹ A company representative observed:

But the major restriction to placing "round pegs in round holes" stems from the fact that the transfer clause in our Union Contract prevents us from having any choice in the selection of personnel transferred from other offices.¹⁷⁰

During contract negotiations in 1971, the company attempted to introduce a two-tier seniority scheme whereby base seniority would be applied for the first two years of employment with system-wide seniority in effect thereafter, a provision that would only affect newly hired employees.¹⁷¹ Despite the fact that the company was unsuccessful, conflicts continued over transfer rights.

Women and Discrimination

Even if passenger agent jobs in all locations were officially available to women, agents who had worked for the company since the 1950s and 1960s talked about the difficulties women sometimes encountered when they sought to fill certain airport functions such as gates and terminal control during those years. In 1949, delegates to the TEA general meeting had gone on record as advocating an all-male passenger agent staff at airports on the grounds that women were unsuited to the work because they had difficulty handling baggage. The minutes of the general meeting clearly illustrate the sexist assumptions of the time:

We do not agree with the Company's contention that an irate person will be pacified by a girl's pretty smile. The average passenger is a man of middle age, likely old enough to be the young lady's father, and his time (as he is most often a business man), is worth too much money to be shrugged off with a flash of teeth.¹⁷²

Although it seems that women were not completely barred from airport jobs, there are indications that men co-workers and management sometimes resisted their presence.

During the first few decades of TCA/Air Canada's existence, there occurred a huge growth in all levels of management as well as an increasing division of labour in the overall management function as new offices were opened and others expanded. Women usually had much difficulty gaining access to management positions. During the war years, they began entering low-level management categories through promotions to in-charge positions. While precise data are unavailable on this trend, by early 1944, women represented approximately 40 percent of participants at airport passenger agent supervisors' meetings,¹⁷³ a clear indication that women were being promoted to low-level management positions. During the two decades following the war, however, most of the promotions to supervisory-level positions went to men. Women were occasionally promoted to these first-level management jobs, but were not to be found in higher-level management categories.¹⁷⁴ Women nonetheless represented approximately 50 percent of passenger agents by the late 1950s and this proportion reached approximately 60 percent by the late 1960s (see Table 3). Women's inferior position was not specific to the sales department, but prevailed throughout the company and reflected women's status in society in general.

Towards the end of the 1960s, women passenger agents' possibilities for promotion, while still limited, began to expand. The following statement by an agent

who had been recommended for acting supervisory duties illustrates this slowly changing context:

Quite honestly, Bob, the possibility of becoming a first-line supervisor has, of itself, never held the significance that so many of our own ambitious(?) fellow members give to it. There is here, however, a principle involved - one you will expect from me, I imagine - outlets to higher positions for something more I believe, than half our members - the women... There is no certainty, of course, that the recommendation will go any further, although the present climate leads me to think that women will be given such opportunities here.¹⁷⁵

With the growing number of women entering the labour force on a permanent basis and the emergence of the women's movement, long-standing beliefs about women's proper place were increasingly put into question. The inequities confronting women were being rendered transparent in many workplaces, and women passenger agents, like other women workers, slowly began demanding that their problems be addressed.

Women employed by TCA also faced other forms of discrimination during the second half of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Because of labour shortages during the war, married women were allowed to retain employment with the carrier should their services be needed.¹⁷⁶ During the period immediately following the war, married women were usually dispensed with, a situation not dissimilar to that which prevailed in the civil service and in other occupations and industries. In the early 1950s, however, the company modified its policy on the employment of married women. Should they marry while in the service of the company, women were removed from the permanent list of employees and placed on a temporary list for an indefinite period, and they could be dispensed with at any time. This rule generally applied when satisfactory replacements could not be found. Married women were not usually hired as new

employees except in locations where the company had difficulty recruiting other forms of labour. In such cases, their employment was on a temporary basis only.¹⁷⁷ However, in the late 1950s, the company altered the employment status of married women to make them equal to single women and they were thus no longer terminated upon marriage. In the early 1960s, despite this change in policy, complaints were registered by married women workers that management in certain locations refused to grant them permanent status.¹⁷⁸

Discrimination based on sex also existed in the area of free and reduced travel passes, an important aspect of employees' benefits package. Indeed, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the company and the union received complaints from married women passenger agents who argued that they were being discriminated against because company regulations (based on federal legislation) covering staff travel pass benefits identified as dependents wives of married men employees, but not husbands of married women employees. Moreover, even if the regulations stipulated that passes were to be issued only to dependent persons, cases cited revealed that gainfully employed wives of men passenger agents enjoyed these travel benefits.¹⁷⁹ This practice clearly reflected the prevailing assumption of the traditional husband breadwinner-dependent wife relationship. While the following excerpts from a letter written by a woman passenger agent to the president of the SEA on the issue probably do not reflect the general mood of the times, they do point to a growing frustration with the unequal status of women as employees and union members:

Why have you done nothing to improve this situation? Why does the Association take no interest in the unanimous discontent on the distaff side? We have tried in Toronto, at the time of the pre-negotiation

meeting, to persuade our elected representatives (male, of course) to promise to include this problem among the others to be negotiated, but we were ignored - all evening. I must say that that took some doing, because we were certainly determined to be heard. I personally, felt even more defeated, because I had gathered all the married women available, and talked them into turning out for the meeting to show their sincerity, and as it turned out, the evening was an absolute waste of time. We feel that the present policy is discriminatory and unjust. Why should TCA 'look the other way' when a male employee requests a pass for his working wife, when the very manual which they choose to interpret so literally in the case of "wives and dependant children", also says "dependant wives"? An officer of the Company has explained to me that "since the man is traditionally the wage-earner, the Pass Bureau assumes that his wife is dependant, whether or not she actually is." I am told that if my husband were completely dependant upon me, and provided that he earned not one red cent during the year, perhaps I could obtain as an example of TCA's generosity, a pass for him. Big deal! Why the sudden literal interpretation? We feel that there is likely no reason for not extending this so-called privilege to our husbands, beyond the fact that the officers of our association are men, the officers of the Company are men and no one is very interested. TCA claims that there is some vague sort of law which prohibits this. I doubt it, and even if there were, this is not 1937, and why can't it be changed? Since our representatives here seem uninterested, perhaps as the president of our association, you would take time to inform me if any attempt has been made to press for a change in the pass system, or if you have any plans to do so, say in 1970 or so.¹⁸⁰

In response to complaints received on this matter, the SEA made representation to the company to have the regulations amended in order to allow married women employees to secure passes for their husbands.¹⁸¹ In the summer of 1962, following the government's approval of recommendations made by TCA, free and reduced rate travel benefits were extended to husbands of married women employees.¹⁸² However, these privileges were not extended to the children of married women employees. The following management response to an employee's query concerning this sex-based inequity illustrates the company's rationale for these limitations:

Our society has given the major responsibility for support to the male member of the family. The normal pattern is for the father to be the

member of the family who has the dependents, not the mother. Our policy works on this principle, although we did deviate in part in favour of the spouse of a female employee. Wives and mothers are doing more in our society to provide support, but it is usually an extra, not basic to the general welfare. In those families where the wife and/or mother is clearly the continuing major support of the household, i.e. in cases of permanent incapacity, our regulations allow for the shift in emphasis and grant rights to her in favour of spouse and children. Such a condition is seen as an exception and calls for special procedures. To adhere to our present policy ensures a consistency of application without being concerned with individual families and possible manipulation on the point of dependency to suit their personal desires. Our policy does not favour the male, it just accepts him as the responsible person in the household for spouse and children.¹⁸³

In late 1969 pass privileges were finally extended to dependent children of women employees.¹⁸⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the changing nature, conditions and relations of passenger agent work over the course of the first thirty-two years of the growth and development of TCA/Air Canada. I have demonstrated that the work of passenger agents underwent a general process of deskilling with the introduction of new forms of technology and the reorganization of the labour process. Taylorist forms of work organization were implemented and refined. In this context, workers saw their overall tasks redivided and most experienced an increasing loss of control and discretion over the production process. Moreover, technical control was entrenched as the labour process came to be organized around new, albeit still rather unsophisticated forms of technology. The transformation of the labour process of passenger agents points to an ongoing process of proletarianization. Despite the many changes which intensified work

and increased management's control over the labour process, passenger agents continued to enjoy a relatively leisurely pace of work and could still provide personalized service to customers.

The redesign of the labour process of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada followed the broad pattern of the transformation of white-collar work described by Braverman¹⁸⁵ in terms of the rationalization and mechanization, and consequent degradation of such work under capitalism. More than two decades before Braverman concluded his study, C. Wright Mills¹⁸⁶ had written about the increasingly specialized, rationalized and mechanized nature of white-collar work that was occurring in the context of the huge expansion of enterprises. While both Braverman and Mills documented significant changes in the world of white-collar work, their studies were of a more general nature and thus could not grasp the many intricacies of the transformation of specific labour processes.

While this chapter has dealt mainly with the immediate labour process, employment practices have also been examined. I have shown that the employment relationship was modified during the formative and consolidation years of the air carrier. With the unionization of passenger agents, job protection was secured. In addition, limited seniority rights for layoff and reemployment were established and, following the introduction of labour-saving technologies and the consequent fear of redundancy, the union succeeded in negotiating system-wide seniority for layoff and recall purposes. Moreover, limited transfer rights were won early on, and were also eventually based on seniority. The ability to transfer improved passenger agents' mobility prospects, an important job condition, especially beginning in the 1960s when promotion possibilities

were curtailed. These various seniority-based rights resulted in better working conditions and served to enhance passenger agents' control over their employment situation. Moreover, these rights protected workers, to a certain extent, against unilateral managerial actions. Despite the fact that these different elements of the internal labour market were fought for by workers and were not the result of the employer's divide and conquer strategies - an explanation put forth by Edwards¹⁸⁷ when identifying the emergence and growth of such markets - these arrangements nonetheless formed part of a strengthening bureaucratic control, and therefore constituted an important means to effectively integrate workers.

While the first two decades of the company's existence were generally marked by accommodation on the part of workers and the union (following its creation in 1946), conflicts increasingly surfaced during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s as a more militant union sought to resist detrimental workplace changes and fought to improve the working conditions of passenger agents. The union's struggles usually revolved around employment practices rather than the reorganization of work.

The transformation of the labour process of passenger agents as well as the changing nature of the union and of labour-management relations were accompanied by a process of feminization. The female reserve army of labour was called upon to fill the growing ranks of the passenger agent occupation during the Second World War as well as during the period of tremendous economic expansion following the war, a phenomenon occurring in other industries. As numerous studies have documented, during the post-war years, women entered the burgeoning world of clerical, sales and service work on an unprecedented scale. While the growing number of women employed

as passenger agents by TCA/Air Canada enjoyed better working conditions than many women in other workplaces, they nonetheless suffered certain forms of discrimination, mostly associated with notions of dependency and women's proper place in paid and unpaid work. Studies by Rosemary Crompton and Gareth Jones¹⁸⁸ and Jane Barker and Hazel Downing¹⁸⁹ point to a similar situation for other groups of women white-collar workers.

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5. THE LABOUR PROCESS OF PASSENGER AGENTS: THE EARLY 1970s TO THE EARLY 1990s

In this second chapter on the labour process of passenger agents, I analyze the effects of ongoing innovations in computer software and hardware on the organization of work and working conditions throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. I demonstrate that while massive technological change and work reorganization tended to increase management's control over workers and further deskilling, this process was not linear given the growing variety and complexity of products which acted as a mitigating factor. Moreover, I consider the impact of the changing travel market on agents' job experience and skills. I also examine the consequences for passenger agents of the continued implementation of communications technologies which allowed the company to achieve a high degree of centralization of its reservations function. I explore the implications of the numerous modifications to the organization and location of work for the nature of service provision. The transformation of work, which resulted in a more capital intensive labour process and in major improvements in productivity, had a strong impact on the job security of passenger agents. Throughout this chapter, I analyze the growing conflict between the union and the company as the former increasingly attempted to protect passenger agents against the detrimental effects of workplace restructuring. This chapter also provides an account by passenger agents of their work experience in the turbulent and rapidly changing context of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In addition, I discuss workplace problems faced by women passenger agents such as sexual harassment and relatively limited promotion opportunities.

The Automation of the Labour Process

The growth in passenger traffic during the 1950s and 1960s was accompanied by a huge increase in the volume of reservations and transactions associated with the handling of air travellers at various company locations. As a result of the expansion of air travel and the diversification of services and products, labour costs mounted as more workers were hired to deal with the airline's customers. Though the automated passenger name and reservations information recording system introduced in the late 1960s in the two largest reservations offices somewhat increased productivity, processing the many transactions by manual or semi-automated means proved, at times, to be difficult and inefficient. ReserVec had served the airline well for many years, but it too needed to be replaced given that this automated space inventory control system, which was designed to handle about 60,000 transactions a day,¹ had reached the limits of its capacity as early as 1967 when it was processing up to 150,000 transactions on busy days.² On a single day during Expo '67, 205,570 transactions were recorded.³ This older, slower equipment was outdated by modern high-speed computerized networks being used by air carriers in other countries. An electronic reservations system with greater capacity and capabilities was required by Air Canada if it was to increase labour productivity, especially during a period of extensive capital outlay for new planes and in the face of an expanding air travel market.

In the late 1960s, Air Canada began drafting the functional specifications for a completely new computerized network which combined the electronic space inventory and passenger name record systems.⁴ The computer, known as ReserVec II, was tested in the fall of 1970 and went into full operation in early 1971.⁵ The technology consisted

of cathode ray tube (CRT) sets (television screens with matched keyboards) which were installed in most of Air Canada's reservations, city sales, airport ticket and airport control offices as well as in other company departments and which were linked to the central processing unit (mainframe computer and ancillary equipment) located in Toronto.⁶

ReserVec II, which was designed to increase productivity and improve efficiency, represented a major move towards a more capital intensive labour process. Upon evaluation of the potential effects of ReserVec II on passenger agent employment, the company concluded that the growth rate of this job category would be arrested following the introduction of the new technology. Moreover, the company estimated that approximately 270 to 300 passenger agents would become surplus to requirement by the time the computerized network was fully operational. Because it was anticipated that the redundant workers could be absorbed by employment growth by the spring of 1971, headquarters management decided that full-time employees in the CALEA bargaining unit who had been hired on or before August 8, 1969 and who became surplus as a result of ReserVec II implementation would be offered continuous employment under normal working conditions and at full pay, although some agents might have to relocate at company expense in accordance with contract provisions.⁷

With the introduction of ReserVec II, Air Canada was able to effect fundamental modifications to the labour process of passenger agents in terms of office organization and passenger handling procedures and methods. ReserVec II facilitated the reshaping of work by allowing for an alteration of tasks while simultaneously transferring some duties to the computer or to passenger agents in other offices or to other groups of

workers. This sophisticated computerized system laid the foundation for far-reaching changes as its capacity could be augmented and its programmes enhanced to meet future exigencies.

The process of making reservations was greatly simplified with the introduction of ReserVec II. The new electronic network provided a faster, more convenient way of registering, storing, processing and accessing data. Airline space information maintained in the central computer could be called up on CRT sets, thus rendering the ReserVec transactors obsolete. In addition, some of the frequently used reference material needed to complete bookings and answer customers' queries was immediately programmed into the computer and made readily available to passenger agents. In many cases, time-consuming searches through numerous manuals on schedules, seat availability, tariffs, flight forecasts and various products for information required to perform the job were eliminated. Indeed, the computer carried out much of the searching previously accomplished by the agents. When customers called reservations offices or presented themselves at city or airport ticket counters, passenger agents were able to respond promptly to most questions and book seats by interrogating the computer through CRT sets. In offices without CRT sets, agents queried the computer by teletype. The volume of information made instantly available to agents allowed for the provision of faster and more complete reservations services. The response time of ReserVec II was similar to that of the old ReserVec, but the new, sophisticated computer could generate substantially more information than transactor cards with their limited number of punch positions.⁸

Despite the introduction of ReserVec II, the job of passenger agents, however,

did not consist exclusively of work on terminals. Given that not all reference material was immediately computerized and because workers did not always trust the computer to provide accurate information, agents continued to consult industry and company manuals and guides to carry out their work. The electronic data bank contained listings of the most frequently used on-line and interline fares, but the software was not initially available to compute ticket prices. Agents therefore still needed to understand basic tariff rules and be able to price itineraries. Furthermore, because other services such as car rentals, hotel and tour reservations, and the booking of other airlines' space were still externalized, agents directly contacted people outside the company and the industry in order to complete a reservation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the larger reservations offices some of these services were handled by agents working in specialized functions.

Given that all passenger name records were retained in the central processing unit, local reservations offices were no longer required to maintain card files. As a result of this centralization, records sections in reservations offices disappeared and with them so too did the conveyor belts that had carried completed transactor cards from the telephone sales sections to the records offices. During an interview, a passenger agent, recalling the transition to ReserVec II, noted:

I was down there when they took the old records system out and they pulled out all the belts and everything where we had to send up the cards through. The favourite expression at that time, when you got a phone call from a passenger and you couldn't find his reservation, or you got a call from another city and you wanted to change the reservation, and we couldn't find it, we'd just say 'norec' [no record]. When they took out the belts we found out why. You should have seen that. We said, "oh god! Look at all the cards down there. No wonder we didn't have a record of it." There were a lot of oversales. And a lot of people found

out the way of getting around the 'norec' sales was to prepare backup cards.

With the elimination of the records sections, the majority of agents in reservations offices became telephone sales agents answering calls from the general public. Agents could now complete the total reservation transaction at the time of booking, including selling the airline seat and immediately storing the passenger's file in the computer. Because this system centralized passenger name records, any agent equipped with a CRT set was able to retrieve any passenger record within seconds without the intervention of other employees, regardless of where the original reservation had been made. The agent dealing with the customer effected changes or cancellations to the file, except for special or problem cases when it was necessary to rely on co-workers employed in specialized functions. Once amendments were made to a passenger name record, the agent serving the customer refiled it in the computer. Agents working in city sales offices and at airport counters enjoyed more independence as they now had access to the central processing unit and thus no longer needed to call reservations offices for bookings, revisions to files or other information.⁹

The problem of botched passenger bookings caused by filing errors, lost files or inaccurate modifications to the name record was greatly alleviated as the most current record always had to be on display before agents made any alterations. In addition, a seat could not be held in inventory without the complete passenger name record. For these reasons, it was virtually impossible to have a difference between the number of seats sold on any given flight and the number of passenger records held for that flight.¹⁰ The enhanced accuracy of the seat inventory offered by the computer, however, did not

prevent the company from pursuing its oversales policy.

By providing oft-used information instantly and rendering all reservations records immediately accessible to all offices for display or change, ReserVec II helped reduce paperwork and kept telephone calls and teletype traffic to a minimum. The computer also generated outgoing messages and processed and stored incoming interline and on-line messages automatically. Because of the integrative capacities of ReserVec II, most of the communications agents who dealt with teletype messages became redundant. Some were reclassified to passenger agent positions, while others were offered jobs as message intercept edit clerks in a new department associated with the ReserVec II network.¹¹ The work performed by these clerks involved manually handling transactions that could not be automatically processed by the computer, such as inputting reservations and changes for offices which were not CRT-equipped, sending and receiving interline reservations requests and other information, and rewording and recoding all messages rejected by the system due to errors.¹² Given that these tasks were similar to those of communications agents, the CALEA gave notice to Air Canada that it wished to reopen the agreement in order to negotiate wages for a new classification of workers. When talks failed, the union accused the company of retitling the communications agent job to that of message edit clerk and declaring it out-of-scope.¹³

The CALEA was also concerned that station agents II (represented by the IAMAW) would take over some passenger agent duties at airport locations. With the introduction of ReserVec II, the control of flights was shifted from the reservations office to the airport at a preset time prior to flight departures. Most of the day-of-flight duties, including flight close-out and records reconciliation, previously carried out by passenger

agents in reservations records sections, were transferred either to the computer or to airport passenger agents who typed out the closing information immediately rather than calling it in to reservations agents. The CALEA worried that with this transfer of work to airport locations, station agents II, who were already performing some bargaining unit work at a few small stations, would be taking over more passenger agent functions by virtue of their involvement in the operation of ReserVec II equipment to perform flight close-out duties.¹⁴ Job security issues were raised, but complaints were never processed through arbitration even though the union began taking such action following the denial of a grievance related to the assignment of passenger agent duties to station agents II.¹⁵

Following the introduction of ReserVec II and in the wake of the implementation of Telpak in the Ottawa reservations office in 1971, the union fought for improvements to seniority language dealing with staff reductions in order to enhance passenger agents' job security. In 1974, important modifications were brought to the seniority clause. It was agreed that when a staff reduction occurred at a base and the number of surplus employees exceeded the number of available vacancies in the system, the senior laid-off agents would be given first choice of either filling a vacancy or bumping a more junior employee. Moreover, affected workers would have the right to bump more junior agents at any base as opposed to the most junior agents on the system as had previously been the case. Finally, workers affected by a staff reduction were now guaranteed one week's pay for each full calendar year of service should they elect to terminate their employment with the company.¹⁶

Computer-Assisted Passenger Processing

The forecasted growth in passenger traffic as well as the introduction of the faster and larger B-747 aircraft, the first of the wide-body jumbo jets put into service in the early 1970s, were expected to create enormous ground handling problems at airports because of the unprecedented volume of passengers served at any one time. ReserVec II played a pivotal role in innovations aimed at improving customer handling at airport locations. Automated passenger check-in at flight counters represented the first phase in the computer-assisted passenger processing programme. Automated check-in facilities were established and procedures initiated in London, England and Miami in 1971.¹⁷ The programme was introduced in Canada in the spring of 1972 in the form of a pilot project at the airport in Vancouver and was extended to most airport locations during the 1970s.¹⁸

The company expected that computer-assisted passenger processing, which was designed to speed up and simplify passenger check-in, would improve productivity and result in a decrease in future staff requirements.¹⁹ The new system brought about fundamental modifications to the overall labour process of airport passenger agents. A twofold change in the organization of work occurred whereby some passenger handling tasks were shifted from the gate/departure lounge area to the check-in counter while simultaneously being computerized. ReserVec II-based check-in enabled any counter agent to assign the passenger a seat on any flight. Instead of gate agents setting up charts and controlling the assignment of seats, check-in agents used CRT sets to monitor seat availability on a particular flight and to reserve a specific space for a passenger checking in. A boarding card was then manually prepared by the check-in agent who added the

seat number to the document. At airports equipped with CRT sets, passengers were no longer required to proceed to a predetermined flight departure gate to select their seats and obtain their boarding cards. In addition, some check-in counter positions were equipped to issue tickets, thus providing one-stop check-in service to many passengers. However, because of deficiencies with this method, when automated check-in was introduced at the airport in Toronto, all ticketing was confined to one area.²⁰ Eventually, all major airports adopted these procedures, except for Rapidair counters. Regardless of the procedure adopted, the new check-in process resulted in a reduction in the number of stops made by customers at the airport prior to flight boarding. While the tasks of passenger agents working at check-in counters expanded beyond tagging bags and verifying tickets, seat selection duties inherited from gate agents were simplified through computerization.

For their part, gate agents experienced a loss of responsibilities related not only to seat selection duties but also to other tasks. The automated check-in system eliminated some of the post-flight functions usually carried out by these agents. Indeed, because check-in was based on the number of passengers and not on the names of the individuals, gate agents no longer reconciled manifests with tickets lifted to indicate which customers had travelled. Some of the tasks of balancing flight information were also incorporated into the computer. Many of the communications tasks performed by CALEA members disappeared as company workers in other departments could access necessary information directly from the computer rather than contact passenger agents. In some cases, transactions entered into the computer by agents or by non-sales workers automatically generated messages to other departments or airlines. By automatically transmitting

downline seat availability data and other information, the computer also took over some of the work of agents in the terminal control centre.²¹

Computer-assisted passenger processing was not introduced without resistance on the part of passenger agents and their union. In referring to meetings between Air Canada representatives, CALEA officers and passenger agents, during which management made presentations on the forthcoming establishment of automated check-in at the airport in Vancouver, the district chairperson wrote to the union president:

As we progressed step by step through the procedure, the Passenger Agents were repeatedly picking holes in it and often making recommendations to rectify them... [I] pointed out that the Passenger Agents were in no mood to make yet another Mickey Mouse system work at the possible future expense of their jobs. I stated that CALEA viewed this system with "cautious acceptance".

He added:

On 29 May, CRT check-in was put in full-time operation with resulting chaos. The afternoon shift is not too bad, but the day shift is ridiculous. Flight delays became the rule, not the exception. The check-in counter often has wall-to-wall people out in front. Likewise the ticketing counter. The paper-work involved at the standby counter position generates long line-ups. With only one agent at the gates for each departure, they are going squirrely. Supervisors and managers are getting over-anxious and repeatedly doing scope duties (a general grievance will be filed at Step II on that) and the Control Office is untenable most of the time. I have seen the installation of RDC [reservations departure control], RES I [ReserVec I] and RES II [ReserVec II] in my time with the Company, but never anything like this. The agents, because of their nature, are busting their back-sides and the Company is buying all kinds of overtime in order to make this system work. Without success.²²

Following implementation of the system at major airport locations, the union remarked that the company's goal of improving customer service was not being achieved. It pointed out that lineups had not been eliminated and passengers spent a greater amount of time waiting for service at the initial point of contact because each person was

subjected to more functions at that one position. In addition, some counters were not equipped to issue tickets and not all agents were trained to query the computer for specific information or effect changes to reservations, a situation which created confusion and frustration for air travellers and passenger agents. Moreover, the union felt that computer programmes tended to be inflexible, thus reducing the level of service available to the public. Indeed, given that the check-in software was structured to properly distribute seats on the aircraft for weight balancing purposes, agents were required to offer customers the seat selected by the system. It was therefore not always possible for passengers travelling as a group to be seated together unless they checked in at the same time. Should agents comply with a passenger's request for a specific seat, even though they had been advised not to do so, the automated load distribution programme could be nullified.²³ In addition, holding connecting flights for delayed passengers proved somewhat difficult due to the impossibility of quickly identifying which passengers had boarded a given flight. Furthermore, the actual computer check-in totals were, at times, seriously in error because of computer malfunctions, agents' mistakes or customers either missing their flights or travelling on other flights after checking in. This could affect several stations on a multi-destination flight.²⁴ Due to the safety aspect which necessitated a computation of the weight and balance of an aircraft, a manual procedure to produce more accurate passenger counts was reinstated to verify the computerized check-in information before flight close-out, a practice which sometimes caused late departures. A method was later introduced whereby agents adjusted the load figures in the computer to ensure a match with the lifted flight coupon count. A series of alterations were brought to the automated check-in programme to secure additional data

in order to correct deficiencies and provide for better space planning and control.²⁵

In early 1972, Air Canada undertook to broaden the computer-assisted passenger processing system by automating the pricing and printing of tickets as a means of improving productivity and service. Air carriers in other countries had also begun to automate these procedures.²⁶ The pilot project was to begin in late 1973, but delays in the delivery of printers and ticket stock as well as the need to effect technical modifications to the printers to accommodate the ReserVec II communications network compelled the company to postpone the introduction of this technology on a number of occasions.²⁷ The pilot project, which was finally implemented in late 1974, included the installation of twenty printers at airport locations, city sales offices and tickets-by-mail sections of the reservations office in Toronto and Montreal and in the tickets-by-mail section of the Vancouver reservations office. Further installations were gradually made on the basis of ticketing volumes.²⁸

Although computerization of the ticketing process was to be carried out in two phases, with ticket printing preceding fare calculation, by the time automated ticketing was initiated, the pricing capability was available for simple domestic itineraries.²⁹ Programme development for complicated journeys proceeded slowly with automated fare calculation becoming increasingly sophisticated over the years. The new system benefitted not only locations where tickets were prepared, but also various sections of reservations offices.

Given the labour-saving potential of this technology, the union raised concerns that the automation of ticketing would affect the job security of passenger agents. The company predicted that this innovation would improve productivity and would result in

a decrease in forecasted staff requirements, but anticipated that passenger agents already in its employment would not be affected.³⁰ Some reassignments, however, were necessary due to staff reductions in the tickets-by-mail and pre-paid ticket sections of reservations offices. This resulted in the loss of a small number of coveted specialized positions.³¹

Computerized ticketing involved the use of a printer connected to CRT sets. Agents at ticketing locations called up or created a passenger name record and when all the information needed to issue a ticket was recorded, they entered a new transaction and obtained the completed ticket within seconds from the adjacent printer. Both automated ticket printing and pricing used the information contained in the passenger name record and reservations data stored in the computer. To determine the fare applicable to a specific journey, the pricing modules analyzed a passenger name record itinerary and compared it with the data on tariffs, rules and routing charts stored in ReserVec II, taking into account such factors as dates of journey commencement and termination, hour of the day, length of stay and class booked.³² The system thus eliminated the need, in some cases, for passenger agents to check tariff manuals or display fares on the CRT screen and then add them up by hand. Because computerized fare calculation for complicated journeys was not initially available, itineraries could not all be automatically priced. In these situations agents calculated the fare and manually completed the sections of the ticket dependent upon the fare such as the tariff basis, taxes and endorsements. Tickets had been previously priced and handwritten by passenger agents, a time-consuming procedure that could cause delays at ticket counters. During an interview, an agent recalled calculating fares manually:

We used a piece of paper and pencil and used tariff books. You had to calculate the ticketed point mileage, the maximum permitted mileage, and calculate if you could use this routing, and then you'd have to look up the routing charts, and then you'd have to sit down and start playing with fictitious currency units. And then you'd have to look up your rate of exchange for that day, and then you'd have to calculate it. But this whole thing was done on pencil and paper. So you weren't really accurate, I mean, you could really, really be off. Toronto-Montreal, there was no problem, that was a published fare. But if it wasn't published, if it wasn't there in front of you in black and white, this is the fare, then you had to calculate it. Domestically, most were published. International, we had nothing published other than Toronto-London or Montreal-London where we went directly. But, if the person was going Toronto-London connecting to Dublin, there was no way you could tell what the fare was. Toronto-London-Paris, you couldn't tell them. Today you could.

One of the main reasons Air Canada followed other carriers into computerized pricing and printing of airline tickets was to increase productivity by speeding up the issuing of these documents to passengers. Fare determination time was virtually eliminated for many tickets. The length of ticket preparation time was trimmed by over one minute.³³ Automation of the ticketing process also resulted in an improvement in the legibility of tickets, an enhancement in the accuracy of fares and a decrease in the number of spoiled tickets due to errors or customers failing to pick up documents prepared in advance. Because the system was designed to generate an immediate record of ticket sales, passenger agents and accounting personnel were no longer required to tabulate all the information contained on each of the millions of ticket coupons handled each year. Over time, gradual improvements to the method of gathering relevant sales data from tickets allowed the company to capture more information at points of sale.

Throughout the second half of the 1970s, computer software was gradually developed, providing for enhanced automated pricing capabilities and ensuring a more accurate and consistent calculation of fares which were increasing in variety and

complexity. Thus, in a growing number of cases, passenger agents no longer had to refer to printed guides or understand tariff structures in order to price itineraries and determine the most economical fare because the cost of many tickets was calculated by the computer, although fares for intricate itineraries had to be priced manually, a task sometimes carried out in the larger reservations offices by agents in specialized sections. These changes affected the work of agents in ticketing functions, in general telephone sales and in certain specialized reservations functions. While automated printing eliminated some of the routine and tedious tasks of passenger agent work, the computerization of fare calculation greatly simplified the pricing process for ticket and reservations agents.

Expansion of the Computer System

With the multiplication of products and special services that accompanied the growth of the airline over the course of the 1970s, the amount of information stored in the computer was greatly increased and the need for agents to refer to outside sources was significantly reduced. ReserVec II software programmes were expanded over the years to facilitate the storage, processing and retrieval of various industry and travel-related data. In the early 1970s, services such as car rentals and hotel bookings were computerized and thus became accessible through ReserVec II.³⁴ Later in the decade, when the company included tour programme reference material and reservations capabilities in the computer, passenger agents were able to confirm selected tours immediately, with the system feeding the completed booking directly to the wholesaler. Previously, reservations had to be made directly by telephone with tour companies.³⁵

In larger reservations offices, some of these duties had been carried out by agents in specialized positions. Therefore, software programmes developed over the years not only affected the overall job in general reservations offices, but also resulted in the modification of work in specialized sections because certain tasks were integrated into the computer. Furthermore, when the flight schedules of additional carriers began appearing in the computer, agents contacted these companies less frequently. With the inclusion of CP Air's flight schedules in ReserVec II in 1978, both national and all regional Canadian carriers were represented in the database.³⁶ Other airlines also purchased time on the system to meet their own reservations requirements. Moreover, following its introduction in 1970, ReserVec II was expanded and adapted to handle not only reservations, ticketing and check-in tasks, but also numerous operations in other company departments. A wide variety of information was thus made instantly available to Air Canada which greatly facilitated both short-term and long-term planning. In addition, the ReserVec II initiative allowed the company to develop highly skilled computer professionals and market this expertise while simultaneously effecting a deskilling of the passenger agent job.

Over time, as the ReserVec II system became more sophisticated and was able to handle additional functions, and as an increasing array of data were placed in the computer, the use of printed sources and paper was significantly reduced. ReserVec II was programmed to provide agents in reservations, airport and city sales offices with most of the information essential to the completion of tasks related to air travel. Though a broader range of services was made instantly available to the travelling public, technological change generated an erosion in the skills needed to perform the passenger

agent job as much of the required knowledge and decision-making abilities were transferred to the computer, and many functions were reduced to simple information retrieval and translation. The forced reliance on a machine to obtain information and complete tasks made the work more monotonous and routine and consequently less challenging. Passenger agents enjoyed less flexibility in the organization of their workday and became increasingly controlled by the computer. The union remarked that agents in reservations offices "who spend eight hours a day plugged into a VDT [video display terminal] complain that they are becoming mere appendages to machines working on a terminal assembly line."³⁷ These myriad modifications to the automation process tended to operate within and reinforce preexisting patterns of work organization. The introduction of new forms of technology also significantly enhanced productivity, as reservations agents dealt with more calls and airport agents served more passengers than before in a given period of time. Pressure to produce more at a quicker pace resulted in passenger agents experiencing a considerable increase in their workload.

By facilitating the storage and retrieval of a wide variety of data and accelerating the reservations, ticketing and check-in processes, automation resulted in agents spending less time interacting with each passenger, with other agents and with workers from other airlines and related industries. Indeed, much communication work was automated. Computers increasingly contacted computers for car rentals, airline seat reservations, hotel bookings and credit card checks. In addition, numerous types of messages were transmitted between company locations and departments through ReserVec II. Hence, for many passenger agents, especially those employed in reservations offices whose non-monetary work-related rewards tended to revolve around interactions with people, the job

became more socially isolating. However, because the work of agents at airport locations and city sales offices did not call for the constant use of computers, these employees had a greater opportunity to interact with the public and with each other, thus making the job less socially isolating.

As reservations and airport offices became larger and as products multiplied over the course of the 1970s, new specialized functions were created while others expanded. In the larger reservations offices, a small proportion of agents were assigned on a full-time basis to these specialized positions to deal with complex tariffs; agency sales and commercial accounts; tours, groups and charters; queues; prepaid tickets; tickets-by-mail; and government travel, or to work as expeditors or coordinators to resolve various types of problems. The growth of these functions provided a minority of agents with a more fulfilling workday, but also tended to remove some interesting aspects from the job of most agents. Passenger agents in certain dedicated positions sometimes called upon co-workers in the general reservations section for assistance. For example, if many passengers had to be contacted quickly because of schedule alterations or irregular operations, the name records were placed in queues to be handled by general reservations agents. Given the nature of the job in general reservations, many agents looked forward to helping out specialized agents and becoming involved in a broader range of tasks which were sometimes less routine. At airport locations, specialized jobs included terminal control and ticketing as well as in-charge gate positions. Jobs in Maple Leaf lounges and at some of the special services counters were also coveted. Finally, city sales office jobs, which required a broad range of knowledge and skills, were sought after assignments. The work in dedicated positions in reservations, airport and city sales

offices tended to be more interesting and diversified and allowed for greater autonomy and freedom of movement. Agents performing these functions generally exercised more control over the organization of their workday and were less tied to the computer. Moreover, some of these jobs were highly skilled, with agents acting as trouble shooters and assuming responsibility for a wide variety of tasks. These workers were often called upon to take decisions quickly in order to resolve pressing problems. For these reasons, dedicated positions were very attractive to workers.

In the larger offices, a detailed division of labour existed, with agents filling specialized and support functions on a full-time basis. In some locations, agents worked in many of the functions on a rotating basis, whereas in the smaller offices the absence of a rigid division of labour meant that most agents performed several functions as part of their everyday duties. Initially, even though senior employees, by virtue of their extensive work experience, often secured the specialized jobs when vacancies occurred in reservations offices or at airport locations, management selected agents to fill different work functions. Appointments sometimes generated accusations of favouritism which led to conflict between the company and the union and between workers. A clause was eventually included in the collective agreement in 1978 which stipulated that vacancies in different work functions at a location would be filled according to seniority and based on written requests, after due consideration had been given to the employee's qualifications and the requirements of the operation.⁴⁸ Despite the union's gains in this area, the company still enjoyed a certain amount of discretion in awarding specialized positions because the language was open to interpretation. In some locations, management resisted the loss of control over staffing decisions. This contract provision

nevertheless allowed passenger agents to bid for positions, a marked improvement over past practices whereby management exercised total discretion in assigning functions to employees. The new language also stipulated that any existing procedures would not be reduced. This clause was aimed at protecting workers at locations where union-management agreements provided a method to facilitate movement from one work function to another which was more advantageous to agents. The exception thus ensured that offices functioning on a rotating basis could continue to do so.

By the mid-1970s, even if a small proportion of agents had access to these more rewarding positions, for most passenger agents the job had become monotonous and repetitive, a situation which resulted in low worker morale, especially in the larger reservations offices. In some locations, either the union or management undertook surveys in order to assess passenger agents' job satisfaction and working conditions.³⁹ In the summer of 1975, the CALEA presented a brief to Air Canada management outlining problems in reservations offices.⁴⁰ Faced with brewing discontent in the larger reservations offices, the company was compelled to address the situation. In April 1976, with the support of the union, it initiated a major work improvement programme in the Toronto reservations office. As a first step, a questionnaire was sent to all passenger agents in order to identify some of the problems and determine modifications which could be introduced to make the telephone answering function more interesting. The survey confirmed that agents found the job simple, boring, repetitive, devoid of situations which challenged their full capabilities and deficient in the variety and nature of skills required of them. Agents complained that the lack of autonomy and responsibility as well as the absence of opportunities to exercise personal discretion and

initiative prevented them from accomplishing their tasks in the most appropriate manner.⁴¹

In response to feedback from agents, a number of changes were made in the general reservations office. Many work rules were relaxed. In addition, agents in designated positions acted as resource persons in areas such as rates, tours and queues, or as ReserVec II specialists or team coordinators. These workers, who were trained to fill the gap in knowledge between the level required by general reservations agents and that needed by agents working full-time in specialized functions, remained in the designated positions for a few months and were then replaced with co-workers on a rotating basis.⁴² These various adjustments were designed to enlarge the job by increasing autonomy, providing workers with a greater degree of involvement in planning and administering team activities, and giving them access to the information and expertise necessary to perform the work efficiently and productively. Although the basic job was not fundamentally altered, the experiment, which resulted in improvements in the level of job satisfaction, was well received by passenger agents. It is important to note, however, that satisfaction with supervisors, with Air Canada overall and with the social aspects of the job improved most, while motivation and general satisfaction with the work itself did not improve significantly.⁴³ Union officers and passenger agents were strongly committed to continuing with the quality of working life programme, but the company, under the guise of modifying the project, effectively cancelled it in May 1978, arguing that productivity was suffering.⁴⁴

Computer Enhancements During the Late 1970s and Early 1980s

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the changing environment in which airlines operated, characterized by an economic crisis, gradual deregulation of air transportation and growing competition within the industry, prompted air carriers to offer a multiplicity of special products and fares. The proliferation of discount fares, in particular, made the reservations job more complicated. Designed to stimulate travel on specific routes or during low-demand periods, reduced fares were more complex than regular ones because they were accompanied by fences such as midweek, weekend or low-season travel, advance reservation and free or chargeable stopovers. Matching up customers' needs satisfactorily with the vast array of fares and products required knowledge and skill given the intricacies of tariff rules and products. Promotional fares, which could be time-consuming to book and demanded an extremely high degree of attention to detail, benefited both the public and carriers. Passenger agents' workload increased as they were forced to absorb a larger variety of fares and product information and handle a growing volume of calls. When reservations offices were flooded with inquiries following the announcement of seat sales, agents were often called upon to respond to these situations with little advance notice. In such cases, the lack of sufficient staff made working conditions very difficult. Forever changing fares, with their new and complex rules and information, could lead to confusion for workers as well as customers.

Passenger agents expressed much frustration with the limitations of the automated pricing system, especially with the information on fares generated by the computer. There was widespread concern that the data available in ReserVec II were incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. Some of the essential information was not kept up-to-date and the

spelling and grammatical composition occasionally led to confusion. At times, agents had little confidence in the usefulness of the system as a sales tool and tended to refer to external sources to ensure that the correct fare was quoted. Placing clients on hold or calling them back after determining the appropriate fare led to poor customer service. Furthermore, agents were not always properly trained to carry out their duties effectively.⁴⁵

The company was aware of the difficulties encountered in introducing new fares, a situation which was aggravated by the rapidity of product renewal. These changes were nonetheless essential if Air Canada was to remain competitive in the marketplace. In view of the serious deficiencies with the automated fare calculation system, the airline attempted, during the early 1980s, to improve the implementation process for new or modified products and enhance all aspects of fares information. Pricing capabilities were gradually expanded thus significantly cutting the time required to answer fare inquiries accurately. However, the company maintained that, given unprecedented fare structure adjustments and software enhancements which were both stretching the technical limits of the ReserVec II system, some much needed developments would have to await the next generation of computers.⁴⁶

In the context of industry changes over the course of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Air Canada also experienced enormous passenger handling problems at many of its airport terminals, mainly due to congestion. This situation prompted the company to examine the possibility of expanding the computerized passenger processing system to allow for automated self-ticketing at airport locations. The carrier initially announced that a type-trial would commence in early November 1978 at the airports in Toronto and

Dorval, but a series of problems delayed implementation of the project until early September 1980.⁴⁷ The system, which was named Ticketmatique, provided enRoute card holders departing from the airports in Dorval or Toronto with access to a unique ticketing service designed to provide fast, convenient, one-stop service. The Ticketmatique units consisted of a credit card reader, a ticket printer, a microprocessor and a telephone. The ticket vending machine was activated by the insertion of an enRoute credit card which was instantly validated by the system, and telephone contact was automatically established with a passenger agent in the local reservations office who assisted the caller by completing the reservation. The customer then pressed a button to obtain the completed ticket.⁴⁸ When the company provided the union with an evaluation of the programme in March 1981, it indicated that utilization of the machine had been minimal and that a number of operational problems had surfaced and corrective action to improve the reliability of the system was ongoing.⁴⁹ The units, however, were eventually taken out of service.

In the early 1980s, Air Canada introduced a few other significant innovations to facilitate the processing of air travellers at airports and maintain a competitive edge. Advance seat selection was initiated for first-class passengers in December 1982 and was extended to full-fare passengers on Atlantic flights in February 1983. The service was gradually expanded to other destinations and to other categories of travellers.⁵⁰ The provision of seat selection to preferred customers at time of booking, which was obviously an important marketing tool in the competitive business travel market, created problems for airport agents. Indeed, during interviews, workers reported that passengers who were not eligible for this service were sometimes frustrated because they could not

obtain a more desirable seat, even when they checked in early. Moreover, customers who had preselected their seat complained loudly when they lost this privilege because of the company's practice of making available to other passengers shortly prior to flight departure seats selected in advance but not claimed. Agents working in reservations offices also bore the brunt of irate clients who complained that this new seat selection policy was unfair because it excluded certain categories of travellers.

In December 1982, a second pilot project was inaugurated at the airports in Winnipeg and Halifax to test boarding pass printers and the name check-in programme. Name check-in was turned up system-wide in April 1983, with boarding pass printers installed at all major airports. Boarding pass printing was progressively implemented at other airport locations during the year.⁵¹ The introduction of these new automated features, which were also being provided by airlines in the United States and in other countries, represented another important phase in the development of Air Canada's computerized reservations and check-in systems. With the new equipment and programmes, whenever a customer checked in, the agent accessed the passenger name record which contained all relevant flight data. After verifying the file, the agent activated the printer. Appearing within seconds was a personalized boarding pass containing a wealth of information presented in common language and in type character. Prior to automation, boarding cards were filled out manually, using information from the traveller's ticket. The boarding card previously contained sufficient but limited data and was written partly in airline code and thus was often meaningless to passengers. With the new system, seating errors were virtually eliminated because seat numbers were immediately printed on the card based on information from the computer, whereas under

the former system, agents entered the details manually.⁵² Modifications to computer-assisted passenger processing augmented the speed at which boarding passes could be produced, thereby potentially reducing congestion and waiting time at airport counters. This resulted in workers losing some control over their work process. However, automated boarding pass printers eliminated some tedious aspects of the check-in process. Given that the system was implemented during a time of crisis in the industry and the economy in general, workers feared that this technological innovation, with its labour-saving capacity, would result in the disappearance of airport jobs. The introduction of this new technology was not without technical difficulties. Incidents of overheating, ink roller disintegration and jamming of boarding passes were reported. Software problems also had to be ironed out.⁵³ Most of these problems were eventually resolved.

The Move Towards Self-Service Technology

The late 1970s and early 1980s proved to be a trying period for Air Canada. The proliferation of fares and products, which accompanied the restructuring of the airline industry, severely strained the company's computerized passenger handling systems. Despite new programmes and procedures to enhance ReserVec II's capabilities to deal with this situation, passenger processing remained highly labour intensive. Increasing productivity was therefore critical to Air Canada if it was to improve its competitive position in a rapidly changing environment. The ReserVec II computer was being superseded by more advanced reservations and passenger handling systems and equipment developed and marketed by airline companies in other countries. Air Canada which, until the late 1970s, had been a leader in this field was now losing ground. The

saturation of ReserVec II's capacity and capabilities, as well as the imperative to stay abreast of the many technological innovations spurred Air Canada into undertaking, in the early 1980s, a comprehensive project known as Passenger, Reservations, Information, Servicing, Merchandising or PRISM (the title of the project was later changed to PRISMAC - for PRISM Air Canada - because another company was using the PRISM acronym). The goal of this initiative was to study and apply the technologies available and those that were known to become available from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, in terms of both the reservations system and the processes used to ticket and board passengers.⁵⁴

The project team put forth a concept that identified a number of different ways in which new technology could be applied to develop an integrated, consumer-oriented, total passenger handling system. For the reservations offices, a computer terminal that would transform the ReserVec II product displays and booking transactions from a service tool to a truly merchandising tool was envisioned. Substantially expanding and improving the automated fares pricing capabilities was another fundamental objective. In addition, the team proposed new channels to market the company's services and provide customers with direct access to products for shopping and reservations through home computers or videotex systems located in shopping centres. User-friendly software and hardware geared to self-service was recommended for airport counters and off-premise locations to allow for check-in to be partially carried out prior to arrival at airports.⁵⁵

These major technological innovations could potentially have an even greater impact than ReserVec II on the job security and overall duties and responsibilities of

passenger agents. Since its introduction, ReserVec II had grown tremendously in terms of flexibility and versatility to accommodate a number of passenger handling functions, and the type and amount of information available in the computer had greatly expanded. With the development of this more complete automated passenger processing system, many of the tasks once performed manually by passenger agents were computerized and much information as well as decision-making abilities were transferred to the computer. The impact of electronic technology on the employment situation of passenger agents was difficult to evaluate because few workers had been declared redundant as a result of computerization, though the number of jobs had, at times, been reduced through attrition. However, over the course of the 1970s, passenger volumes had outpaced employment growth. The expansion of the industry throughout the 1970s had thus hidden the relative demise of the passenger agent job category brought about by technological innovations designed to enhance productivity. In this context, it had been difficult for passenger agents to grasp the longer term consequences of technological change.

PRISMAC represented the most important challenge the union had ever faced in terms of technological change. This wave of automation could radically alter the way the work of agents was carried out, thereby fundamentally transforming the passenger agent occupation. This new technology would also greatly impinge upon job security. Over half of the CALEA's members worked at airports and stood to be affected by a check-in system designed to bypass airline personnel. Moreover, the provision to consumers of direct access to Air Canada's database could significantly reduce reservations office staff. It was unlikely that passenger agents displaced by this labour-saving technology would be absorbed in other company functions or departments. The

union was profoundly disturbed by comments made by an Air Canada regional manager to the effect that if implemented fully, PRISMAC could theoretically do away with most CALEA members.⁵⁶

Conflict between the union and the company erupted over the PRISMAC initiative. Given the potentially disastrous consequences for passenger agents, the CALEA felt that management was not keeping it fully apprised of planned changes.⁵⁷ A major incident which gave rise to confrontations between Air Canada and the CALEA occurred in the summer of 1983 when the company carried in its employee publication a photograph of management wearing T-shirts promoting the PRISM project, some of which read 'Prism Warden' and others 'Prism Governor'.⁵⁸ The union countered the company's gesture with its own version of PRISM shirts, the back of which read 'CALEA Member' and the front 'Prism Inmate'. The union, which was in the process of developing an education campaign to raise the membership's awareness of job security issues associated with the new technology, stated:

Equating this repressive new reservations system with a jail sentence is an appropriate comparison... Hopefully this kind of consciousness raising will help us in negotiations to reduce our PRISM SENTENCE.⁵⁹

The PRISMAC concept was sweeping and development proceeded at a much slower pace than anticipated. Some of the modules were eventually implemented while others were greatly modified or delayed indefinitely. During an interview, a management representative talked about the difficulties associated with the PRISMAC project:

PRISMAC was supposed to be our third generation computer whereby we were going to build a new system from the bottom up. Some high level executives had done a road map whereby they more or less knew what

they wanted the system to do but they didn't know how to do it. It was a new language for all of us. We were totally unproductive, in my estimation. For the first year, we didn't have a clue what we were doing. It was a very frustrating time for all of us because we were learning something new, went in with very high hopes, and really, it just became a monster. Actually, even if we were trying to develop a new system for us to bring in changes, we were trying to change ReserVec II and for the changes we wanted to make, the architecture of ReserVec II just didn't permit these changes to happen. So we were almost forced into working with a paper plan to develop something from scratch and it got to the point that we realized we had a monster on our hands. We had a twenty year project of 100 people working on it, and it was just too hard to wrestle down. I think that's really why we're migrating to Covia, because we realized we had to buy into another system because we can't upgrade ours as well as some of the U.S. carriers, and we never had much success developing a brand new third generation computer from the ground up.

Under the PRISMAC initiative, fare displays were continually upgraded and automated pricing capabilities were improved, thereby enhancing selling tools. These changes were crucial in order to increase productivity and make the cheaper fares profitable for Air Canada. In the summer of 1987, ReserVec II was linked to the airfare system developed by the Société Internationale de Télécommunications Aéronautiques, a Belgium-based non-profit cooperative owned by over 300 airlines. This advanced fare computation programme, which featured easy and speedy access to worldwide tariff data, substantially improved ReserVec II's international pricing capabilities by enabling Air Canada's passenger agents to quote and auto-price most on-line and off-line international itineraries and offer the most current and lowest applicable fares. In addition, a new broader North American fares database supplied by the Airline Tariff Publishers Company, which enhanced the pricing of all domestic and intra-United States fares, was turned up in June 1988.⁶⁰ The two fares computation systems were upgraded over the years. These software enhancements facilitated the ongoing erosion of decision-making

skills by incorporating such abilities into the computer. Instead of agents having to unravel the tangle of tariffs, route structures and rules to provide customers with the information requested, the computer automatically determined the most appropriate fares.

While continually changing automated fares computation packages resulted in modifications to the labour process of passenger agents, the most significant development for reservations offices flowing from the PRISMAC project was the new display terminal known as the reservations selling station. The equipment was intended as a replacement for the outdated terminals introduced in the early 1970s and for the upgraded models that followed during the 1980s. Field trials for the new terminal were held in the Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver offices in the spring of 1987.⁶¹ Implementation was planned for September 1988, but the first of the reservations selling stations were finally introduced in the Toronto office in the summer of 1989.⁶² Terminals were installed in other reservations offices over the course of the next two years.⁶³

The selling station was designed to restructure the labour process in reservations offices by effecting a shift in the basic function of reservations agents from service to sales. Enhanced selling tools were required to transform passenger agents from order takers into sellers able to entice shoppers into becoming consumers of Air Canada's products, thereby improving sales performance and productivity. The new terminal boasted many features that ensured a more sales- and product-oriented presentation. A quad screen improved product displays by enabling agents to view flight schedules, fares and flight availability simultaneously. A built-in memory capable of storing trip data at source curtailed the need to repeat requests for information from the central computer system. The keyboards also featured function keys which combined transactions and sent

multiple requests to the mainframe, thus reducing keystrokes and errors as well as simplifying the complex series of commands and codes agents had to know in order to access data. These enhancements, which were designed to put agents in a sell mode, were instrumental in reducing the number of transactions which had mushroomed over the years. Consequently, agents could pay more attention to selling the products and focus less on transaction language. In the context of forever changing fares and tariff rules and the growing number of products, the introduction of the new system facilitated the job. Easy and consistent access to all product information also reduced the length of the customer-passenger agent interaction. Minimizing agents' input simplified the reservations process.

Following the implementation of the new system, passenger agents lost some flexibility in fulfilling their duties while the company gained greater control over the labour process. The loss of skills and knowledge could, however, lead to problems as pointed out by an Air Canada manager:

The big disadvantage of the new technology is that it's so user-friendly. I really don't think people being trained on the new system are really going to understand all the background that may be needed. Some people say they don't need to know it, I don't know. It could create some problems, especially if they run into some binds. They'll really never understand how the computer works... I think, really, it may be less skill as opposed to more, especially if it's a fairly young person who's had any involvement with PCs at all, it could be quite easy to pick up. As we move into better fare quoting capabilities and stuff, there should be little room for error as far as I go. I'm hoping that the '90s are going to be quite easy for people to operate the technology.

Agents generally enjoyed working with the new reservations selling stations, given that some of the old terminals were outdated and dilapidated to the point of making them very difficult and tiring to operate. Nonetheless, they were aware that the new equipment

would not improve overall working conditions. During an interview, a passenger agent described working with the new selling station in the following way:

Now you press one button whereas before you had to press twenty buttons, which is great except that the passengers at the other end of the line are saying, "are you still there," and I go, "yes, I'm working." And the thing is, they can't hear you because of the soft-touch typing. And I find that working on the new computer, there's a lot more time where nothing is being said. One thing with the new computer, you can get all the information at once and you have it without asking the passenger more questions. So there's that lack of talk there and you have to make up a conversation, 'cause you're just sitting, waiting for the computer to do the work for you. I've had to say, "are you still there." And it seems that the transactions are taking longer because whereas before, as you were punching it all in, the computer would be doing it as you punched it in, this way, you press, say one button, the computer is doing it all. It's probably taking less time, but because you're just sitting there twiddling your thumbs, it seems to take longer. It seems it's taking the computer three times longer. Maybe after awhile, I'll adjust to that. But the response time is so, so slow. They're trying to work on it. Right now, it's just waiting and waiting. It's more user-friendly, there's not as much computer codes. Honestly, an imbecile could work it because they've really done everything for you, they lead you by the hand throughout everything. Now you press a button for hotel availability. It tells you, "here's what most passengers want, do you want to book that." You press one button, it's booked for you by the computer. It does everything for you. If you forget how to do something, you just press a button, it tells you. It's very user-friendly, very, it even says, "one moment please, not ready." But still, like one girl said, we still have the same calls and the same ignorant passengers and travel agents. Fine, it's going to make it a bit more interesting for awhile because there's a bit of difference there, you know, it's a bit of a challenge. But you can't remove the monotony, you're still sitting there for eight hours a day plugged into the computer. So it's nice that it will take away some of the drudgery of typing, but it's not going to change the job any. Everybody is so excited about it, but I really can't get very excited because all it is, is a different way to access information. It's not changing anything else except that you can access information quicker, serve clients, make more money. But it boils down to the same job.

Serious problems began emerging shortly after the new terminal was put into operation.

Agents were annoyed with the slow response time which resulted in dead air. In

addition, certain transactions were initially not functioning properly, thus reducing the system's effectiveness and leaving passenger agents frustrated. Workers reported experiencing eyestrain and headaches from reading the small characters when using the quad screen feature. A number of agents resorted to using the split screen to reduce the stress associated with working with the quad screen.

Passenger agents were once again faced with massive technological change when Air Canada entered into an agreement to purchase the British Airways Business System (BABS) in 1991 to replace ReserVec II.⁶⁴ A test of the BABS system adapted to meet Air Canada's needs was undertaken in Winnipeg in early 1992, and the company planned to fully implement the new system during the second half of 1994.⁶⁵ The carrier decided to replace ReserVec II in order to reduce its operating and ongoing development costs. The new system was functionally superior and more user-friendly and offered the airline the ability to better manage its products.⁶⁶ When the union expressed concern about the potential effects of the new technology on the job security of passenger agents, the company noted that, despite the fact that the new system would definitely increase productivity, the benefits would primarily flow from technology-based cost reductions and revenue improvements.⁶⁷

Major technological innovations associated with the PRISMAC project, many of which pointed to a trend towards self-service, were also introduced at airport locations. In early 1988, an automated system for dealing with standby passengers was piloted at the airport in Ottawa and was turned up at other airports in the spring of that year. This new programme effectively removed the limited amount of discretion passenger agents exercised over standby passengers' boarding priority and included this capability in the

computer. The machine now determined clients' standby priority based on a number of commercial considerations including, length of journey and membership in promotional programmes such as Aeroplan and enRoute Gold Card. Moreover, passengers immediately registered for standby when checking in instead of doing so at the gate after having checked in. Standby passengers for Rapidair flights continued to be processed on a first come, first served basis.⁶⁸

Other significant changes were introduced at airport locations in the late 1980s and early 1990s as Air Canada undertook to revise and update check-in and baggage handling procedures. In late 1988, the company piloted automated baggage processing at the airport in Vancouver, a system already in use in the United States. New counters and feeder belts were designed and built around the Super-Vision baggage sorting system which used optical character recognition to read tags and labels placed on baggage and other items moving along the conveyor belt and to route luggage onto the correct pathway.⁶⁹ When the company introduced an automated sorting system at the airport in Toronto in late 1990, it adopted bar-code reading technology.⁷⁰ The new sorting equipment could handle luggage at a quicker pace than the previous system and greatly improved the speed with which aircraft could be loaded. It also tended to alleviate congestion at peak periods. Although Air Canada maintained that the new facilities offered a highly efficient check-in process that improved customer service,⁷¹ passenger agents raised important concerns when the technology was introduced at the airport in Vancouver. Problems surfaced with the baggage sorting system and the coordination of the feeder belts with the main conveyor belt. The electronic tag reader was rejecting a high percentage of luggage being scanned and tags were regularly being torn off. Agents

had to manually reposition luggage on the belt to allow the reader to correctly scan the information from the tag.⁷² These difficulties were eventually resolved by the company.⁷³ The carrier also implemented automated baggage tag printers in the spring of 1991.⁷⁴ The printers, using information from the reservations database, generated baggage tags containing some of the required information, thereby reducing agents' involvement in the preparation of the tags.

In the late 1980s, Air Canada also began developing automated boarding control technology.⁷⁵ A pilot project was initiated in September 1990 in specific areas at the airport in Dorval. During the initial phase of the project, the company tested new VDTs, printers that generated a machine-readable combined ticket and boarding pass with all relevant trip information encoded on a magnetic strip, as well as equipment to electronically scan this boarding document and perform passenger reconciliation. A number of software applications were successfully implemented and work was continuing on additional programmes to streamline all aspects of passenger processing. These developments affected tasks such as ticketing, check-in, baggage handling and securing, irregular operations, boarding, flight close-out and reconciliation.⁷⁶ With these new programmes, the company was able to more quickly capture and more easily manipulate information necessary for planning and financial administration purposes. These automated processes were being implemented to enhance customer service and staff efficiency and reduce overall passenger handling costs, thereby improving productivity. They were also introduced in order to remain competitive with other international carriers which were developing similar automated boarding control systems.⁷⁷

The automation of passenger handling functions at airports reduced the repetitive

tasks performed by agents, but nonetheless simplified the overall work process. For passenger agents, gradual technological changes translated into a significant and ongoing transformation of their jobs as skills were integrated into the computer, management control was enhanced and the pace of work was accelerated.

The many innovations provided Air Canada with the ability to eventually implement a self-service airport operation. Under such a system, a small number of agents would be needed to assist certain passengers, but in the majority of cases the checking in of air travellers would not involve direct contact with company employees. While some agents did not fear for their jobs because they believed passengers could not adapt to a self-service airport, especially given the latter's inability to orient themselves under the existing setup, others dreaded the consequences of such transformations for their employment security and dismissed their co-workers' argument, pointing out that the growing presence of computer technology in everyday life meant that a large proportion of the population was becoming increasingly computer literate.

The Centralization of Reservations Offices, Base Closures and Massive Layoffs

The 1980s and early 1990s were very difficult times for airline workers. Hiring freezes, layoffs brought about by consolidations and closures and general staff reductions coloured the entire period. Passenger agents at Air Canada did not escape unscathed. The company downsized its operations, reduced capacity or totally suspended services to many communities and closed offices and entire bases. In some instances, passenger agents' jobs were taken over by lower paid, non-unionized or unionized but junior workers of partially or fully owned subsidiaries such as Air Ontario Inc., Air Nova Inc.,

AirBC Ltd., and Air Alliance Inc. which introduced new services to communities abandoned by the parent company. Air Canada also closed most city sales offices in communities it no longer served, with travel agencies taking over the business.

One of the main cost-cutting measures undertaken by the company which had a heavy impact on the job security of passenger agents was the increased centralization of reservations operations. In the spring of 1982, the company introduced a centralized reservations unit, known as convention central, to provide a reservations service for delegates travelling to various conventions in Canada. This move was part of an effort to capture a greater share of this lucrative market. The establishment of this facility, which was located in Montreal, resulted in the elimination of some specialized and interesting tasks from local reservations offices.⁷⁸

In the early 1980s, bases in Northern Ontario were greatly affected by automated telephone switching capabilities. This technology was utilized to close the reservations offices in Timmins, Sault Ste-Marie and Thunder Bay, with calls telpaked to Sudbury and Winnipeg.⁷⁹ In early 1984, Air Canada's United States reservations services were centralized in New York, following dramatic reductions in long distance phone rates brought about by deregulation in the telecommunications industry in that country. Before the transition, the company had been one of the last airlines with offices in the United States without centralized facilities.⁸⁰ In 1991, this reservations centre was moved to Tampa.⁸¹

The trend towards closing regional offices across Canada and shifting the work to major cities accelerated dramatically throughout the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s. As Air Canada downsized to fewer and fewer reservations offices, jobs in many

larger communities disappeared. Indeed, the Sudbury reservations office was axed in January 1989, with calls routed to Toronto.⁸² Bases in the Atlantic provinces also underwent a major reorganization as a result of centralization. The Sydney (in June 1989), Moncton and Saint John (both in January 1990) telephone services were consolidated into a new Maritime reservations centre in Halifax. As well, calls to the Gander reservations office were transferred to St. John's in June 1989.⁸³ In July 1991, the general reservations offices in Halifax and St. John's were closed and the calls were redirected to the Montreal and Toronto centres respectively.⁸⁴

Reservations offices in western Canada were also deeply affected by the trend towards centralization. New telephone equipment was programmed to automatically reroute overflow calls to the first available reservations office. This technology was used to feed call overloads from Saskatoon and Regina to Winnipeg beginning in the summer of 1985,⁸⁵ and between Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary beginning in the summer of 1988.⁸⁶ The reservations offices in Saskatoon and Regina were eventually closed in October 1989, with calls telpaked to Winnipeg.⁸⁷ Although there were indications that Air Canada initially intended to phase out operations in the Edmonton and Vancouver offices and route calls to Calgary under a plan it called Res West,⁸⁸ the Edmonton and Calgary reservations offices were instead centralized in Vancouver in July 1991. These closures were part of a major round of consolidations that saw some of the larger reservations offices disappear, leaving only four reservations centres in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Not only was the number of general reservations offices reduced from eight to four, but most other telephone reservations functions, including commercial and special accounts, which had been handled by some fifteen

offices were consolidated in the remaining four centres.⁸⁹ This major consolidation was made possible because of reduced telecommunications rates, and by new technologies already being used by other major carriers. Workers in Winnipeg also feared that calls would be telpaked to another location, but following a company review of its operations as well as efforts by the district union leadership to prove that the office was financially viable, it was decided that this centre would remain open indefinitely.⁹⁰

By introducing call centralizing technology, Air Canada aimed to enhance customer service as well as streamline its operations in an effort to reduce costs and improve productivity. The company maintained that through reservations offices consolidation, customers in smaller communities benefitted from the longer office hours in the larger centres. It also claimed that the overflow feature of the technology allowed calls to be answered more promptly, a feature that was particularly important during peak periods.⁹¹ By distributing the workload and reducing the time agents spent waiting for calls, the system brought about an intensification of work and an increase in productivity. Studies done by the company determined, for example, that on average, a 15 percent improvement in the promptness of service measure had been achieved through the networking of calls between Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.⁹²

Many agents disagreed with the company's contention that the quality of customer service was enhanced with this technology. They pointed out that centralization reduced personalized service because most agents in the central offices lacked the necessary knowledge to answer queries pertaining to the community where the call originated. For example, a customer contacting a local reservations office could receive directions to the airport, but could not be guaranteed the same service from a centralized office.

Centralization, especially call overflow, caused mix-ups and resulted in frustration for passengers and workers. Agents in Winnipeg reported that they had received calls from Saskatoon and Regina where customers hung up when they discovered they were speaking to someone from another city. In some instances, customers kept calling back until they reached an agent in their own city.⁹³

During slightly over a decade of Air Canada reducing and abandoning flight services to small and medium-size communities and centralizing reservations operations, many workers were faced with job loss. Because the number of passenger agents laid off was relatively small each time a new closure or downsizing occurred during the second half of the 1980s, the fact that overall, hundreds of passenger agents were affected in various ways by these decisions remained partially hidden. In the early 1990s, however, the massive layoffs that occurred at Air Canada as well as throughout the entire industry made the situation more visible.

The choices available to workers were limited, thus making decisions extremely difficult. Passenger agents with sufficient seniority were able to relocate within their home base when at least one location remained open. When that same base was further downsized or closed completely, workers could be compelled to move once again, but this time to another city. Other agents were forced to change status from full-time to part-time to retain a job at their base. For many passenger agents, downsizing or base closures meant uprooting themselves and their families from homes and communities where they had worked and lived for many years in order to start anew in another city, sometimes with only a few months notice. Agents with as much as fifteen years seniority were sometimes compelled to move across the country in order to remain in the employ

of Air Canada. Many of the workers declared surplus were offered jobs in Toronto or other large centres where the cost of housing was prohibitive, thereby making a transfer difficult if not virtually impossible. Redundant workers from smaller communities who had a network of family and friends were not always willing to move to large metropolitan areas when their children were young. Dislocation costs to workers and their families were high. Because not all workers wished or were able to relocate, some were obliged to go on laid-off status in the hope of being recalled, while others chose to retire. The union negotiated improved transfer and layoff rights which provided members with more options. Some workers decided to accept improved severance packages negotiated by the union and terminate their employment with the airline. Amongst those who chose to stay in their hometown despite losing their jobs with Air Canada, some took on similar but lower paying jobs with commuter air carriers which, in many cases, were subsidiaries of their former employer.

Consolidation also affected a number of part-time workers who had moved to Toronto in order to obtain full-time status in the hope of later returning to their original base. During an interview, an agent working in the Toronto reservations office explained her dilemma over this situation:

I have a transfer in to Halifax. That's one reason I refused my last transfer to the airport because, if I took that, I'd have to wait another six months to be eligible for Halifax. Right now I think I'm not too far on the list. The only problem with Halifax is that, because all the smaller stations are closing, they're sending other people to Halifax. Sydney closed, so that's ten people that went to Halifax, that took ten jobs that I would have had a chance at otherwise. But because they're closing off smaller stations, I don't know how good my chances are. It depends, I'll have to see in the fall. Usually the schedule changes in October and April when they do manpower, so if anything comes up in October. I really don't know when it will come up again. I definitely want to go back.

Many people come to Toronto to get full-time and want to go back full-time to another base. But Toronto, would actually have been a last resort. It so happens that I had a girlfriend here and things were good for moving at that time, so I thought, "oh what the heck, I'll go." But Toronto would've been my last choice.

With the centralization of reservations offices and massive layoffs occurring in the early 1990s, agents who moved to Toronto in order to eventually obtain a full-time position in their hometown found that transfer possibilities had virtually been eliminated.

Families where both partners worked for pay were faced with the potential loss of a major source of income if agents chose to relocate or terminate their employment. A November 1984 company document announcing plans for the closure of offices in Regina and Saskatoon revealed Air Canada's assumptions about women workers' attachment to the labour force. The report, obtained by the union and discussed in the House of Commons, listed all Saskatchewan employees by seniority and indicated their age, sex and marital status as well as whether each employee was likely to transfer, take laid-off status or terminate employment. Married women were targeted as those most likely to terminate or accept layoff and await recall. In addition, part-time workers who, according to the contract, would be the first group of workers to be laid off, were labelled secondary wage earners.⁹⁴ The majority of part-time workers were women. Clearly, Air Canada stood to benefit from the situation faced by married women when confronted with an employer's decision to transfer work to other communities. In such cases, married women with families may be less likely to exercise their relocation rights.

Although solutions made available were acceptable to some passenger agents, satisfying every individual circumstance proved impossible given the limited number of options. The end result of downsizing, centralization of reservations offices and base

closures was job loss and personal upheaval for many workers. During an interview, a passenger agent discussed difficulties related to closures and layoffs:

The general comment about Res West is, "I wish they'd tell us what they're doing so I can plan my life." They're [agents] all under the impression, and it's common because they've [management] done it in the past, that they're going to say, "okay, in a month we're closing, here's your options, decide what you're going to do." And so you've got a house to get rid of, kids to change schools, and a new house to buy. Is it worth the move, or should you think about looking for something else, but can you afford it because you've got to pay your mortgage? There's a lot of personal effects that it has. I don't think it's very fair. It doesn't give them a lot of confidence in the company that they're working for. That's why I kind of had to laugh when Léo Desrochers [then executive vice-president of marketing, sales and service, Air Canada] was going around talking about quality and quality, how it's got to start from the ground level, and how we have to treat our employees well so that they'll treat their customers well. I know of someone in Sydney who was buying a house, it was a \$90,000 house, which for Sydney is an expensive house, they don't sell many of them in a year, and she was making a pretty major decision. A high level of management came through and she asked, "are our jobs secure here, can I make these plans." And they said, "oh, yes, I would not worry about Sydney closing." And it was only something like ten days later that they announced the closing and she couldn't go back on anything. She had the option of working for Air Nova at half the salary.

The union criticized Air Canada's handling of office centralization, base closures and massive layoffs which it felt showed disrespect and a lack of consideration for workers and their families. Problems such as insufficient advance notice and the timing of announcements affecting workers were singled out.⁹⁵ Although joint discussions were held once decisions were taken to downsize or close offices, the union was critical of management for not providing it with adequate information and for not involving it in the decision-making process. Consultations with the union did, however, result in the consideration of alternative means of reducing staff overages such as leaves of absence, revised work schedules and improved severance packages. The adoption of these

solutions succeeded in averting some layoffs, thereby helping to avoid the trauma of job loss in a number of instances. In some cases layoff notices were issued before joint discussions were held, thus causing undue stress for workers who ended up not losing their jobs even if they had initially been advised that they were surplus to operations.⁹⁶ Despite the fact that joint meetings produced positive results, the union felt that its suggestions and ideas were often disregarded by the company.⁹⁷ In a letter to Air Canada headquarters management, a CAW-Canada official wrote:

It is not enough for the President of the company to ask for a meeting with the union a couple of times a year to address privatization and how great it is for corporate executives while at the same time hammering the workers at the different locations with layoffs and cutbacks and ignoring the union almost completely on these important issues.⁹⁸

The union also deplored the fact that decisions about closures were sometimes made, only to be changed with little warning and without prior discussion with union representatives. The company's Res West plans are a case in point. In February 1987, the union understood that, with the introduction of Res West, operations in the Edmonton and Vancouver offices would gradually be phased out and centralized in Calgary.⁹⁹ However, in March 1989, the union was notified that seventeen full-time employees in the Calgary reservations office were being declared redundant (this number was later reduced following joint discussions).¹⁰⁰ Soon after effecting layoffs, relocations and changes of status from full-time to part-time, Air Canada reversed its earlier decision and recalled affected agents and actually began processing transfers into the Calgary office.¹⁰¹ The frustration and havoc experienced by workers as a result of management's actions are well illustrated by the following excerpts from a letter written by some of the Calgary reservations office staff:

The agents in the Calgary Res Office have been under a great deal of stress and frustration for the past several months. We totally understand the reasons our company might have to "tighten their belts," but we do not understand the lack of consideration or the shoddy way this is being done. Agents (full and part time) have been bounced around from position to position, one day being trained for a new function, the next day being told they will no longer be working there, and there is a new "plan." Ultimately this creates a domino effect and changes many agents' lives down the line... For example: A full time reservations agent was called one day to be advised of lay off status, the next day it was rescinded... 14 full time agents advised in mid April they would be on lay off or change of status to part time. For 3 long weeks the numbers were changed daily. A scorecard was required to keep track. Can you appreciate how you feel having this indecision hanging over your head. Important decisions, such as mortgage payments, car payments, relocations and alternate employment were and still are a constant concern... Both the union and agents have suggested plausible alternative work schedules that have fallen upon deaf ears... A part time airport agent, about to start 2 weeks company vacation was told at the airport, just prior to boarding her flight, that she would be laid off. The following day that decision was reversed, however the agent was NOT ADVISED until her return to work 14 days later.¹⁰²

As mentioned earlier, the Calgary reservations office was eventually closed with calls telpaked to the Vancouver centre.

During the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s, the union coordinated major efforts to fight consolidations and office closures, with many passenger agents actively participating in the struggle. The union developed an instructional package called 'Save Our Service (S.O.S.) - The Campaign Against Closures Survival Kit', which provided district officers and members with information and suggestions on strategies to fight total or partial base closures.¹⁰³ Petitions were circulated, letter writing campaigns were launched and workers encouraged friends and families to voice their concerns. In bases slated for closure or downsizing, the union undertook media and community awareness activities. Officers and the membership alike tried to impress upon the business

establishment, politicians at all levels of government and the public that they should join passenger agents in their struggle because communities would suffer financially, not only due to job loss, but also as a result of the ongoing erosion in standards of transportation services. This argument was in sharp contrast to Air Canada's position that the takeover of routes by alliance carriers would improve service to these communities.

The activities conducted by the union and the membership were partly successful. In the summer of 1985, following a strong public campaign by the union, the company decided that the reservations offices in Saskatoon and Regina, which had been slated for closure by October 1985, would temporarily remain open. Nonetheless, basic reservations services were to be phased out over several years through attrition. In the interim, the company installed technology which allowed for the transfer of overflow calls from the two reservations offices in Saskatchewan to the Winnipeg office.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, in the short-term, there were no involuntary relocations or terminations, but vacancies were not filled. As mentioned above, when the doors of the general reservations offices were finally closed in Saskatoon and Regina in October 1989, the remaining workers were declared surplus. In the fall of 1986, parallel efforts by passenger agents in Sault Ste-Marie resulted in the company rescinding an earlier decision to close the city sales office when it suspended flight service to that community.¹⁰⁵ The office was eventually closed in April 1989.¹⁰⁶ Finally, in an unprecedented show of solidarity, hundreds of members from the western provinces were involved in a massive campaign to oppose Air Canada's Res West project. Their efforts, which began in early 1989, met with initial success. Indeed, in May 1989, the company abandoned its previous plans to centralize some specialized functions from Edmonton,

Vancouver and Winnipeg to Calgary.¹⁰⁷ In July, the company reversed its earlier decision to telpak general reservations calls from Vancouver and Edmonton to Calgary and elected to retain the three reservations offices.¹⁰⁸ However, as previously mentioned, Air Canada closed the Calgary and Edmonton offices and routed calls to the Vancouver reservations centre in the summer of 1991. These closures, which took place in the context of an economic recession and the concomitant decrease in demand for air travel, were part of an overall downsizing of Air Canada's operations that resulted in massive layoffs across the country. Further layoffs occurred in late 1992 as management continued its drive to make the airline more profitable and competitive. The company planned to further reduce its workforce in 1993.

The Work Experience of Passenger Agents in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, changes brought to the labour process of passenger agents working in reservations offices extended the process of removing control and knowledge from agents and integrating them into the computer. Over the years, the computer system had been greatly refined through subtle and continual modifications which resulted in workers spending a greater portion of their time on relatively uninteresting tasks. Even though some of the tedious and repetitive tasks were eliminated through automation, very little new and fulfilling work had been made available to the passenger agent group. Moreover, with the centralization of reservations functions, passenger agents assigned to telephone sales were now to be found in one of the four large reservations offices where a greater division of labour existed. In addition, with centralization, a number of dedicated specialized positions were lost. Finally, with

staff cutbacks in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the job of processing customers was intensified and became more stressful.

The following excerpts from interviews with passenger agents about their work in reservations offices are testimony to the demanding, albeit often boring nature of the job. Although a few interviewees claimed that they enjoyed their work in general, the vast majority expressed dissatisfaction with most aspects of the job. One agent put it very succinctly, "I think working the phones is a very depressing job. I would never ever go back, it's horrible." Another agent constantly referred to the boredom of the general reservations job:

I just couldn't sit there and do it over and over. You know, the monotony got to me. I found that I couldn't remember who I was talking to, they kind of blurred in my mind. So, when you find yourself wondering, "did they ask me to go to Vancouver or Montreal, I can't remember," and you're trying to sort of hope they'll mention it again because you don't want to ask, because then they're going to think you're a real idiot. That, I found sometimes hard. But, maybe again, it was because I was young and I had a lot of other things on my mind and I didn't maybe put in as much emphasis on the job as I should have, you know, according to Air Canada [laughs]. My concentration was not always fully on my job because it was a bit like a factory job, you know. "Good afternoon, Air Canada, may I help you." And [mimics customer] "what's the cheapest fare to Milan?" You do it so many times a day. I mean, I don't know what it's like at Bell Canada, but I would think, I don't know how it is right now, but I'm sure at one time it was the same kind of thing. It's because, even when you're talking, half the time you could be explaining the fare and listening to another conversation. It's like it wasn't even your own mouth talking, because you'd said it so many times, you were just like a recording. And, you know, I guess that's bad, but it's hard not to do that. Because there's got to be some way to stop yourself from going crazy with boredom.

An agent in Toronto who had previously worked in a smaller base spoke of the lack of challenge offered by the job in the larger reservations office and of the interest that the slightest change in routine could generate:

The first call was terrifying. You felt so guilty because you're on hold for so long because you couldn't find the information. I guess, it takes a month before you feel you're not so nervous when the calls come in, but it takes probably a good six months to feel you know all there is to know. Even so, you still have your support people you could go to if you can't get a rate, or if you don't know how to book for a stretcher. I've been here just over two years, and there's really no challenge left after two years, like absolutely no challenge. That's why I would like to get out of reservations, it just holds no interest for me any more. I know it really came to a head in January, maybe because of winter, you know, I'm dying to get home to Nova Scotia, but in January I was just so frustrated, I didn't know if I could take it another day. Just day to day, I was dreading the thought of going to work. Although it started before as well, even when I first started. I remember, there was a girl from the airport and me and because we were used to airport work, walking around, talking to people. Sitting down with a headset on, taking calls for eight hours a day, I never really enjoyed it, I knew I wouldn't. I never thought well, this is wonderful, I enjoy this. I think from day one, I did not like it, I never liked it, although I really got frustrated with it after probably just over a year. I thought gee, I'm just so sick of this. Because it's so monotonous, there's nothing to do to break the monotony. You know that the persons are calling for cheap fares for Florida in February, come January, February, you've gotten probably twenty calls a day looking for cheap flights to Florida. It's just the monotony of it all, it's just boring. There must be some people in there who enjoy it, people who like selling, the challenge of booking. To me, it just doesn't cut it, you know. I just find it monotonous. I know most of my friends, the people I have coffee with, they feel the same way and will do anything at all just to get off the phones, whether they're helping, sweeping or cleaning or anything, as long as they're not taking calls. Because you just get sick of knowing you have to offer to book, knowing you have to say this and this, knowing the person who calls will want the same thing the last ten people wanted. It's just not a challenge at all. Yesterday, I had to book to get a stretcher case arriving from Edmonton after a motorcycle accident, and I was so excited because it was something I hadn't done. I mean, the poor girl. But I was so interested in doing something I hadn't done in awhile. It's a different format and procedures and that was quite interesting, but you get a stretcher once every two or three years. Most of the time, it's just routine, there's just nothing else to stimulate you.

As one agent added, the breakdown in call types throughout the day was very predictable, and this added to the monotony of the job:

You don't memorize anything because you've repeated yourself so many

times over the years with exactly the same transaction, that you don't think, you just automatically do it. Now, if it doesn't come to you automatically, then you have to think. For anybody who's new, they have no idea what the process is of thinking and they usually call one of the help desks, you know, for help. But those are things that you're not using on a regular basis and the majority of your work is extremely repetitious. It's exactly the same thing and it depends on the time of day you're working. Your early, early morning calls are flight forecast information. Your calls throughout the day are basically booking and businesses. Your evening and weekend calls are people who are shopping or people wanting to know arrivals.

Despite the fact that passenger agents were on the front line and developed a knowledge and understanding of customers' needs and wants through constant interaction with the latter, many complained that they were not consulted by management during the design and development of products. They were nonetheless expected to sell the products, some of which agents felt were wanting.

As revealed in the following quote, opportunities for decision-making were also limited for general reservations agents because of the division of labour within offices. In addition, the interviewee argued that even the challenge of trying to convert as many calls into sales as possible had its limits in terms of job satisfaction, a statement echoed by most workers:

Everything is pretty straightforward, and I find particularly here because they don't want you to deal with complex problem. They say, "send that away to fares. If you're coming up with something that you can't really handle, get a specialist to handle that." And those are all specialized positions. So you don't have as much opportunity. Unless you find it challenging to get whatever percentage of your calls into sales. Some people, but I don't think that there's really very many, would really consider that like, okay, let's see if I can get this sale. And that's what the company wants, and I understand that, it's only right in a sense. But I don't think there's very many people who think that way, but there are some, and that would be their challenge. It's like every call is a challenge, I've heard that a few times. But I don't think that too many people view it that way. When I first came, I remember that it was kind

of exciting finding out all this stuff out for the people. It was sort of gratifying to do the call and having done everything right, because everything was still so fresh. But of course, that's a very short-lived type of thing. I can't really think of anything that I like about the job. Isn't that awful!

In smaller reservations offices, the situation was somewhat different. Indeed, because the division of labour was less pronounced, agents were expected to fulfill most functions. It should be noted, however, that workers in smaller locations were not called upon to systematically respond to many of the more complex requests that agents in specialized functions in larger locations had to deal with. Moreover, because of a greater amount of downtime, agents in smaller locations were not constantly taking calls and were therefore able to socialize more and carry out some of their domestic duties at work, as illustrated by the following account:

I was at a small station in Newfoundland before coming to Toronto. Newfoundland is a lot different because you just go to work and the atmosphere is so different. It's a lot more relaxed, you're behind the scenes, so they're answering the phone but they're able to do other things, which I'm not sure is completely okay. Some people knit, or make Christmas decorations or things like that, there's other things going on and they answer the phone. There isn't the pressure.

Given that reservations functions have been centralized into four main offices where work tends to be more hectic and regimented, most agents are now subjected to similar working conditions.

The following account by a passenger agent who had been working for the company since the mid-1960s clearly reveals that some were aware that the low level of skills which could be developed on the job generally hindered their marketability:

For the reservations staff, I think it's an extremely difficult job for that level of pay. It's white-collar work. I don't know whether that's considered highly skilled or not. I mean you're highly skilled in one very

narrow aspect. You're highly skilled in the airline business, but you don't know how to do anything else. So, I don't know. You can get a job with possibly the hotel industry and the travel agencies. Maybe if a corporation had a travel department, you could have a job there. But nothing else, because you don't have any secretarial skills, you don't do things like a legal secretary. But on the other hand, if a legal secretary loses her job, she could come to Air Canada and be trained to do the job. So it's that kind of thing. Most people with a modicum of intelligence could come to Air Canada, be trained by Air Canada and do the job. You sit at a desk, plug in and do the job. You don't need particular skills. To some extent, the computer system has made it easier because it's immediate, you don't have to go searching for books and tomes of some kind, it's right there. Now, of course, everything is in the computer.

Moreover, some agents spoke of the changing status of the job. An agent argued that since the 1980s, the job had become less attractive than when he was hired in the early 1960s. Consequently, he stated that he would readily discourage others from joining the passenger agent ranks:

My daughter wanted to go into tourism when she came out of high school. Her girlfriend also wanted to and as they were getting close to coming out of high school, I said, "no way, you're crazy." It's not what it was when I got in. When I got in, it was almost the cream of the crop. It was a good job and it was a prestigious and well looked upon job. But it isn't what it was. The self-confidence or the self-reward is not there any more. Working as a part-time employee for two, three, four, five years prostituting yourself because the only way to get in is to become a part-time and having to work another part-time or full-time job just to survive to get enough seniority to become a full-time employee and then to work in the sweatshop of the industry, which is the reservations office, for ten to fifteen years before you get enough seniority to get out of there and go to the airport.

Despite the fact that many agents were aware that the job had lost status over the years, some felt that they were white-collar professionals and that working for Air Canada conferred prestige upon them. Moreover, many believed that the opportunity for worldwide travel made possible by the free and reduced transportation benefits provided by the company enhanced their status vis-à-vis many of the carrier's customers as well

as other groups of non-airline workers.

The type of passengers also had an effect on the job experience of agents. The modification in fare structures beginning in the late 1970s made it possible for a greater number of people to fly more often. In 1983, Air Canada estimated that over 90 percent of all initial inquiries were for discount fares.¹⁰⁹ The fact that a large proportion of itineraries were similar and not very complicated made the job more boring. Conversely, the job of passenger agents was rendered increasingly demanding because workers were called upon to deal with a growing variety of customers and types of interactions. This shift in the client base meant that agents had to develop and make use of a wide array of social and communication skills. Customers became disgruntled and irate when they did not obtain the products and high quality service promised them through Air Canada's promotional campaigns. Senior agents felt that callers complained more frequently than in the past. For passenger agents, this made an already stressful work situation even worse. One agent was disparaging in her comments about the new type of traveller:

Because of the competition, we find that we're getting bus people booking on the airlines, 'cause the fares are so reasonable and realistic. I guess I shouldn't say that, but the people who used to travel on the buses and the trains, they don't travel on them any more, they're now flying, because the air fares are so cheap. They will not travel unless they get a cheap fare. You could tell them a fare that is ten dollars more and they'll say, "you find me the day that's ten dollars less or I'm not going any other way." So it's very time-consuming. What used to be a five minute call or an eight minute call is now twenty-five, thirty minutes.

Continuing in the same vein, another agent spoke of her frustration at having to often deal with difficult customers or those shopping for low fares. She noted how this situation had an impact on her job experience:

They [management] never took into consideration how repetitive the job

was, how, because of seat sales and everything, everybody wanted the cheapest, the cheapest. I mean, I got to the point where, if I heard that word one more time, I think I would have gone insane. You know, [mimics customer] "I want the cheapest fare, the cheapest, is that the cheapest, I want the cheapest, I want the cheapest." I mean, they didn't care about anything else, all they wanted to know was, "what's the price." And there were people who would come on the phone, and you would try to say to them, "look, we have a regular fare at this much, but if you book three weeks ahead, if you don't change it, book well in advance so you can get a seat, I can get it for you for this much. This is the lowest, lowest, lowest price we have." Then you know you'd sort of draw them in and get them interested, right. But a lot of people, they got really mad, "I told you, I want to know the cheapest fare," and that's all they wanted. And you say the price, they'd hang up, no thank you, nothing. So that becomes hard to deal with because you really start feeling that people are rude, and a lot of them are rude. You're just sitting there almost going into a trance repeating the information over and over. And of course that's going to affect the way you feel about the job and how you treat people. It's hard to stay fresh and treat every person as a new person. If I had someone really, really trying, I would kind of take a breath, talk to the person beside me for a second, get up and stretch and then go back because otherwise, I found I took it out on the next passenger. And it's not fair to the customer. I don't think the company really took it into consideration, it's like you're supposed to be superhuman. They don't take into consideration what it's like to just deal with the general public. Like, 99 percent of the time, it was, "what's the cheapest, what's the cheapest," and that's all you got. You didn't get the guys spending money, they all went to their travel agent who did everything for them, or they had a special corporate office that handled their ticketing, they didn't call us. We just got the cheap people. So I don't think they take that into consideration, how repetitive that makes the job.

Many agents talked about how difficult it was to provide friendly and courteous service to each customer, given the massive number of calls received:

It's a not as personalized, you learn to be a lot less personalized. It's like working in a busy K-Mart on a Saturday afternoon where you're just trying to barely meet the needs of everyone who's come along, "where's that?" "here." That sense of being so busy I think sort of erodes the sense of customer service thing. Because you know that the calls are waiting and that after this guy, there's going to be another one. You don't want to be pleasant so much. This is sort of the more psychological aspect of the job. It can wear you down. If you're down, it's hard to do the job.

You've got to sort of detach yourself from the customers and just deal with them like cattle, just by virtue of the sheer numbers.

A passenger agent reflected on the difficulties sometimes encountered in trying to figure out what customers wanted. Clearly, agents were often called upon to make use of social-psychology skills even though they did not receive training as counsellors:

At the beginning I found myself getting upset actually quite often. I can't even give you a good example because I have been away from it for awhile, it's almost like you deliberately erase it from your memory 'cause you don't want to remember it. But, you know, things like people phone and "hum, I want to visit my mother," and you think, "yeah, where's that, yeah, what about it." I felt like you had to be very sensitive, almost slightly psychic working on the telephone. You always had to anticipate what the people really meant, what they weren't asking that they didn't know. Like, I got to the point I think you could tell where the person was going from the way they said hello on the phone. So, I always tried to sound friendly and give them all the information I could. But then, you did get people who were cantankerous or argumentative, and then it became so hard, because I felt, I'm really trying to be nice and helpful and then you're swearing at me or you're getting so angry. Sometimes I just felt I just couldn't take it. I'd think, why am I making an effort and you're being so rude to me.

The stress that resulted from having to constantly deal with demanding passengers was, at times, extreme and affected agents not only on the job, but even after they left the office, as is evidenced by the following account:

At the beginning I found quite often I was in tears. First of all because I let it frustrate me that I found people so stupid, and secondly because I guess maybe my irritation showed and they would turn on me. And I also think that when you don't sound sure, when you get insecure when you first start a job, people can sense that and they really take advantage of it, and a lot of people turn on you because of that. It's almost like they sense your weakness and they take full advantage of it. They would be getting angry, or even just my own frustration with the job, and I'd end up in tears. I'd have to go to the washroom and cry. And I wasn't the only one, there were lots of people like that. Then, gradually with time, I became firmer on the phone. I just made up my mind to always anticipate what the person really wanted so that I didn't get into an argument. What sometimes happens on a phone call, is you start off with

great intentions but it just gets worse and worse and worse. It almost sometimes brings out the worst in you that you almost want to fight with everybody. And that's when you're either going to have a nervous breakdown or it's time to change jobs. When I found myself just getting too upset, I thought, well I'm going home upset at night, I'm a nervous wreck.

Clearly, agents felt degraded by the manner in which they were treated by some customers. During interviews, many talked about having to deal with insults and other forms of aggression, as the following quote illustrates:

It's stressful. Gosh, you can't help but, I know I can't help but take it personally when someone calls up and starts insulting you and screaming. I know I had one of those calls, the caller was very unpleasant, he said, "get me a supervisor." I said, "is there anything I can help you with." He said, "I don't want to talk to another moron, get me a supervisor." I was so insulted, I mean, I can't help but to take it personally. I didn't say anything that indicated I was a moron, I said my name. You get people like that who are totally unreasonable and there's nothing you can say that will make them listen to you. Definitely, I hate getting an irate caller, or somebody telling me that I'm stupid. There's no reason for it. Some people are so unreasonable. You get one bad call in your entire day, you get 30 lovely people, but if you get one nasty person, it just ruins your entire day. Definitely, that's a big part of the stress. As soon as someone becomes abusive we're told, "get a supervisor, you don't have to put up with any abuse." Although they've changed that. I was first told that if someone ever used profane words with me, just say, "I'm sorry, call back when you've calmed down, goodbye," and hang up. Now they say, even if someone's being profane, you have to say, "I'll get you a supervisor," and put them on hold and get a supervisor.

Given the state of the industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s, workers were forced to endure more abuse than had been the case earlier. Customers' complaints about their treatment at the hands of agents could result in discipline and, as such, represented a form of workplace control. Moreover, many agents expressed frustration with supervisors who demonstrated a lack of support by bending rules and acquiescing to customers' demands, thus leaving workers with no control and placing them in a most

embarrassing position:

You spend five minutes or ten minutes listening to a guy screaming at you and then explaining to the person why they can't have what they want. You go get the supervisor, he comes back and tells the person in five seconds, "yeah, you can have it." So this guy on the phone realizes, "hey, all I've got to do is get a supervisor, all I've got to do is scream loud enough and I'll get a supervisor who gives me what I want," tells his friends at lunch, who tell their friends. The supervisors, first, undo all of what you've done, and second, they build ideas in the heads of the clients that they can get what they want if they scream loud enough. They have the authority to bend the rules, whereas we don't. So, you'll go through five or ten minutes, and it's often more than that, of talking to somebody and checking and going through every option, offering them different alternatives, telling them why they can't do it that way. And they'll still keep screaming, because maybe someone told them that if you scream loud enough, you'll get to a supervisor. Fifteen or twenty minutes on the phone with someone screaming is a very stressful thing, it's extremely stressful. You get so worked up, you're just shaking, because you can't scream back, you've got to be calm and professional the whole time, you can't hang up on the person, you can't do anything to the person. I've been called a faggot, I've been called everything under the sun just because I don't give them what they want. Most of the abuse takes the form of a frequent flyer who admittedly spends a lot more time in airports and on planes than any res agent and who says "hey, I do this all the time." And you say, "I'm sorry, you can't do that because of this and this." "I do it all the time, and I'm doing it this time too, you don't know what you're doing, you better get some more training, buddy." And if you say anything, you're in line for discipline. So, it's very stressful. It can be very, very stressful.

Many interviewees were also critical of some supervisors' unwillingness to deal with the ever-increasing volume of complaints and irate customers. This forced agents to cope with situations they sometimes were not trained to handle or given authority or resources to resolve.

At airport locations where the job was more diversified and agents were not always tied to a computer (although the computer remained central to their work reality) employees nonetheless experienced difficult working conditions, especially in the context

of major staff reductions and increased workloads. Most of the passenger agents working at airport locations were in constant contact with the public and faced a variety of situations that were sometimes less than ideal. Given the nature of front-line service work, agents were called upon to make use of social and communication skills to deal with the many possible types of interaction.

While the pace of work was less harried at smaller airports, the job could be boring because of the amount of downtime and also due to the lack of ongoing crisis situations so common in larger stations which resulted in greater diversity and allowed for the development of problem-solving skills. Nonetheless, because agents rotated through the different work functions, they were able to develop a greater command of all aspects of the job. An agent who had worked in a small base in Atlantic Canada before moving to Toronto in order to get a full-time job compared her experience in both bases:

Here in Toronto, you're a designated ticket agent, if you bid in for ticketing, you're a ticketing agent all the time. Once you get into a job, you stay there, you have that function. Except they rotate people to meet flights or check-in. Over there in the small bases in the Atlantic, if you're full-time, you go through the process, which I think is good 'cause it keeps up all your skills. The only thing I had to get more used to was, here everything is so much more regimental and specific. Everything is more cut and dry here while things at home were more flexible.

Many of the jobs in the smaller stations were eliminated, however, when Air Canada pulled out of a number of small and mid-sized communities. While these jobs were disappearing, others were being created at larger airports, especially in Toronto (at least until the crisis of the early 1990s) where the company undertook ground handling contracts for other airlines.

The following excerpts from interviews with passenger agents illustrate the nature of work in larger airports in the late 1980s and early 1990s. An agent's comments clearly reflected the job-related stress experienced by most airport agents:

Everybody has up days and down days, and some days I don't want to be there, I don't want to handle this. But you have no choice. You go there and you just have to go for it, you just have to do the best you can. And if it's going to take you three more cigarette breaks than normal, take them because then at least you're doing the job properly. Definitely, it is very stressful because you have passengers yelling at you and all this. Of course it bothers you, you know. You don't want that to happen. And I'm not worried about Air Canada, it's just me. Wait a minute, I did not lose your bag, I personally had nothing to do with this.

While most agents talked about the stressful nature of the job, the international check-in and gate sections of the airport in Toronto seemed to present more than it's fair share of difficulties:

The absolute worst would be to work in the international section. I could never work there, never in a million years. I'd have to quit before I could stand it, seeing what's happening to people there, both to the agents and to the passengers. The facilities are just not there to handle them. It's the thrill of death, you have to be on drugs to go there. It's impossible sometimes. When a plane cancels in front of your eyes and you've got 300 people standing in front of one agent and they say, "what do we do." How do you talk to 300 people at once, and try and act like you're sane, and you can't get someone on the phone and they're all yelling at you. I don't know how agents could put up with that, but they do. A lot of them take a lot of flack, I don't know how they do but they do, with people being rude and yelling and blaming you for what's happening. It's a firing line sometimes, if you get bad weather and flights are cancelled. What can they do. But at the same time, that passenger agent has to take the flack. It's fierce at times. They'll throw things at passenger agents. I would not work out there. It's too stressful for one agent and that's what happens, there's usually one left because the others have been called to another gate, someone has a wheelchair to go, an emergency. No, I couldn't handle it.

Even though some of the specialized functions could be more interesting, the work could nonetheless be very frustrating and stressful as revealed by the following comments:

I stayed on the ticket counter for eight years, which is another hell hole. It became the complaints department frankly. It's dreadful, absolutely dreadful, dealing with money all the time. You always have people waiting in line, and by the time they get to you, they're cranky. If you said "good morning," they'll snap. It's a dreadful, dreadful place. And no matter what goes wrong at the airport they say, "send them to the ticket counter and they'll straighten it out." So I stayed there till it was so bad that I bid for the Maple Leaf lounge. But the ticket counter is a dreadful place to work. All you did is take abuse from morning till night, and when you would be slightly not busy, the supervisor would come running, "can you help us with a check-in," but no one ever came to help us.

Many agents felt that the check-in counter held very little challenge:

The check-in counter is pretty soul destroying if you're there for very long. It's fine for a day, but you wouldn't want a dose of that. Of all the people, they'll all get it for one day, so it's pretty fair, I think it's fair. Some people just like the check-in counter and they don't want to go to gates, and if it's a bad storm, who wants to go to gates, everyone wants check-in. But a lot of agents prefer gates.

The gate function was more interesting and diversified and provided agents with the possibility of exercising more control over their work, but the stress level could be quite high, a situation many felt would largely be resolved by increasing staff:

The person who's working the flight is the person who has to set up the information. Basically, you're juggling everything, you're going to the gate, you're making sure that the aircraft is at the gate. If it's not, then you're going to phone somebody and ask them, "where's the aircraft, is it coming in late from somewhere, what's going on." You want to make sure there's a crew on board the aircraft by the time they're supposed to be there, and if not, where are they and are they expected to come soon. You have to give them a customs declaration form for that aircraft, you look at the load, how many are booked, you know then if the flight's oversold, how many employees who have registered to come out for that flight. When there are meals, you have to know that you've got the correct number of meals. Sometimes things change drastically. Let's say you have an open flight, commissary may look at the flight and decide to put a certain number of meals and depending on situations there may be missing meals. You also look at how many passengers requested special meals. And then you start boarding, and you have to handle standbys, you have to handle latecomers who maybe by now you've given their seat

away. There's a lot of things you're juggling around. And on an oversold flight, it can get crazy, just insane. People who pay full fare, executive class, they get to reserve their seat ahead of time. They haven't shown up, and there are no seats left, people are checking in, there's no seat for them. So they come to the gate to get a seat and you have to tell them to wait and then they start getting panicky, "you mean I might not get on this flight, what do you mean. I bought my ticket six months ago." And then you have to go through the whole thing of explaining to them that that doesn't mean they'll get on, that it's industry practice to oversell the flights. And so, they go bonkers when you tell them that. They don't understand. You go through a lot of stress with that and you're responsible. You know you've got time periods to do all of your different things, to try to keep everything under control. And it could be really difficult sometimes. But a lot find it more challenging, there's more variety, they enjoy it more. And you're moving around more, you're not just sitting at a desk. So, most people have more of a sense of freedom and a sense that they're really accomplishing something. Some review every flight they do and talk about every detail. It's a big thing to them, to a point where I feel, like who cares.

Another agent talked about how passengers at the boarding point could be stressed as well as annoying, thus adding to the commotion and creating more difficulties. Agents needed to be skilled at handling passengers in trying circumstances, as illustrated by the following quote:

All the time that you're trying to get your flight out, you've got somebody over here who's totally confused, doesn't know where he's going and won't leave you alone. He's trying to get on the flight and he's persistent in trying to get on. And you'll be doing something on the computer and there's no way that if you don't do it right now, that plane's not going to leave or it's going to land in the other city before you get your message sent and you're trying to do this and this person is there and he's asking a dumb question. Sometimes, you know he's in the right place, you've told him before, "look, yes, the flight's leaving from here, please have a seat." But he sat down for two seconds, looked at you and he's thought of another question and he's coming up and he's going to ask that, and it does not matter what you're doing, there's no consideration for you. And, at times, flights have been delayed, they're always late those little planes, and these passengers will be at the bar, and they're a little bit drunk, and you get four or five of them back there surrounding the counter, and you're trying to explain to them that their flight is not coming in, or it's been cancelled, and they don't want to understand what

you've got to say. And at the same time they're going to Quebec and you're boarding a flight to Ottawa and you're trying to get your passengers checked in and passed them so that you can get them out, and they just block the way. So, it makes the job very, very difficult.

if flights were delayed or major discrepancies were uncovered, agents were called upon to justify their decisions and actions. One agent expressed her frustration with this situation:

Well, working flights, sometimes it's very annoying to be called by someone saying, "why were you three minutes late pushing that light." Well instead of sitting out there in your ivory tower, come down here and talk, and be part of it. They have to be up there in their ivory tower, but don't start criticizing the ones that are down there with the mobs, when you don't really know, all you're looking at is lights. That light [indicating plane is departed] didn't go out for six minutes, why? 'Cause five minutes they let you get away with but at six, then they start screaming. As I say, it's the only place that I can say that I get annoyed.

In the late 1980s, supervisors at some of the larger airports began monitoring gate agents more closely and questioned workers even in cases of minor flight delays. They also began intervening in, and actually taking over agents' work during the last few critical moments prior to flight takeoff. Agents in charge of gates, who relied on their experience and judgement to facilitate on-time flight departures, were effectively stripped of important responsibilities and control over the job.

Another problem regularly raised by agents during interviews focused on the difficulty in providing service to customers. Like front-line workers elsewhere, agents are expected to deliver quality service in a prompt and efficient manner. However, given inadequate staff levels and training as well as their lack of decision-making power, agents were not always able to offer more than the minimum to travellers who had been promised flawless and rapid service. An agent who had been working for many years

at Air Canada talked about the change in the level of service offered:

Before, if you went to meet an international flight, you got the baskets and you went around a long way to push these baskets to help. You reserved them for the women with children and the ones with the heavy bags and when the messages came in, they always included women who need assistance. You took care of the elderly and helped anyone who could not get through, and you would go down, maybe at times we would be six or seven, to meet a flight, and they weren't all wheelchairs. We were meeting those flights to assist people who really required assistance. Today they don't do that, today you'll go down to meet a flight coming in. Well, women with children are not considered any longer people who need assistance, so, therefore, they're expected to fend for themselves because we haven't got the staff to help anyone like that. We will if we can, but we're not assigned to do it. We don't help anybody who looks like they're having a hard time, 'cause you don't have time, you don't have the staff, it's all been cut. Today, you push wheelchairs mostly and if someone doesn't require a wheelchair, you might assist them or walk with them, but only if they ask for it.

A member of management who had been with the company for several years also felt that service to customers had deteriorated:

C'a changé, sûrement pas pour le mieux. Puis, je pense que la compagnie est grandement responsable, parce que moi, je m'souviens très bien avant, quand on n'avait pas les ordinateurs, je pense qu'il y avait une grande qualité de service et on nous l'appelait constamment, service aux passagers, service aux passagers. C'était une gloire, un honneur. Ça existe encore, mais pas autant qu'avant, je n'pense pas. Je ne suis pas sur le plancher tout le temps, mais pourtant j'en vois tous les jours des choses extraordinaires que les gens font encore. Mais c'est peut-être pas autant qu'avant où le service était primordial, puis on l'disait à nos gens, le service avant tout, si vous donnez du service, vous ne pouvez pas vous tromper, vous avez l'attitude. Après ça, il y a eu les ordinateurs et je me souviens très bien, on nous a dit, quand les ordinateurs sont arrivés, que le service aux passagers, c'est pas comme avant. Là, c'est les gros porteurs qui s'en viennent, puis on n'aura pas le temps de donner le service qu'on donnait avant. Maintenant, c'est l'ordinateur, maintenant c'est la production, ça on nous l'a bel et bien dit. Maintenant c'est la production, c'est un peu le système d'autobus, faut se dépêcher, puis Rapidair puis tout ça. Alors on a dit ça à nos agents, puis on a probablement atténué, peut-être involontairement, mais on a sûrement refroidi l'ardeur. Puis là, on essaie de la reprendre. Va falloir réussir, parce que sans ça, je pense qu'on ne passera pas à travers comme

compagnie aérienne parce que, ça c'est un cliché, mais le client, éventuellement c'est lui qui va décider.

As he remarked, however, many agents went beyond the call of duty to provide customers with quality service, despite the fact that conditions were not always conducive to doing so.

In the summer of 1989, in an effort to survive in the highly competitive air transportation environment, Air Canada introduced a programme dubbed 'customer care' which focused heavily on quality of service to customers.¹¹⁰ Customer care was presented as part of a massive cultural change that would ensure that Air Canada be recognized not only as a safe and efficient carrier, but also as one capable of providing superior customer service. The company spoke of the need to focus heavily on the soft side or human dimension of service delivery and, in this context, introduced a customer's 'Bill of Rights'.¹¹¹ Under this initiative, employees were to be given the power to act, which meant more freedom to take action to ensure customer satisfaction when problems arose, even though this resulted in the bending of rules. Workers who offered exceptional service were to be rewarded.¹¹²

Many of the agents interviewed felt that they were not really given any increased powers to deal with situations as they saw fit and that the new programme did not change in any way the overall provision of service. There was also much criticism about the awards programmes. A passenger agent highlighted some of the problems with the customer care initiative:

The company advocates customer care. I don't think they've got a clue what customer care is. They hired a company to come in and give customer care sessions and they spent millions and millions of dollars on that. They brought in employees from all over this region and put on a

song and dance about Air Canada. Then they were giving examples of good employees and what they were doing about the customer care. Well, throughout all of this, they had employees who were violating the union contracts. For example, they'd have a flight crew that was off escorting a passenger around the airport, which is our job, not his, and vice versa, they'd have somebody on the ramp doing something that they shouldn't be doing. All they did through this stuff was make a lot of employees very irate instead of having them come out and say, "yes, that's customer care to be proud of." And a lot of employees who've been giving customer care for the last twenty or thirty years, breaking their backs, felt that the praise that these people were getting, although it might have been deserved, they didn't get praised for everything they did. And if you were doing your job and if everybody was doing their job, you shouldn't have to come out with extra praise for certain people because every time you praise this one for doing his job, there's somebody else who's done three times as much over there but you haven't seen it.

The union as well as workers were critical of the customer care initiative and argued that staff levels and the lack of training were at the root of the poor quality of service.¹¹³ The company's position was that an improved level of customer service did not automatically result from an increase in staff, and that cost efficiency was not in conflict with the provision of warm and friendly service to customers.¹¹⁴ However, it did eventually recognize that more emphasis needed to be placed on training and skills development if service delivery was to be enhanced.¹¹⁵

The customer care programme also gave rise to other problems for passenger agents. Many felt that customers took advantage of the promise of enhanced service and the 'Bill of Rights', and were consequently more demanding of agents. The latter were concerned about disciplinary action based on customer complaints, as noted by the following:

They seem in fact to be saying that no matter how unreasonable a customer may be, the agents' job is to make them happy and if they don't they will be disciplined.¹¹⁶

Interviews with passenger agents clearly reveal that customers' treatment of workers influenced service delivery. Many agents described how dealing with irate passengers could change their way of interacting with people and their desire to provide service, as illustrated by the following quote:

There are things that passengers say to you today that you wouldn't have heard before. They're more demanding. They don't take into consideration that you could be doing anything else except just dropping everything and handling them. And if you conceded to their demands, you wouldn't get anything done, all flights would be delayed because you can't give them the service that they need. And also, the travelling public, because fares are reduced and so low, everybody is travelling. So very often, those people travelling who've never flown before haven't got a clue what you're doing or what they're doing, and they're very rude about everything. It's difficult. You'll say things to passengers today you'd never say before. You never would have treated anybody like that in the past, but then you would not have been treated like that either.

An agent who had been working for Air Canada for close to thirty years explained that the changing type of passenger as well as the inability to offer a level of service similar to that of the past had negatively affected his attitude towards the job:

The job function has become, how can I put it, more stressful. That's what I find today. I used to think it was fun going into work. I don't find that any more because of the increased workload, increased passenger loads. Cheaper fares have created a lot of problems for us because of the type of passenger we get today as opposed to what we got fifteen, twenty years ago. People in those days tended to, it was almost like going on a luxury liner, you know, across the Atlantic, where one deemed it necessary to wear the appropriate dress to go on the aircraft, and people were much more polite in those days. Today I find that because of these cheap fares, there tends to be sort of a downgrading of pride in people who'll put anything on to come to an airport. People's attitudes have changed as far as I'm concerned. Passengers seem to be much more demanding, much more aggressive. They seem to be aware that if you shout and scream loud enough you'll get what you want. It's a well known fact at the airport, when you talk to the agents, that the people have changed. Passengers could become very abusive if they don't get what want. The company has always put a lot of stress on customer service. We keep telling management that we can't give customer service

today. Those days are gone where you could sit at the check-in counter and have a little chit chat with a passenger. Because of the volume of passengers, it's just impossible to give that sort of semi-first-class treatment to the passengers, because you just can't do it, you don't have time, everything is so fast and so furious. I mean, you could stand there with a grin on your face all day, but you'd look like an idiot because it's not sincere. But they keep saying customer service, and I keep saying, where is your customer service? We're not giving customer service at the airport any more.

Passenger agents working at airport locations also talked about how business travellers had become very demanding and, as the following excerpts demonstrate, were not necessarily more pleasant to deal with than some of the so-called 'bus people' that many complained about:

I have noticed a change since the airlines have started recognizing the business travellers, in other words giving them all the perks. For instance, when Connaisseur service came out, it was free alcohol on the airplanes. The flight attendants nicknamed them pigs in space, because they would say, "oh, it's free, so I've got to have six or seven." But, by and large, or in a lot of cases I found that that kind of service for awhile made the business traveller very, very arrogant and much less pleasant to deal with. They'd come up to you and say, "well, I'm business class." Okay, all that means is that, to go to Vancouver, you'd pay twenty-five dollars more than a full-fare economy. Big deal! But the company made that a big distinction, and it was a marketing ploy, and it seems to have worked. But that, for instance, has sort of changed the attitude of a lot of the business class people. I'm not saying that they weren't due the service all along. But some people end up crying, they don't like being spoken down to. Sometimes it's so hard.

Today they're very orientated to corporate executives. Now, you have these boarding announcements. Usually, we'll board by rows, starting from the back of the aircraft to speed up the boarding. Well now, they've said that, regardless of that, you're supposed to make an additional announcement saying that those with executive class can board at any time. So, what I've seen happen was that you're doing your pre-boarding announcement, you're trying to put women with children and people with wheelchairs and the old people walking with canes, you put them on first. And when we made that boarding one day, three big executives got up and blocked the door, and they weren't going to let anybody by until they got on first. You begin to wonder. I questioned that and I was told that

for pre-boarding they should wait, but since they've been pampered and spoiled like that all the way through, these big men were not going to let anybody even fragile, or no matter how much assistance they need, past them. They were going first.

Face to face contact with customers created potentially explosive situations that rendered airport agents' working conditions less attractive and stressful. Indeed, agents talked about the growing number of times they had to deal with abusive passengers:

There's a lot more violence that's happening at the airport. There's one girl, a passenger jumped up and punched her in the eye, broke her glasses and gave her three stitches. There's another situation where a supervisor got hit over his back with a hockey stick and it damaged his back. The attitude of the company is, they don't want to sue and they don't want to cause waves. What they figure in all these instances is if they just let it go, then sooner or later the anger will wear away and the agent won't do anything and neither will the company. And the whole thing will die down because they don't want bad publicity.

Like many public-contact workers, passenger agents were clearly exposed to potentially risky situations at work.

With the increase in international terrorism, airport agents also faced other types of dangerous situations. In this context, airport security became a major work-related issue. Federal regulations adopted in the late 1980s established security measures requiring carriers to reconcile all passengers boarding an aircraft with checked baggage on all international and transborder flights. This was to ensure that no baggage would be boarded on outbound flights without the accompanying passenger. Airline agents pointed out that because these regulations did not apply to domestic flights, unsafe baggage could easily end up on board the aircraft. They were also critical of the fact that waivers, which allowed airline management to make judgement calls in particular situations, resulted in too many international and transborder flights departing with

baggage not matched to passengers. The union argued that carriers traded off security measures for the sake of on-time departures, a practice justified on the basis of increased market competition.¹¹⁷ In addition, because the penalty for non-compliance with the security measures was minimal, airline companies could easily write off fines as part of the cost of doing business.

The federal Airport Restricted Area Access Clearance Program was another major component of airport security measures. Under this programme, in order to enter various areas of airport terminals, agents required a security pass which they obtained only after being subjected to fingerprinting and an in-depth personal security screening by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. The union opposed the security programme, arguing that the measures violated members' fundamental rights to privacy. It also felt that these measures, which made scapegoats of members, would not resolve the lack of airport security.¹¹⁸

On Being a Woman Passenger Agent

Although women and men passenger agents' experience of the job was similar in many ways, women faced situations that men generally did not encounter as part of their paid work life. For example, most agents interviewed, both women and men, felt that women workers suffered a larger share of the abuse dished out by customers. A male agent clearly recognized that a problem existed for his female co-workers:

I think the ladies who work out here tend to get the much shorter end of the stick. Because of my size, men especially would tend not to give me as much lip as they would a young lady. They think they can take advantage of them. I think that's very chauvinistic. It's not always the men who do that, I've seen female passengers dump all over the ladies as

well.

An agent working in one of Air Canada's Maple Leaf lounges was well aware of differences in treatment based on sex, as illustrated by her description of her experience in dealing with businessmen:

Les passagers, surtout ici, c'est un milieu pour ça où nous avons surtout des hommes. Ce sont des hommes d'affaires, et ce sont tous des hommes qui occupent des postes importants, c'est-à-dire qu'ils sont chairman of the board, ou qu'ils sont présidents de compagnies, ou vice-présidents de compagnies, ou directeurs. Ils vont d'un extrême à l'autre. Ils sont d'une politesse, d'une courtoisie, d'une amabilité, c'est absolument remarquable. Ils intimident, parce que moi, j'suis une femme assise ici, et puis s'ils n'arrivent pas à avoir ce qu'ils veulent avoir, ils intimident carrément ou ils mentent. C'est incroyable de voir leur réaction. C'est-à-dire qu'ils vous attaquent, puis ils vous disent, "si vous n'avez rien à dire, moi j'ai décidé que ça va être comme ça, vous allez faire ce que je vous dis." Ils intimident, ce qu'ils ne font pas avec les hommes, alors ça j'ai remarqué. Je maintiens mes positions, je reste très ferme, je reste très calme aussi, parce qu'il faut le faire, et j leur fais entendre, que non c'est pas comme ça, c'est comme ça et puis qu'eux dirigent leurs compagnies et moi j'suis la représentante d'Air Canada et j'suis là pour diriger ma compagnie. Ils écoutent, parce que je ne suis pas une jeune femme. alors c'est qui fait qu'ayant l'expérience, ayant la connaissance et la maturité, à ce moment-là c'est pas la même chose. Mais j'suis convaincue que si j'étais plus jeune, ils iraient à fond d'train, là je serais complètement écrasée.

One agent expressed her views on how certain categories of passengers acted differently towards female and male agents. Her reflections clearly highlight assumptions about women as both incapable workers but caring individuals:

A male passenger comes up to you and treats you like you're incompetent because you're female and you shouldn't be there. It doesn't matter where you are, he finds you incompetent. Somebody like that, it doesn't matter where they find you, you know, they'll find you exactly where they want you to be and find you incompetent because that's just the type they are. Then again, passengers, and even a lot of women travelling, older women and women travelling with children, they come in and they see males and females lined up checking in, they would tend more to go toward a female who may have some compassion and understanding for the children, and make them feel a little less intimidated.

In early 1993, when Air Canada indicated that it intended to introduce mandatory name brevets for all uniformed passenger agents, the union opposed the move because it feared that this practice would needlessly expose its numerous women members to harassment from the travelling public.¹¹⁹ The company later dropped its plans.¹²⁰

Based on interviews with passenger agents, it is clear that women more than men workers faced the forms of abuse described above. Moreover, some women agents in reservations offices talked about having been propositioned by callers. Women workers at public-contact counters also spoke of incidences of sexual harassment as illustrated by the following quote:

I ran across incidents myself, on a personal basis, but with customers at the airport. Working in the Maple Leaf lounge, I did have some situations where I had to contact a supervisor or contact a special squad. You're the only female and you're in a room that's locked and you may be alone with passengers. It could be rather intimidating.

There is also evidence that women passenger agents were sometimes sexually harassed by both male co-workers and members of management. Union documents dating back to the early 1960s refer to cases where supervisors allegedly sexually harassed women agents. On one occasion, a district chairperson reported that a passenger agent resigned because of such treatment. In response to the chairperson's complaint on behalf of the worker, the president of the union indicated:

After very careful consideration and thought, bearing in mind the nature of the situation and its delicacy relating to the slanderous nature of the comments of Mr. [name of supervisor], I have decided to ask for legal advice on the problem... I also understand that there is some evidence that this person has encroached upon the female staff in the Reservations office whilst they have been on duty and made comments directed to these particular persons.¹²¹

Instances were raised where supervisors allegedly tried to coerce women workers into

providing sexual favours, with the threat of dismissal should they refuse.¹²² During a CALEA women's conference held in 1985, a workshop on sexual harassment pointed to cases of men supervisors and passenger agents sexually harassing female workers.¹²³ A report on the conference noted that "it became obvious that sexual harassment has existed for years but had been a silent issue."¹²⁴ Interviews with passenger agents also point to incidences of sexual harassment of women workers by male members of management:

Sometimes you never know when you're sitting in one of those stupid coaching and counselling sessions and you're sitting in your chair and he's right here and, like this always bugs me but, you know, sometimes they put their hand on your knee and they say, like, well whatever. And I don't know if that's just their friendly way of doing or whatever. But I always feel like, get away from me, you don't need to touch my knee to put your point across. I usually just kind of move over a little bit or whatever, without making a big deal about it, because it's not exactly comfortable.

Ce qui me scandalisait, c'était quand il y avait des gens qui étaient malades, il fallait qu'ils [management] les remplacent. Il y avait un superviseur en particulier qui s'plaçait sur le coin, puis avec ses chums ils disaient, c'était typiquement macho, "lui as-tu vu les boules à elle, on va la faire venir s'asseoir ici pour remplacer." Et ils asseoyaient les filles cute autour d'eux. Puis c'était vraiment comme ça, puis c'est comme ça qu'on a installé le système d'ancienneté. Dernièrement, il a fallu que je fasse un pitch parce qu'il y avait du harcèlement sexuel. Souvent les responsables arrivent et font un massage dans le cou des filles. J leur ai dit, "c'est pas un salon de massage ici." Ou ils leur jouaient dans les cheveux, c'est pas un salon de coiffure ici." J leur ai dit, "les filles, elles ne veulent pas se faire regarder juste les seins, puis c'est ici quand on leur parle [points to the face]." J'ai eu des plaintes à un moment donné d'harcèlement sexuel, le responsable venait ici et faisait des blagues sexistes. J lui parlais, il retournait, oubliait ça, deux semaines après il disait, "voyons donc, les filles aiment ça les massages, voyons donc." A un moment donné j me suis écoeuré, j suis allé le voir le responsable, puis j lui ai dit, "là ça va faire, attends-tu que j règle ça à coups de poings sur la gueule, c'est quoi qu tu veux." C'est quelque chose qu il faut toujours refaire, c'est des stéréotypes puis c'est d la rééducation. Mais moi, j suis là pour faire leur éducation, j suis pas là pour endurer ça. Et puis s'il y

en a dans le bureau qui accepte ça, moi, je ne l'accepte pas, je ne tolère pas ça, y'en est pas question. Parce qu'il y a des gens qui vont faire comme s'ils acceptaient ça, finalement c'est parce qu'ils ont peur.

Interviews with passenger agents reveal that women workers were subjected to debasing sexual comments from male co-workers. The following quote shows, however, that they did fight back:

Sexual harassment occurs, it probably occurs just about anywhere. It depends on whether the people involved are, or particularly the woman involved is going to laugh it off, or consider it more serious and she doesn't want this to continue any more. But I know of a guy I worked with who was really bad, I mean the comments that he threw around, it was just ridiculous. I mean, it really made me mad, but I didn't make any formal charge to him, I just ignored him and my reaction was to abuse him, till he got to the point where he wouldn't say anything to me any more. But I just sort of dealt with it in my own way. There was a woman who charged him, but because of the type of management there, I don't think they really took it too seriously. They got it solved and I think he's smartening up to a certain degree. But there are always those guys out there, you know, harassment in terms of the things that they say to you, they think it's funny and think it's easy to get away with. I think it exists everywhere though. He'd say things like, "what are you wearing under that dress, let me feel the material of your dress," or if somebody bent over and had a low-cut blouse, he'd have a comment to make, something about, "if your boyfriend's out of town, do you want to get together," I mean, that's not really harassment, but those would be the kinds of comments that he would make.

Clearly, while the enactment of federal legislation in 1984 to protect workers against sexual harassment¹²⁵ recognized the existence of the problem, it did not provide ultimate protection. Moreover, women workers were not always willing to take the formal route of redress when they felt they had been sexually harassed. They sometimes were not sure if their experience was really sexual harassment. Women did, however, find informal ways of fighting unwanted sexual advancements. Beginning in the late 1980s, the union undertook initiatives to raise membership awareness of the problem of

sexual harassment.¹²⁶ In 1992, a member of the union bargaining committee was designated to liaise with management to expedite the resolution of sexual harassment complaints on behalf of passenger agents working for Air Canada.¹²⁷

Like their counterparts in other workplaces, women passenger agents were not only victims of sexual harassment, but also faced limited promotion opportunities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, women had begun making modest advancements within the company in the late 1960s. Following the publication of the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970, Air Canada examined the issue of equal opportunity for its women employees and found that while they constituted 30 percent of the company's workforce, women held only 4 percent of management positions.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the majority of Air Canada's female labour force worked as flight attendants, passenger agents, secretaries and clerks, with an infinitesimal number of women holding traditional male jobs such as pilots and mechanics.

In response to the Commission's report and because of its own findings, the company developed policies, objectives and programmes to ensure equal employment opportunities for women.¹²⁹ It was remarked that "career minded women in Company ranks will welcome recently reformed personnel policies."¹³⁰ Moreover, following the recommendations of the Commission and as a result of complaints from its women workers,¹³¹ the company abolished discriminatory health benefit policies whereby husbands and children of women employees were denied coverage unless they were dependent while wives and children of men employees were eligible for coverage without restriction.¹³²

By 1975, following the implementation of equal opportunity programmes,

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improvements were recorded, with women representing approximately 8 percent of management ranks.¹³³ In the passenger agent group where women accounted for approximately 65 percent of the workforce, 89 percent of the first line supervisors were men and 11 percent were women. By 1978, these proportions had changed to 73 percent and 27 percent respectively, and the percentage of women passenger agents had increased slightly.¹³⁴ At the beginning of 1980, the proportion of women in the employment of Air Canada remained at approximately 30 percent, but only 10 percent of management positions were filled by women.¹³⁵

The findings of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment indicate that in 1983, the proportion of women in the management group had not significantly changed. In addition, women had made few inroads into airline jobs traditionally held by men.¹³⁶ Following the introduction of the 1986 federal Employment Equity Act, which implemented many recommendations of the 1984 report of the Royal Commission, Air Canada initiated an employment equity programme aimed at improving the representation of the target groups designated by the Act, namely women, aboriginal peoples, members of visible minority groups and persons with disabilities.¹³⁷

It should be noted that in 1988, aboriginal peoples accounted for only 0.3 percent of the passenger agent group, members of visible minority groups accounted for 3.9 percent and persons with disabilities accounted for 1.2 percent.¹³⁸ By comparison, in 1986, the representation of aboriginal peoples, members of visible minority groups and persons with disabilities in the Canadian labour force was 2.1 percent, 6.3 percent and 5.4 percent respectively.¹³⁹ For the passenger agent group, the proportion of aboriginal people actually decreased to 0.23 percent in 1991, while the proportion of members of

visible minority groups increased to 5.1 percent and the proportion of persons with disabilities increased to 1.7.¹⁴⁰

Though the company recognized that women remained underrepresented in the management group, its president and chief executive officer remarked that, "we believe that there is no intentional discrimination in Air Canada and we constantly strive to avoid it."¹⁴¹ In 1987, the first year for which Air Canada reported to the federal government on the results of its programme to improve the numerical representation of disadvantaged groups in the company as required by the Act, women represented 33 percent of the total company workforce (compared to 44 percent of the Canadian labour force) and 11 percent of the management category.¹⁴² In 1989, Air Canada reported that slightly over 16 percent of management positions were held by women,¹⁴³ whereas in 1991, this number reached 19 percent.¹⁴⁴ While there obviously occurred a significant increase over a short period of time, it is not clear if these numbers actually reflect real gains.

The company had access to a large pool of women in the passenger agent group that it could potentially promote to management positions. Indeed, the proportion of passenger agents who were women grew from approximately 60 percent in the early 1970s to approximately 70 percent in the early 1980s. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the proportion sometimes reached 75 percent (see Table 3). Several of the passenger agents interviewed spoke of the lack of promotion possibilities for women in their category and for women in other employee groups, and felt that the company was not making effective use of its many women workers as evidenced by the following quotes:

In Winnipeg, in order to be a supervisor you usually have to be a man.

But I don't see that in Toronto. In Winnipeg, it was incredible how blatant it was, and especially considering they were dealing with a situation where 85 percent of all the staff were women, 15 percent were men, and they can't find anyone capable in that 85 percent to take over. Now, since I started in Winnipeg, there was a complete turnover in supervisors and they now have four supervisors, they're all men. And the reservations manager is a man. And I know that that's the situation that exists there. I don't think Air Canada's well known for promoting women. If you consider overall, I'd like to see statistics on what percentage of their managers are men and which are women, especially when you consider that with us, the overall percentage across the country is 70 percent. And I don't know what the percentage is with flight attendants, but I would guess that it's higher. And we're not the only group that they pull from to get their management, but it does make me somewhat suspicious. I guess they're just starting maybe to get out of the old boys network. But, I would say I don't notice it so much in Toronto, there's a lot of women supervisors in Toronto, and a lot of acting [supervisors] of both sexes. Somebody's who's been around longer may have noticed differently.

I think that they're tending to lean towards the men for acting. It's just my opinion, because it just seems to me that, for the percentage of men we have in our office, they seem to be doing a lot more acting assignments than we do. It seems there are always men acting. I know one guy, for example, he started a couple of months before I did, although he started at Toronto airport, we had our training at the same time, and he is now a sales manager in cargo. So, he's gone very far quickly just because, I think, he's the white male, who wore a tie to work and has a little briefcase.

Even though there were many women supervisors, an agent talked about how customers made sex-based assumptions about who the supervisors were:

I think men get a lot less hassle. Well, sometimes they get less hassle because, first of all, it's kind of a funny thing that they [customers] always assume men are supervisors. If there's something that you have to check with the supervisor, some guy comes walking by in a uniform and they'll say, "oh, is that your supervisor?" And they don't realize half the time what they've done. But there are a couple of women at the airport who get ticked off sometimes with this and they'll say [mimics], "just because he's a man doesn't mean he's a supervisor." And then the person kind of goes [gasping sound] and they realize what they've done. They just made that assumption. I mean, we are mostly women. There are a lot of guys, but still. It's just like if you go to the bank. How

often, if you're in a bank and something has to be checked or whatever or you want the manager, it turns out to be a man. So a lot of times, you just assume that when you see a man come over, that maybe he's the manager. He may just be a teller like everybody else, but I think we all still do it, especially in things like banks and our job where you seem to see so many women on the counters all the time.

Some women passenger agents close to retirement spoke of the double hurdle that now prevented them from attaining management positions. They felt that they had been overlooked during their early years with the company because of sex discrimination in promotion, whereas they now faced barriers, not only because of their sex, but also because of their age:

In 1967, they were doing all the new hiring. I had worked for another company that was not promoting women. For a great number of years, until times changed, you really didn't have a chance as a woman to get ahead, regardless of how qualified you were, so I really didn't look to get a promotion out of being a passenger agent for that reason. I know that things have changed in recent years, but I'm older now and I don't know if the opportunities are there with the company. The way the company's changing today and with the way the economy's changing, the way the company's reducing staff, they're certainly not hiring anyway. So I'll remain where I am until I retire unless there's an opening somewhere or something like that.

Quand j'ai passé mon entrevue, on m'a dit que je n'aurais jamais de promotion parce que j'étais une femme. La promotion des femmes dans les rôles de surveillants a commencé dans les années '60s. Il y en a eu un peu, on a donné des promotions à des femmes, parce que je pense qu'ils devaient le faire, c'était une société de la couronne, alors je pense qu'ils en ont nommé quelques-unes, mais qui étaient toutes stéréotypées. Elles avaient toutes la même allure, toutes le même style, elles avaient la même allure qu'un homme, elles pensaient de la même façon, elles fonctionnaient de la même façon. C'était surtout celles-là qui avaient des promotions. C'était très limité. C'est plus tellement acceptable aujourd'hui. Aujourd'hui on donne des promotions à des femmes qui pensent comme des femmes, qui fonctionnent comme des femmes. Il y en a eu très peu, puis finalement dans les années '70s, il a commencé à en avoir plus. Mais, ce qui se passe, c'est que quand on travaille pour une compagnie pendant X années, on vous perçoit d'une certaine façon et il arrive un moment où on ne pense plus à vous pour des promotions

parce qu'on vous a toujours perçu comme n'étant pas ce qu'on appelait autrefois 'high potential' pour des promotions. Parce que quand vous avez commencé à travailler, on vous disait, "vous n'aurez pas de promotion," alors on ne fonctionnait pas pour avoir des promotions et on vous percevait comme ça. Alors, ce qui fait que toutes les femmes qui ont commencé avec moi n'ont jamais eu de promotion, parce que nous étions perçues comme ça. Il y a encore d'la discrimination aujourd'hui, elle est beaucoup moins évidente, mais il y en a encore. Il y a encore de la discrimination au niveau des femmes.

Even though many agents clearly recognized the existence of some form of sex discrimination within the company, others believed that if individual women really wanted a promotion, it was within their power to achieve this goal through hard work and persistence. They also maintained that people were usually promoted according to their abilities and that any form of equity programme would merely result in special favours for women who might not merit promotions. They were, however, unable to reconcile their belief that only the best employees, regardless of sex, were promoted with their own criticism of the quality of many supervisors and of major company decisions which, it must be noted, were almost exclusively taken by male executives.

Many of the interviewees with a university education who were hired in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s had joined the company with high expectations of moving up in the organization as they did not want to remain in the passenger agent job which they found boring and devoid of challenge. Available data suggest that by the late 1980s, close to 50 percent of passenger agents working for Air Canada had some post-secondary education, with a small percentage holding post-graduate degrees.¹⁴⁵ The discrepancy between the promotion possibilities and the ambitions of a relatively highly educated workforce was a source of frustration for passenger agents and could be problematic for management which faced a vocal and confident group of workers.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis of the changing nature, conditions and relations of passenger agent work over the course of the past twenty-three years. The key concepts that organized the previous chapter, including technological change and work reorganization, skill and deskilling, strategies of control, employment practices as well as resistance and accommodation, have also been used to structure this chapter. In weaving together changes in work experiences and relations, I have demonstrated that a process of proletarianization was under way throughout the period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. An increasing feminization of the passenger agent occupation accompanied this process. The major transmutations that occurred in the labour process have been understood in the context of the structural transformation of the airline industry in general and of Air Canada in particular. As has been made amply evident, the crisis-ridden state of the industry during most of the period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s has had profound implications for the labour process of passenger agents, a reality that underlines the impossibility of viewing the workplace in isolation from wider structural factors.

In discussing modifications to the labour process, I have pointed to an overall deskilling process generally characterized by an ongoing separation of conception and execution, a continual loss of decision-making power, discretion and control over work, and an intensification of work. Following Braverman,¹⁴⁶ deskilling has been increasingly identified as central to the changing nature of a growing number of white-collar labour processes. While his analysis highlighted the transformation of work up to the mid-1970s, many white-collar labour processes have since undergone dramatic

modifications in terms of substantive complexity and job control/autonomy. More recent studies such as those carried out by Crompton and Jones,¹⁴⁷ Roslyn Feldberg and Evelyn Nakano Glenn,¹⁴⁸ and Marcy Cohen and Margaret White¹⁴⁹ have provided concrete evidence of the significant redesign of white-collar jobs. The paucity of research in this area of work is disturbing, however, given the large amount of white-collar labour power that is consumed under advanced capitalism.

My analysis confirms what studies of both white-collar and blue-collar work have shown, that the implementation of new forms of technologies has played a major role in facilitating the reorganization and deskilling of work. It has also served to bolster systems of workplace control. Indeed, while technological innovations and the reorganization of work during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s had resulted in the establishment and entrenchment of technical control, the massive introduction of sophisticated computer and telecommunications technologies beginning in the 1970s greatly strengthened this form of control. Passenger agents enjoyed less flexibility in the organization of their workday and became increasingly directed and paced by the technology. These changes served as a powerful reinforcement for the overall system of structural control and tended to minimize the problem of transforming labour power into labour. The implementation of computer and telecommunications technologies was not the only underlying cause of deskilling and intensified control as it merely operated within and reinforced preexisting patterns at work. This finding corroborates conclusions drawn by Webster¹⁵⁰ in her study of clerical labour that the introduction of technologies strengthens previous forms of work organization.

What is clear is that technological innovations are increasingly being used by

employers to deskill, control, cheapen and eliminate white-collar labour in order to ensure the accumulation of profit. The adoption of new technologies to revolutionize white-collar labour processes has disproportionately affected women because of their concentration in many of the jobs under assault. Computer innovations have been instrumental in accelerating the transformation of work and in maximizing the productivity of labour-intensive white-collar job categories where women are concentrated. Like passenger agents, these workers exercise little, if any, control over the shape and direction of technological transmutations that affect their immediate work experience and their labour market position. Technological change involves choices and options but has been presented by management as inevitable. The crisis in the airline industry during the 1980s and early 1990s has facilitated the promulgation of such an interpretation.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that the deskilling of passenger agent work was not direct and unmediated. That deskilling has never followed a linear path has been raised by numerous labour process commentators. Indeed, many studies have pointed to countervailing forces that impinge on the tendency towards deskilling, a phenomenon that can be attributed to the dynamic and social nature of the labour process. In the case of passenger agents, one of the most important of these mitigating factors was the introduction of a maze of new fares, products and complicated transactions which rendered the job more demanding and complex. These changes occurred with the deregulation of the airline industry and the expansion of markets beginning in the late 1970s. In order to standardize a differentiated product so as to remove uncertainty and improve productivity, the employer systematically implemented

computer programmes and hardware that simplified the work and removed discretion from workers, thereby bolstering the deskilling process. Despite the fact that some of these technological innovations were specific to product markets given the need to be more competitive in a deregulated environment, managerial decisions concerning these markets have directly impinged on the nature and organization of work.

Another force that mediated the deskilling process resided in the changing nature of the service aspect of passenger agent work. Though the job has always been characterized by constant public interaction and has always required the exercise of interpersonal skills, transformations in the industry brought important changes to this requirement. With the deregulation of air transportation and the consequent escalation in competition which led to the introduction of a variety of discount fares, a growing number of people travelled by air more often and many became more sophisticated in terms of their knowledge of industry products and practices. Moreover, the drive for market expansion prompted air carriers to promise customers high quality service. The latter thus expected certain standards of service and were more willing to demand satisfaction. In dealing with a more demanding and sometimes aggressive consumer, passenger agents were called upon to deploy a wide range of social and communications skills. Conversely, the increase in less interesting and less complicated itineraries promoted deskilling. In addition, heavier workloads and the lack of power to make meaningful decisions made it increasingly difficult for agents to develop and exercise the people skills needed to handle situations as they arose and thus to provide a useful service and feel satisfied about the job. As in many other areas of women's sales, clerical and service work, the employer has generally assumed that employees bring to

the job most of the non-technical abilities required to perform their tasks. These capabilities are usually not seen as skills but as natural qualities. My investigation confirms the conclusions drawn by Gaskell¹⁵¹ and Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor¹⁵² that skills definition is a social process that has worked to the disadvantage of women and has left invisible most of their learned abilities.

This chapter has revealed that the employment relationship also underwent important modifications during the period of crisis and transformation of the airline industry. Despite the fact that workers' transfer and layoff rights were maintained and enhanced, these elements of the internal labour market were largely nullified beginning in the late 1980s because of reduced mobility opportunities and job insecurity that were caused by a series of permanent layoffs and base closures brought about by massive technological change as well as the restructuring of the airline industry and a general worsening of economic conditions. In this context, management has been able to modify its employment practices. While a highly differentiated job structure offering prospects of upward mobility had not been available to passenger agents, the possibilities for lateral movement had been a crucial element of the internal labour market and thus of the bureaucratic structure of control. With the significant lessening of the employment security of passenger agents, control was shifted, to a greater extent than before, to the external labour market. This highlights the disposability of passenger agents, most of whom are women. The increasing tendency for passenger agents to join the growing ranks of the reserve army of labour is a clear indication that previously highly secure white-collar jobs have not been immune to capitalist restructuring of the labour process and the labour market.

Throughout this chapter, I have shown that fundamental changes to the labour process and to employment practices spurred the union into fighting to protect passengers' overall working conditions. The company, which faced a stronger and more militant union, increasingly resisted infringements on its rights and also sought concessions from workers, especially in the context of industry restructuring and a recessionary climate. Despite the employer's greater power, the union's actions did modify the outcome. Conflict and confrontation coloured labour-management relations beginning in the 1970s, and especially throughout the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s. To a certain extent, the union was able to mobilize collective action against detrimental changes to employment practices, especially in the face of threats of massive layoffs. The struggle against the elimination of labour has traditionally been part of the labour movement's agenda. In the wake of economic globalization, the challenge has become enormous as unions must fight the massive implementation of labour-displacing technology and other threatening employment practices.

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6. THE EROSION OF PASSENGER AGENTS' JOB SECURITY

This chapter provides an analysis of changes to the job security of passenger agents. I demonstrate that beginning in the 1960s, job security was diluted, not only due to continual technological innovations which modified the labour process and increased productivity (as discussed in chapters four and five), but also as a result of the cross-utilization of company workers and the contracting out of work which was, at times, facilitated by the introduction of new technologies.

In the first section of the chapter, I examine the circumstances surrounding the utilization of non-CALEA bargaining unit workers to perform passenger agent tasks, such as management personnel, station agents II, flight attendants, security personnel, porters, travel agents and staff from other travel and airline companies. In the vast majority of instances (with the notable exception of travel agents) company practices revolved around the work of passenger agents at airport locations. In the second section of the chapter, I focus specifically on the contracting out of passenger agent tasks to travel agencies. Indeed, central to the issue of job security dilution was the transfer of passenger agents' work to such agencies through the provision by Air Canada of direct on-line access to its central reservations system, the installation of off-premise VDTs, ticket printers and boarding pass printers, the development of software designed for agencies and the adoption of different practices encouraging customers to deal with agencies.

Throughout these two sections, I show that the union struggled to protect passenger agents' job security, waging many battles during contract negotiations and through the filing of numerous grievances and arbitrations. Although it did initially make some gains during contract talks and while many arbitration awards were in its favour, the union was nonetheless often compelled to later give up during collective bargaining,

especially beginning in the mid-1970s, some of the important gains made through the arbitration process. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss the union's concerted efforts, beginning in the mid-1980s, to develop innovative policies and programmes aimed at reversing the trend towards the weakening of job security brought on by massive technological change, the cross-utilization of employees and the contracting out of work. I demonstrate that the union's actions did influence employment practices.

The Cross-Utilization of Workers and the Contracting Out of Work

One of the first major conflicts over job boundaries involved supervisors. During the first decade of the company's existence, when the division of labour was less clearly established and the duties of different groups of workers overlapped, supervisors, acting supervisors and, at times, managers performed some passenger agent duties. It was not until the 1960s, with the growth in, and increasing sophistication of, operations, concomitant with the emerging militancy of the union, that complaints concerning the allocation of tasks began to surface. Though alleged violations to the contract occurred more frequently at airport locations, the numerous grievances registered by the union over the years indicate that supervisors were involved in various aspects of passenger agent work, including handling telephone calls, working at counters, writing tickets, assisting wheelchair passengers, fulfilling duties in Maple Leaf lounges and providing other forms of service to customers.

When the union began protesting against supervisors constantly carrying out passenger agent duties, it met with a recalcitrant employer. While the union did not quarrel with management's right to help out during times of exigent circumstances, it

expressed discontent over the fact that some supervisors regularly worked scheduled passenger agent shifts.¹ The feelings of frustration arising over this issue, combined with the lack of clear contract language, prompted the union to negotiate a clause in 1966 forbidding management personnel from undertaking passenger agent work on a regularly scheduled basis.² This change, however, did not prevent supervisors from performing passenger agent work. In response to the union's persistent criticism, the company argued that it was difficult to precisely define the day-to-day tasks of passenger agents and to distinguish between their duties and those of supervisors when it came to customer service.³ It nonetheless agreed, in 1968, to a more restrictive clause which stipulated that members of management could assist passenger agents only when the requirements of the service justified such involvement.⁴ Grievances continued to be filed, an indication that the contract provisions, which remained somewhat vague, did not adequately address the problem. Although Air Canada resisted the CALEA's repeated attempts to reduce management's flexibility, it conceded, in 1969, to expanded language governing union recognition. Article 2.03 of the new contract stipulated that "the Company will not permit any person not covered under this Agreement to do any tasks or duties covered under this Agreement, unless specifically provided for herein." Management personnel were exempted from the provisions of the article in the event of emergencies and unusual circumstances which arose suddenly and required special assistance to avoid abnormal delay to customers. A second exemption to the clause allowed management trainees to fulfill CALEA-scope duties for a period not to exceed thirty days, as long as they were not a contingent part of the workforce.⁵ The company sought such flexibility in order to ensure that newly hired supervisors and managers

would be exposed to passenger agent work and would have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the different aspects of the job before taking on their duties. This was especially important given the trend towards hiring university graduates directly into management positions - a situation causing concern among agents because of reduced promotional opportunities. While new supervisors received classroom instruction and knew which reference manuals to consult when a problem arose, those who had never worked as passenger agents often lacked practical know-how and were thus not always able to assist when called upon by agents.⁶

Although the contract amendment was an attempt on the part of the CALEA to curtail management's ability to undertake passenger agent work, violations continued unabated, prompting the union, at one point, to accuse some supervisors and managers of using the clause as their authority to perform passenger agent duties.⁷ For its part, the company maintained that in a service-oriented industry it was unrealistic to expect supervisors to turn a deaf ear to customers seeking assistance.⁸ The union regularly complained, however, that contract violations occurred as a direct result of understaffing which resulted in the utilization of members of management as relief personnel for agents' rest and meal periods, a situation that reduced available work for passenger agents and led to a lack of supervision and training. The union won numerous grievances on this work-scope issue and successfully processed several complaints through arbitration. Over the years, even though the company admitted to violations in many of the cases brought to grievance and committed itself to reminding supervisory staff of the provisions of the collective agreement, it systematically refused to make compensatory awards.

A somewhat different type of conflict over management personnel fulfilling passenger agent duties surfaced in the spring of 1969, when the IAMAW went on strike against Air Canada for five weeks and supervisors and other employees were scheduled to carry out the work normally done by passenger agents. While the company suspended flight operations, it merely reduced its sales operations as reservations were being made on an advanced basis, tickets were being issued and refunds were being granted. After a failed attempt to reach an agreement on the correct application of seniority for those passenger agents who were to remain on duty, Air Canada unilaterally decided to place all bargaining unit members on off-duty status without pay. Correspondence between the CALEA and Air Canada reveals that the company wished to retain the senior passenger agents at each base, whereas the union insisted that system-wide seniority be applied with senior agents exercising their right to bump junior employees, and that layoff notices be given to all other agents.⁹ An application to the Minister of Labour for consent to prosecute Air Canada for replacing passenger agents with non-unionized workers during the IAMAW strike¹⁰ was thrown out because granting it would, in the words of the Minister, "impede rather than enhance good labour-management relationships."¹¹ The union nonetheless submitted the matter to arbitration, arguing that the company violated the agreement by not giving members fourteen days layoff notice and by using non-CALEA bargaining staff to perform work normally undertaken by passenger agents. In December 1970, the arbitrator Alan Gold ruled that the layoff clause was incompatible with, and unsuitable to, the situation. He concluded, however, that Air Canada had erred in using non-bargaining unit staff before CALEA members had been individually called back and failed to report. The arbitrator also established that Air Canada was

liable for damages to CALEA members.¹²

Other incidents which brought to the fore questions about job security revolved around station agents II, a group of company employees represented by the IAMAW. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the company closed city sales offices in a few of its smaller bases and consolidated the work at airport locations, most of the sales department functions were allocated to the operations department and passenger agents lost their jobs to station agents II. Some of the affected passenger agents were reclassified outside of the SEA bargaining unit to station agents II positions or as clerk-stenographers. Others transferred to different locations or were laid off.¹³

As mentioned in chapter five, fears that station agents II would be taking over passenger agent responsibilities were once again expressed in the early 1970s when certain reservations functions were transferred to airports with the introduction of ReserVec II. This meant that in a few locations, station agents II acquired an even greater share of passenger agent duties when they began completing flight close-out tasks using ReserVec II. A grievance was initiated, but the union decided against pursuing the matter to arbitration because of the difficulty in trying to prove that flight close-out duties were the sole jurisdiction of CALEA members, especially given that these tasks had historically been performed by both passenger agents and station agents II in some locations. Furthermore, the IAMAW had intervened and the CALEA, which did not want to become involved in a jurisdictional dispute, decided that a more fruitful course of action would be to deal with the matter in collective bargaining.¹⁴ In 1974, the union was able to convince the company to include a contract clause which prevented the hiring of station agents II to fulfill passenger agent duties at locations other than those where

these non-CALEA bargaining unit workers were already employed.¹⁵

Beginning in the 1970s, the issue of job security took on a new dimension when the union began struggling against the contracting out of passenger agent duties. Early in the decade, the CALEA and Air Canada were embroiled in a bitter battle over the utilization by the carrier of outside porter service contractors to provide curbside baggage check-in assistance to domestic passengers at a few selected airport locations. Porters were instructed to tag bags received at the curb in front of terminal buildings and send them directly onto the aircraft, thereby bypassing passenger agents at main check-in counters. With this initiative, the company aimed to improve service to customers by reducing the long lineups often occurring at check-in counters.¹⁶ Under the former system, passengers arriving at the airport would take their own luggage into the terminal or hand over the bags to a porter who would carry them in to the check-in counter where passenger agents would tag baggage.

The union grieved the company's practice of allowing non-CALEA bargaining unit workers to carry out these passenger agent duties.¹⁷ In April 1971, the arbitrator Frances Bairstow dismissed the grievance, ruling that the agreement did not prohibit the company from contracting out the work of tagging baggage at the curbside. In rendering her decision, the arbitrator accepted the company's two main arguments. Firstly, Air Canada maintained that the intention of article 2.03 was to exclude other company employees, whether supervisory personnel or other employees outside the scope of the CALEA bargaining unit, from performing work covered under the agreement. Secondly, basing itself on Canadian arbitral awards, the company argued that it had the right to contract out work because there was no specific clause in the collective agreement

explicitly preventing it from doing so.¹⁸

The CALEA was shocked by the arbitrator's decision which put into question what it considered to be a clear and unqualified job security clause. In his dissenting report, the union's nominee to the arbitration board insisted:

In my view, Article 2.03 operates to prohibit the work in question being given to any person other than an employee within the C.A.L.E.A. bargaining unit. The prohibition is absolute in its terms and unrestricted in its scope; quite simply, the Company has undertaken not to permit any person outside the bargaining unit to do bargaining unit work.¹⁹

As a result of this award, the union felt that passenger agents were more vulnerable to future infringements on their job security through further instances of contracting out. The decision, however, did not discourage the union from fighting against encroachments on members' job security. It marked the beginning of a long and arduous struggle against the contracting out of passenger agent work.

In October 1975, the arbitrator J.D. O'Shea gave a different interpretation to article 2.03 in a ruling concerning the company's decision to subcontract the passenger handling work at the airport in Charlottetown when service was introduced to that city. In rejecting the findings of the Bairstow award, O'Shea concluded that the parties had unequivocally expressed their intention in article 2.03 that the company would not permit any person not covered by the agreement to do any tasks or duties specified therein. The arbitrator contended that by necessary implication, this provision obviously included a prohibition against subcontracting such work. The phrase 'would not permit any person' clearly referred not only to management personnel and other non-CALEA bargaining unit workers employed by the company, but also to any person whosoever, including subcontractors and their staff. The arbitrator further stated that if there were any real

doubts about the effect of article 2.03, that was eliminated by a note which had been added to the contract in 1974 stipulating that tasks normally or regularly performed by workers covered by the agreement would be carried out by these workers at both existing and new locations. He dismissed the company's contention that the note was intended to restrict the utilization of station agents II who were represented by another union, arguing that their use was already specifically regulated under another section of the same clause. He thus directed the company to assign the passenger handling work at the airport in Charlottetown to CALEA members regardless of the fact that the airline would suffer a substantial financial disadvantage.²⁰

Shortly following the O'Shea award, the union initiated a grievance under article 2.03 whereby it contested the installation of ReserVec II VDTs in travel agency offices. The matter was still pending when the parties began contract talks in the summer of 1976. In light of the most recent arbitral decision, the job security clause had taken on a completely different dimension and was now considered by Air Canada to be the most restrictive article in the collective agreement. Indeed, it was remarked that "during the life of the Agreement, the Union contested the application of this Article to the point where the Company felt itself being placed in a straight jacket."²¹ Given that the O'Shea interpretation jeopardized its future external endeavours, Air Canada sought and obtained relief from the clause with the conclusion, in 1977, of a letter of understanding which allowed the airline to market its products through outside companies even though employees of the latter fulfilled duties covered by the agreement. The letter of understanding further stipulated that when Air Canada undertook to perform passenger handling functions for other airlines or tour wholesalers, representatives of these

companies would, to a certain extent, be allowed to deal with their customers even if they might be carrying out passenger agent duties.²² This was in response to pressures from outside companies wishing to retain some identity with their product by having their own personnel visible and available to provide travel material and information to customers. Contracts with other airlines, tour operators and charter companies represented an important source of revenue for Air Canada. Because the union had successfully processed complaints through arbitration pertaining to the performance of passenger agents' tasks by employees of these companies, gaining this latter exemption from the job security clause was critical to Air Canada.²³ The letter of understanding also exonerated the carrier from filling positions created by the opening of new locations with company employees until it determined that this would be economically feasible. Clearly, the strong job protection language was significantly weakened as a result of the union acceding to company demands. The CALEA continued to challenge certain management practices not restricted by the letter of understanding and which it felt jeopardized passenger agents' job security. The union received many favourable arbitration awards, two of which seriously hampered the company's ability to make use of other workers in the fulfillment of passenger handling duties at airports.

The first major arbitral award which imposed severe restrictions on the cross-utilization of employees involved flight attendants. Since the establishment of the airline, some service-type duties at airports had been carried out by these in-flight workers. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the union had been concerned about the growing number of times flight attendants assumed passenger agent responsibilities in terminal buildings, including the monitoring of passenger flows in departure lounges, the lifting

of flight coupons, the provision of pre-boarding assistance to travellers and the communication of flight boarding information. As in the case of supervisors fulfilling passenger agent tasks, the union maintained that this breach of contract was sometimes a direct result of understaffing. Numerous grievances were filed dealing with alleged violations to the collective agreement, many of which were upheld by the company. The frequent involvement of flight attendants in pre-boarding assistance to passengers represented a main point of contention between the parties. While the union argued that this task was exclusively passenger agent work, the company consistently ruled that it was a responsibility to be shared by the in-flight service group and CALEA-scope workers. When the union brought the issue to arbitration in 1977, the company submitted that it had been a practice for many years for cabin personnel and passenger agents to cooperate in the provision of pre-boarding aid to customers. In August 1978, the arbitrator Kevin Burkett ruled, however, that assisting or escorting passengers, including the elderly, the disabled or families with small children, from check-in counters or gate areas to the aircraft, was a task covered under the collective agreement between Air Canada and the CALEA. He therefore declared that the practice of permitting this work to be shared between passenger agents and other workers, notwithstanding the economies which resulted from this arrangement, was in violation of the contract.²⁴

The second major arbitral award which restricted the company's ability to utilize non-CALEA bargaining unit workers to perform passenger agent duties focused on Air Canada's decision, in early 1976, to expand the job of security personnel to include, as part of their tasks, the determination of the acceptability of passengers' cabin luggage according to size. When the security gate concept was first introduced at airports in

early 1973 at a time when the hijacking of airplanes and bomb threats became a serious problem, security staff were hired to screen passengers and the contents of their carry-on baggage for objects such as explosives and guns. It was only after air carriers were informed by the Department of Transport that they were not respecting the intent of an Air Navigation Order issued in 1969 pertaining to maximum cabin baggage allowance that Air Canada directed security personnel to enforce restrictions in this area. In a grievance brought to arbitration, the union claimed that this task was a passenger agent responsibility. Although the arbitrator, Howard Brown, took into consideration the evidence presented by the company that the system had been implemented for the purpose of efficiency and as an appropriate means of complying with the Air Navigation Order, he ruled in favour of the union in November 1978. In finding the company in violation of article 2.03, Brown followed O'Shea's earlier arbitral interpretation that the job security clause unequivocally prohibited the company from allowing any person not covered by the agreement to undertake tasks or duties covered therein. Nonetheless, because the parties were in the midst of negotiating a new collective agreement and could deal with the issue through this process, the arbitrator denied the redress sought by the union that these positions be staffed with passenger agents.²⁵

Constrained by these two significant arbitral decisions, the company once again sought relief from the limitations imposed by the collective agreement, this time during the 1978-1979 round of contract talks. The union reluctantly agreed to expand the letter of understanding signed in 1977 to include additional exceptions to the job security clause.²⁶ Thenceforth, the company was exempted from the terms of article 2.03 as it applied to tasks and duties covered by the collective agreement being performed by other

company employees and by non-company workers and to the extent that such work was being carried out at the time the contract was signed. It was not the intention of the union, however, to permit violations of article 2.03 which had been successfully grieved prior to the revised letter of understanding.²⁷ In spite of the fact that a rider prevented Air Canada from assigning new duties to non-scope personnel, the revised language further weakened passenger agents' job security, especially because the term 'to the extent that such work was being carried out' was open to interpretation. Notwithstanding the relief obtained by the company from article 2.03, the union continued to fight against management practices which it felt threatened passenger agents' job security.

When negotiations were initiated to renew the collective agreement expiring in September 1984, the airline industry was in a state of turmoil as a result of the recession of the early 1980s as well as deregulation and growing competition in the transportation sector. The company therefore sought greater labour flexibility through, amongst other means, the cross-utilization of employees.²⁸ It successfully bargained for less restrictions on the use of in-flight workers and management personnel in the performance of passenger agent work. More specifically, an item in the memorandum of settlement stated that the union would not initiate or support a grievance under article 2.03 where, in unusual situations, in-flight workers undertook tasks related to the pre-boarding of passengers at gate areas. This stipulation further diluted the job protection clause. The provisions exempting management personnel, under certain conditions, from the job security clause were modified to permit supervisors and managers to carry out scope work under slightly expanded circumstances, thereby effectively increasing the company's latitude in this area.²⁹

Grievances pertaining to the accomplishment of passenger agent duties by members of management and flight attendants continued, mainly at the larger airport locations. The union's frustration with the company's practice of cross-utilizing workers is reflected in its minutes of the 1986 contract talks which state that, "it seems the perception is that the clause is now so wide open they'll (management) do what they want - intentionally screw the collective agreement."³⁰ Complaints focused on non-CAW Local 2213 scope personnel selling tickets, pushing wheelchairs, helping pre-board passengers and handling lineups, flight departures and gates. While the company argued that its employees could not refuse to assist customers, especially in the context of more intense competition, the union charged that serious staff shortages were the real cause of violations to the collective agreement. Given that passenger agents were concerned about the inadequate level of service rendered to customers, they were sometimes hesitant to register contract violation-related complaints even when they felt that the company's staffing policies were the source of the problem.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, passenger agents faced new threats to their job security due to the involvement, in their job tasks, of employees of subsidiary companies of Air Canada, namely enRoute Card Inc., Gemini Group Automated Distributions Systems Inc. and Touram Inc., which had significantly expanded their activities as part of an effort to increase the carrier's market share. The union brought to management's attention various examples of situations where such workers were fulfilling passenger agent duties and threatened to initiate a grievance to resolve the issue. Notwithstanding the fact that Air Canada advised its subsidiaries to refrain from such practices, the threat to the job security of passenger agents remained real because of continued contract

violations.³¹ In the early 1990s, the union also pointed to instances where bargaining unit work was being transferred to Air Canada's reservations centre in Tampa. Management advised the union that an error had been made and that the practice would be discontinued.³² This telpaking incident was a clear indication of the ease with which reservations tasks could be shifted outside Canada.

The Contracting Out of Work Through the Off-Premise Programme

While all forms of contracting out of work and cross-utilization of employees represented serious threats to the job security of passenger agents, the loss of work to travel agencies caused the greatest concern. Such agencies proliferated at a high rate beginning in the 1960s when jet travel became widespread and a larger number of people chose to fly. Traditionally, the industry consisted of small independently-run operations. Franchising expanded during the 1970s, a trend which was accompanied by a growing control of the air travel market by larger agencies. Furthermore, independent companies joined forces in consortiums and cooperatives.³³ Travel agencies thus became significant players in air transportation.

Even though Air Canada had always dealt with travel agencies and depended on them to contribute to demand for its services, it was only in the early 1970s that the carrier began to more fully integrate agencies into its marketing strategies to help achieve growth. Until that time, much of the agency business had been foreign travel-oriented, but Air Canada began promoting greater cooperation between itself and these outside companies in order to take advantage of the expected explosion in domestic and international travel.³⁴

In an attempt to exploit technological innovations to enhance its competitive position, Air Canada, like carriers in other countries, launched a project in the early 1970s to place VDTs in offices of major travel agencies and key business accounts. Ticket printers were also put at the disposal of these outside companies starting in the late 1970s. Moreover, additional information and software packages were made available to agencies throughout the years.

The experimental project to provide travel agencies with direct access to the ReserVec II data system began in February 1972 with the introduction of VDTs in eight such outlets in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.³⁵ Upon evaluation of the pilot project later that year, the company reported that the programme had been well received by agencies because the frequency and length of calls to Air Canada reservations offices as well as telephone waiting time were reduced especially during peak periods, thereby improving productivity and service to customers. Although management advised the CALEA that a modest expansion of the off-premise programme would occur in 1973,³⁶ it informed the union in April 1974 that it planned to forge ahead with installations, given the need to increase its market share by granting travel agencies access to ReserVec II and in order to maintain a competitive position vis-à-vis other carriers marketing their own computerized facilities.³⁷ Over the years, additional VDTs were placed in off-premise locations, providing instant reservations and a higher degree of personalized services to a growing number of consumers of air travel who chose to make their trip arrangements through agencies.

The initial phase of the off-premise programme marked the beginning of a protracted struggle between the union and the company concerning the contracting out

of passenger agent work to these external agencies. The CALEA criticized Air Canada for making public its plans to introduce VDTs in agencies before advising passenger agents. The off-premise programme had been announced at the Canadian convention of the American Society of Travel Agents held in September 1971, but the CALEA was only officially advised of the initiative in January 1972.³⁸ The union also accused the company of showing greater consideration for travel agencies and commercial accounts than for its own employees who complained that VDTs were in short supply in some locations while off-premise installations were going ahead.³⁹ This adversely affected the working conditions of Air Canada passenger agents.

From the outset, the union voiced concerns that the off-premise programme would have an impact on the job security of CALEA members.⁴⁰ The issue of job security was becoming quite significant given that over the years, passenger agents had been the group of Air Canada employees most affected by the extension of computerized systems. While the company did not anticipate that the off-premise installation of VDTs would cause redundancies, it expected that the future growth in the passenger agent classification would be slowed down.⁴¹ By April 1975, because of the increase in the number of VDTs in off-premise locations, the union concluded that the continuing employment of passenger agents was threatened. It stated:

In over two years of "discussion" and "dialogue" the Company has been evasive as to its plans. Statements are often encumbered with words such as "currently," "at the present time" or "at this time" and often further diluted with conditional terms. Or the Company makes no comment on fears or points raised by the Union. Since this subject was raised at the UMHQ Meeting of March, 1972, the Company has repeatedly cited some variation of "share of the market" to explain the off-premise installation of CRT sets. Yet, in February, 1975, when the Union requested information on that area, the Company responded with "it was studying

how best to assess this"!! Such an example of preplanning does little to alleviate the concerns of the Passenger Agents over job security nor does it contribute to employee morale. Has the Company been honest with its employees?⁴²

The CALEA indicated that it would make every effort to resist job loss and would not wait until layoff notices were issued to oppose the actions of the company.⁴³ Management responded that it was unrealistic for the airline not to exploit all technological, commercial and competitive means available to ensure the protection and continued generation of revenues. It reiterated its earlier statement that the off-premise programme would not affect the job security of agents in the company's employment.⁴⁴ The CALEA nonetheless filed a grievance on the issue, claiming that travel agencies' use of this equipment as well as their direct access to the ReserVec II data bank, which allowed them to book and confirm space immediately for customers, was in violation of article 2.03, passenger agents' job security clause. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the grievance was awaiting an arbitration hearing when contract talks commenced in the summer of 1976. During collective bargaining, the company was insistent upon its need to achieve some relief from article 2.03 in order to allow it to continue to introduce VDTs in outside agencies without possible further action on the part of the CALEA.⁴⁵ It stated:

The most important single objective of Air Canada's approach to these negotiations was to retain the Company's clear ability to market its product through travel agencies and similar enterprises. More than half of the Company's total sales revenue of \$1 billion annually is generated by such enterprises. For Air Canada to remain economically viable, it was absolutely essential that it retain its right to do business with these companies.⁴⁶

The union withdrew the arbitration and reluctantly agreed to a letter of understanding

which stipulated that the provisions of article 2.03 would not prevent Air Canada from marketing its products through outside companies, even though the latter's employees may be performing some of the duties of CALEA members.⁴⁷ Following this union concession, the company pursued its practice of placing VDTs in off-premise locations. As of December 31, 1976 a total of 267 VDTs had been installed outside Air Canada offices⁴⁸ and by April 1978, there were 409 such sets.⁴⁹ In December 1985, the 4,000th VDT was connected in an off-premise location,⁵⁰ and the number continued to grow thereafter.

In the late 1970s, the off-premise programme was expanded to include automated ticket printers. Under the pilot project, which began in the spring of 1977, ten automated ticketing machines were placed in agency offices. From this point on, printers were gradually introduced in more agencies and special business account locations. As in the case of VDTs, other major airlines were offering this new automated equipment which was vital to the competitiveness of marketing programmes. Moreover, the company expected to achieve additional revenues from the rental of ticket printers as it did from the rental of VDTs.⁵¹

Despite the fact that Air Canada had advised the CALEA in December 1976 that there were no plans to introduce printers in non-company locations,⁵² the union shortly thereafter discovered through articles in newspapers, industry trade magazines and the company's own employee magazine that such equipment would be installed in selected travel agencies on an experimental basis. The union complained that, once again, passenger agents found out about major technological change initiatives through outside sources. The company responded that there had been no deliberate attempt to mislead

the union and attributed this confusion to a breakdown in communications.⁵⁴

Because agencies were becoming a prime selling force for airlines, Air Canada argued that it was imperative for carriers to supply these businesses with the tools to help them move closer to a total travel service in order to capture a greater share of the market. In this context, not only were agencies provided with ReserVec II equipment but, over the years, they benefitted from continual enhancements to software programmes and the abundance of information that was added to the central computer. As other Canadian carriers contracted with Air Canada for the display of their flight schedules and other information, these data became accessible to travel agencies using VDTs. Indeed, one of the main reasons Air Canada distributed this information was to enhance its profile with travel agencies. For agencies renting the technology, the need to contact Air Canada passenger agents to make reservations and obtain general information was significantly reduced or completely eliminated.

Throughout the 1980s, major additional features became available to travel agencies. More specifically, the company offered a computerized system called Autotrav to tour wholesalers which allowed ReserVec II-equipped agencies to access tour information stored in wholesalers' data banks and directly make reservations. This system was expanded over the years with more suppliers distributing their products through Autotrav. Air Canada also improved agencies' contact with hotels by gradually increasing the number of establishments listed in ReserVec II and by phasing in modifications to make the booking process faster and easier. Moreover, agencies renting ticket printers gained the ability to automatically prepare itinerary printouts and invoices. In addition, new ReserVec II intelligent terminals featuring tilting screens and

streamlined keyboards with function keys designed to combine keystrokes used in common transactions were made available to agencies as were improved ticket printers.⁵⁴

Furthermore, software programmes and hardware were developed by Air Canada specifically for use by travel agencies. The Mini Administration Computer (MAC), a by-product of ReserVec II, was introduced in the early 1980s to furnish off-premise users with an automated management information system.⁵⁵ The development of the Maxi-MAC, a sophisticated ticketing, administration and accounting system, which addressed the needs of agencies with multiple branches and volume sales, followed soon thereafter.⁵⁶ Both of these management information systems were expanded over the years. In 1981, Air Canada established the automated agency support centre, a technical service desk for the many agencies and other commercial users of its ReserVec II terminals, ticket printers and MAC systems.⁵⁷ The airline also offered an electronic mail service for the transmission of messages between agencies, thus allowing the latter to reduce long distance telephone charges.⁵⁸ In addition, Air Canada instituted commission plans which provided attractive incentives for agencies to book seats with the carrier.⁵⁹

In March 1983, Air Canada began recognizing in-plant agencies as a new channel of distribution for its products, thereby making available to travel agencies several million dollars worth of ticketing.⁶⁰ Such in-plant agencies, which were branches of existing travel agencies located entirely on the premises of companies and which were established exclusively to service the travel needs of these commercial clients, were already widespread in the United States.⁶¹ Fearing that in-plant agencies would further

erode passenger agent job security, the CALEA filed a grievance alleging violation of the collective agreement.⁶² Air Canada countered that passenger agents had not been involved in reservations and ticketing for these accounts because companies with in-plant agencies had previously operated in-house travel departments with their own staff who handled reservations using ReserVec II terminals. These businesses were now entering into arrangements with travel agencies whereby reservations and ticketing functions were performed by agency staff or company personnel under contract to travel agencies.⁶³ Although the union began processing the issue through arbitration, it put the grievance on hold in February 1984, pending the completion of approaching negotiations to renew the collective agreement ending in September of that year.⁶⁴ The complaint was later withdrawn. The union also withdrew a second grievance which had already gone before an arbitration board concerning the company's decision to allow travel agencies to offer customers advance seat selection, a service previously delivered exclusively by CALEA members.⁶⁵

In November 1986, when Air Canada launched a type-trial programme and installed boarding pass printers in ten company ticket offices and in some fifty travel agencies and commercial accounts, travel agents gained the ability, for the first time, to prepare boarding passes for clients. The company felt that this service, which accelerated the check-in process and offered passengers travelling in first, executive and full-fare economy classes the convenience of receiving their boarding cards before arrival at the airport, was a necessary competitive tool because some American carriers operating in Canada had already adopted this practice.⁶⁶

In challenging Air Canada's decision to provide travel agencies with the

possibility of issuing boarding passes, the union relied on two main arguments. Firstly, it contended that, though the collective agreement allowed the company to market its products through travel agencies, the distribution of boarding passes was not part of marketing the airline's products. It claimed that the products travel agencies could market on Air Canada's behalf were limited to the booking of seats and the issuing of tickets. Secondly, the union argued that, inasmuch as the distribution of boarding passes had been undertaken exclusively by passenger agents as of September 25, 1984, the company could not permit this work to be performed by any person not covered by the collective agreement. During the 1984-1985 negotiations, it had been agreed that tasks covered by the contract, which were being carried out by non-company personnel as of September 25, 1984, could continue to be carried out by such workers. For its part, Air Canada contended that the boarding pass was simply a control document confirming that a ticket had been purchased and a seat selected, and that the issuing in advance of this boarding card to passengers was clearly a function of marketing its products. It added that specific reference to automated boarding pass printers had been made during the 1984-1985 negotiations and its notes of those meetings reflected the union's acknowledgement that the company had acquired complete freedom to market its products through outside agencies. Furthermore, by accepting the imposition of limitations on certain specific duties as of September 25, 1984, the company's intention was not to have those restrictions apply to tasks associated with the marketing of its products.⁶⁷

In an effort to halt the contracting out of passenger agent work, the union proceeded to arbitration with its boarding pass grievance in the spring of 1987.⁶⁸ However, in November 1987, shortly after hearings had taken place, the union withdrew

its grievance fearing that, given the ambiguity of the contract language as to what constituted the 'marketing of the company's products', a far-reaching ruling could be made which would seriously affect any future arbitration cases dealing with encroachments on passenger agents' jobs by travel agencies.⁶⁹

Passenger agents used different tactics to resist the company's practice of allowing travel agencies to provide boarding passes. In some instances, they destroyed boarding cards issued in advance, claiming they were not acceptable, then immediately printed new ones. In the midst of these problems, Air Canada terminated the advance boarding pass programme in September 1988, stating that it planned to develop a combined automated ticket and boarding pass which was the emerging industry standard. Travel agencies, however, claimed that the union was responsible for the cancellation of the project because passenger agents at airports were hassling clients by not accepting agency-issued boarding cards.⁷⁰ In June 1992, the company began offering advance boarding passes to passengers, making it once again possible for agencies to provide this service to customers.⁷¹

The ease with which the work of passenger agents could be turned over to travel agencies, thereby impinging on passenger agents' job security, was driven home once again in the early 1990s when Air Canada transferred travel agencies to Covia International Network's more sophisticated Apollo computerized reservations system. This conversion occurred in the context of a reorganization of the two main computerized reservations systems in Canada, ReserVec II and Pegasus. In the spring of 1987, Air Canada and CAIL announced a joint venture called Gemini Group Automated Distributions Systems Inc. to merge their computerized reservations systems.⁷² In early

1988, following complaints by American Airlines Inc. (owner of the Sabre computer reservations system, the largest such system in the United States) that the Gemini Group would not agree to fair conduct rules, the director of investigation and research of the federal Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs' Bureau of Competition Policy called for the dissolution of the group, charging that the two airlines would substantially lessen competition by merging their reservations systems as it would allow one company to control over 90 percent of the market for computerized reservations services. The case was settled by a July 1989 decision of the federal Competition Tribunal which imposed certain terms and conditions on Air Canada, CAIL and Gemini that reduced the potential adverse effects of the merger on competition.⁷³

This decision followed a partnership agreement reached in March 1989 between the Gemini Group and Covia International Network.⁷⁴ Covia, the second largest system in the United States, was half owned by United Airlines Inc. with five other carriers, USAir Inc., Alitalia, British Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Swissair, owning the balance. With Covia participating as a one-third owner of Gemini, the latter's computer reservations system became part of the former's international network. The companies worked together to develop a reservations system based on Covia's Apollo computer reservations system that would be customized for the needs of Gemini's Canadian customers. The Apollo database contained information on approximately 700 airlines, numerous car rental companies and hotels, and other travel-related businesses. Covia also boasted some 70,000 terminals located in 10,000 travel agencies.⁷⁵

Travel agencies began converting to the Apollo-by-Gemini system in the fall of 1990, with approximately 600 agencies switching to the new system during the initial

phase.⁷⁶ Following complaints by travel agents about implementation problems, Air Canada decided, in the summer of 1991, to reduce by half the number of agencies transferring to Apollo-by-Gemini on a monthly basis.⁷⁷ By the end of November 1991, 1677 agencies had adopted the new system.⁷⁸ In order to enable passenger agents to access the same displays and information as travel agencies and thus better service them, Air Canada acquired a number of Apollo-by-Gemini computers for its reservations offices. Links were also established between the new computer reservations system and ReserVec II. The company trained some passenger agents in the use of the new technology to allow them to be of assistance to agencies in case of problems.⁷⁹ As mentioned in chapter five, following an assessment of its reservations system requirements, Air Canada elected to replace ReserVec II with a completely new reservations system instead of switching to Apollo-by-Gemini.⁸⁰

The new Apollo-by-Gemini computer reservations system offered automated products more advanced than those included in ReserVec II as well as additional features which could significantly enhance travel agency capabilities. The union was concerned that these technological enhancements would enable travel agencies to capture an even greater share of the air travel market. It also feared that Air Canada would precipitate the obsolescence of the reservations offices by not switching to the Apollo-by-Gemini system, thereby encouraging the public to revert to travel agencies.⁸¹

These fears were heightened when, in the context of the globalization of travel automation, Covia International Network and Galileo - which was controlled by nine European airlines, including Aer Lingus, Alitalia, Austrian Airlines, British Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Olympic Airways, Sabena Belgian World Airlines, Swissair

and TAP Air Portugal - signed an agreement in early 1993 to merge their computer reservations systems, thereby creating a new company called Galileo International.⁸² The enterprise meant the joining of forces of two of the airline industry's leading computer reservations systems to create the first global travel products distribution network serving over 25,000 travel agencies worldwide. The distribution of travel products through agencies using computerized reservations systems has obviously become an essential aspect of air carriers' marketing strategy. Since the mid-1980s, airline companies have been aggressively promoting their computerized reservations systems in order to secure more travel agent subscribers and expand their market share. In this context, the capability of computer reservations systems has emerged as a key tool in the struggle to remain competitive and ensure market domination in the wake of the deregulation and globalization of air transportation.

The battle over computer reservations systems in North America came to the fore once again in the early 1990s, in the wake of alliance talks between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp. Indeed, one of AMR Corp.'s main conditions for a partnership was that CAIL agree to utilize the American carrier's Sabre system and break off links with the Gemini Group. Sabre, which already held a commanding share of the American market, would thus be provided with greater access to the Canadian market because of CAIL's use of the system and also due to the increased need for travel agencies to hook up to the American-controlled computer reservations system. This could potentially affect Air Canada's market share and prompt the carrier to offer better incentives and more heavily promote travel agencies, thereby further impinging on the job security of passenger agents.

The introduction of computer technology linking outside companies to Air Canada's central reservations system was a tremendous threat to the job security of passenger agents because it enabled travel agency personnel to perform the job of these bargaining unit workers. Other initiatives undertaken by Air Canada also facilitated the transfer of reservations and ticketing tasks to agencies. With the discontinuation of flight services to several communities (which were often taken over by Air Canada's subsidiary carriers) and with the centralization of reservations offices as well as the closing of city sales offices, the airline's presence in many communities was reduced or eliminated. Consequently, this left only local travel agencies to attend to customers seeking more personalized service. Furthermore, the union charged that by moving city sales offices from prime locations to less accessible areas and by heavily promoting the use of agencies as a channel for reservations and ticket purchase, the company allowed business to slip into the hands of agencies.⁸³ The union also voiced its suspicion that in some reservations offices, Air Canada was reducing the number of telephone lines, a practice which could encourage customers to seek service from travel agencies because of their inability to quickly access a company reservations office.⁸⁴ Finally, during the late 1980s, some of the specialized positions in reservations offices, such as tour desks, were eliminated, with passenger agents instructed to refer clients to travel agencies or city sales offices.⁸⁵ The following excerpt from the minutes of a Toronto reservations location union-management meeting reveals that the union's concern that travel agencies would capture more of passenger agents' work was well founded:

The Union asked whether any dedicated Tours training for CSO [city sales office] agents would take place resulting from the reduction of the Travel Centre function in General Reservations. The Company responded that

an agent from the Travel Centre had been sent to the CSO's to do training in Tours. The Union noted that neither the Travel Centre agent nor the CSO agents involved regarded these brief information sessions as training. The Union therefore contended that Air Canada management is deliberately forcing Tours business to Travel Agencies by not providing adequate training for CSO agents to feel comfortable with Tours procedures. The Company agreed that some Tours business may be lost to Travel Agencies but stated that no further Tours training would take place in the CSO's.⁸⁶

The elimination of specialized positions in reservations offices also reduced the number of interesting jobs available to passenger agents, with more of the staff spending a greater portion of their time on relatively uninteresting tasks.

An important change related to the carrier's customer base also impinged on the work of passenger agents as well as on their job security. Over the years, many of Air Canada's larger commercial accounts had switched to agencies or had set up in-house travel operations. Hence, by the mid-1980s, much of Air Canada's corporate business, which was a crucial market segment, was being handled by outside agencies,⁸⁷ with the exception of the lucrative federal government travel servicing contract. The latter had been established by the crown carrier in 1968 to fill the requirement for government travel.⁸⁸ However, when this \$120 million central travel service account was awarded in May 1986 to Marlin Travel Ltd., one of the country's largest travel agencies, Air Canada passenger agents lost another substantial amount of work. While the transition of the central travel service to Marlin Travel Ltd. was gradual, by December 1987, ninety positions disappeared, the majority in Ottawa, thereby further eroding the job security of passenger agents.⁸⁹ In October 1991, this account was awarded to the Rider Travel Group, an agency which made use of American Airlines Inc.' Sabre computer reservations system and not the Gemini reservations system as was the case with Marlin

Travel Ltd.⁹⁰ Much to the disappointment of the union, Air Canada did not submit a bid for this contract.⁹¹

Although the overall shift of work to travel agencies had begun slowly, the trend accelerated throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, during the early 1940s, the proportion of business secured from this source was reported to be between 5 and 10 percent.⁹² By 1977, more than half of the revenue Air Canada received from ticket sales was generated by travel agencies⁹³ and by the early 1990s, approximately 78 percent of the business went through such channels.⁹⁴ Moreover, close to 90 percent of Canadian travel agencies used computer reservations systems to book airline seats and print tickets.⁹⁵ The volume of calls and the number of tickets that passenger agents did not process because customers were being serviced by travel agencies was therefore enormous. This situation was made possible due to the large number of VDTs and printers installed in off-premise locations over the years. By 1983, the gradual erosion of job security resulting from increased travel agency activity led a district chairperson to complain:

In my opinion - the travel agencies are our greatest threat today! They, and not the passenger agent group, are being groomed to handle the travel needs of tomorrow's passengers. They are becoming the travel consultant, whereas, we are becoming obsolete.⁹⁶

During interviews, many passenger agents who had been working for the company since the 1960s made reference to the tremendous growth in the number of agencies over the years and spoke of their resentment towards these travel businesses, as the following quote illustrates:

Initially, when I first came in, we hardly knew what a travel agency was, there weren't that many. And gradually over the years, particularly in the

late 1970s, they really got a big grip of the market and they were just opening up all over the place, they mushroomed. And there was a bit of resentment in the rank and file because we felt that our jobs were being eroded by travel agencies and by Air Canada catering to the travel agencies. That's not changed. We still feel that way. We are still expected to do everything the travel agency wants us to do. When we come to Air Canada, we're told we want them to stay with Air Canada, they're generating a lot of business and we're there for them. And it's a dichotomy. You're really caught because you want to do your job. At the same time you're doing your job, you have a feeling, maybe I'm doing myself out of my job, by doing my job so well.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the union criticized Air Canada for its apparent unwillingness to compete with travel agencies, arguing not only that the job security of passenger agents would be seriously compromised if the company did not move to reverse the trend it had encouraged over the years, but also that the airline's bookings could potentially be affected because agencies were in business for themselves and were thus not limited to selling Air Canada. The airline could rely, however, on the loyalty of passenger agents to sell its products. The union urged the company to aggressively seek new direct business especially in the form of commercial accounts.⁹⁷ Because these clients were the repeat, must-fly travellers who paid higher fares, encouraging corporate loyalty would be beneficial to Air Canada.

The company maintained, however, that it was primarily concerned with selling seats and that it exercised little control over the way in which customers booked their travel and picked up their tickets. As well, it pointed to the sensitivity of managing its channels of distribution, mainly in relation to travel agencies which had access to a significant number of potential passengers. Travel agencies represented a broad channel of distribution because they were present in a vast number of large and small centres, whereas Air Canada only operated ticket offices in major cities. The company further

spoke of the financial advantages of dealing with travel agents, given the substantial savings which resulted from lower wage rates in agencies and by virtue of the revenue gained through fees for equipment rental and bookings.⁹⁸

The union remained somewhat sceptical about the company's financial arguments because of the commissions paid to agencies and hidden costs incurred when ticket charges and fare rules were waived.⁹⁹ Troubled by the transfer of passenger agent work to travel agencies, a union representative noted:

Travel agencies are taking over more and more of reservations agent work. And if you get into, which they're getting into now, much more sophisticated equipment in the travel agencies than you have in the reservations offices, much more liberalization of rules in the travel agencies than there are in the reservations offices, then you're going to drive your business to those agencies, no questions about it. Now, we've been saying to Air Canada for a number of years, "you really then have the tail wagging the dog, and they're going to call the shots with regards to what they can and can't have, and how much their commissions can be and that kind of thing." They're getting pressure from the travel agencies, first and foremost, not to compete and that tail that's wagging that dog is putting the pressure on. Travel agencies will be in the malls, will be in the high profile kind of places, hotel lobbies, etc. And you will be where no one could find you anyway, and as an end result, you don't have offices.

The union was also disturbed by the number of times VDT-equipped agencies requested general information and assistance in ReserVec II operation while on calls with passenger agents. Agents remarked that travel agencies should not receive commissions when airline employees were required to complete reservations and ticketing functions for them. During interviews with passenger agents, many complained about travel agents' lack of ability to perform the job adequately and the burden this imposed on them. The following observations by two passenger agents reflect the agency-related problems encountered in reservations offices:

They call, and a lot of them are so ignorant, not in a nasty way, but they just don't know their job. It's very frustrating to deal with them because they'll get you to do all the work for them, then they'll say, "no, I don't want to book," or else they'll say, "I could do it with my computer." So you realize they have all the same source material as you do, but they call you and get you to do all the work and then they just book in the computer and get the commission. You feel kind of cheated, in that they're using you basically to do their job when they should be doing it themselves. I don't mind dealing with them, but sometimes it is very infuriating that they call up and they want this and they want this, they want that, and they'll ask you for six different fares and you'll provide all the information and they don't book it. We have an entire department upstairs to handle their calls, but they still call us all the time. They're supposed to call them. You could say "well by the way, you do have a number you can call," but you can't really refuse to serve them. You have to treat them as well as everybody else. They ask you for the fare and the tax. Well they're agents, they should know how to figure out tax. It just gets frustrating when they don't even try. I don't mind if an agent calls and says, "look, I'm new, could you give me a hand." I'm more than happy to. But it's just some agents who are too lazy to do the work themselves and they call and they get you to do all the work, and then they just say, "fine, I'll book it, I have a computer right here." You just feel like you've been cheated.

Relations can be tense with agencies, it depends on the attitude of the agency and on the attitude of the agent. I get an agency on the phone and my back's up a little bit, but I know I have to be nice to them so I don't give them any more or any less than I have to. They often don't identify themselves, and you'll go through all of this nonsense about where are you going, when are you going, when are you coming back, how long are you staying, would you like to book. And you're making an extra effort to get those bloody lines in there, when you know this agency has got someone and will say, "Oh no, I'll call you back, this is just so-and-so from a travel agency." And after ten minutes of developing the call and trying to get the booking. And then the steam comes out of the ears, and I just say, "look, you identify yourself immediately." And I give them shit every time because it's just not right because a call from an agency is different than a call from a person on the street. When they call, all they want is the rate. If a customer calls in off the street and asks that same question, well you have to go through the whole mumbo jumbo of offering to book and overcoming objections and all that kind of thing. They tell the passenger agent they have to go through that anyway even when the agencies identify themselves. Which creates a big stressful situation because you get a travel agent whose been in the business for twenty years and they get real crusty after awhile. And then you struggle

through the whole rigamarole and they say, "listen dear, I just want the rate," and then they scream at you. So, if I get a travel agent, I give them what they want and get rid of them, and I don't stress myself out that way.

It is clear that many agents harboured negative feelings towards travel agents, especially because of job security concerns:

Travel agencies are another problem. They expect the world and Air Canada caters to them, and Air Canada is giving our jobs away to them. I hate travel agencies, I would eat them for breakfast if I could, you know, I hate them. Special accounts deal with agencies, but there's the overflow, or if they can't handle talking to the 'snarks' who work in there they'll call downstairs, and then when these people are closed, i.e. after five o'clock and on weekends, there's all kinds of agencies downstairs. And they're used to getting catered to by Air Canada because agencies do 73 percent of Air Canada's ticketing right now and Air Canada would like them to do 100 percent. They bend over backwards, they contort all out of shape to give whatever the agencies want to them. Agencies turn around and hire someone for eight bucks an hour who calls Air Canada and says, "I didn't have any training, I don't know how to operate the computer, what do I do." I always tell other agents to do it, take a half hour to do it, take as long as it takes, and don't tell them how to do it on the machine. 'Cause as soon as they know how to do it, they'll put us out of business. And the company is only too pleased to push as much business to travel agencies as they possibly can, and I wouldn't be surprised if sometime in the future, Air Canada bought a huge agency and staffed everybody at six bucks an hour and closed all reservations offices.

Because travel agencies had access to the central reservations system and were allowed, over the years, to perform a growing number of passenger agent tasks, the job of Air Canada employees working in the agency section of reservations offices lost some of its interesting and challenging elements. As one agent interviewed remarked, while workers in the general reservations section had become order takers those in the agency section had, for their part, become glorified order takers. Furthermore, given that a growing number of customers, especially business clients and people travelling extensively to a variety of destinations, chose to deal with agencies, Air Canada agents

were not handling the most interesting itineraries as they were relegated to dealing with those customers who many agents referred to as 'bus people'. This situation is clearly expressed by the following agent:

I was at the airport for two years and two years in reservations. So, it's been a disappointment, because I thought it would be more interesting bookings, but I think that's a thing of the past. We just handle changes in bookings which result in informing a passenger about penalties that he has to pay, etc., or rebookings, you know, making changes. I think in the past, probably they got more of the international bookings, but because so many travel agencies have the computer sets now, they tend to be doing a lot of the bookings. A lot of the commercial bookings are done through them, the more experienced, better travel agencies. And that, you know, can be, at times, frustrating for us I think. I mean, the revenue is coming in, now that they're paying commissions through the agencies, but, when you're left to do the small easy sort of bookings, you don't take sort of much use up in the head, after awhile it gets to you.

The Struggle to Strengthen Job Security

As this chapter as well as chapters four and five on the labour process demonstrate, the job security of passenger agents was gradually eroded over the course of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s due to continual technological innovations, work reorganization, the centralization of reservations offices, the contracting out of work, the cross-utilization of employees and massive layoffs. Despite its limited resources, the union fought back through the grievance process and during negotiations, but the strength of the employer represented a formidable obstacle. The majority of scope-related disputes which were dealt with in arbitration established that the provisions of article 2.03 placed a severe restriction on those who could carry out passenger agent duties. Nonetheless, over the years, the company obtained relief from these limitations, thereby gaining an increased ability to allocate passenger agent duties to non-bargaining unit

workers. Moreover, the limited technological change provision included in the contract in 1966 was ineffective in protecting the job security of agents. Beginning in the mid-1980s, given its inability to reverse the trends that had negatively affected passenger agents, the union sought to enhance workers' job security through the negotiation of a stronger technological change clause, innovative job expansion programmes and improved layoff and relocation provisions. The following section will explore how these strategies modified the outcome.

In order to protect the job security of members, the union fought to achieve more control over the direction and pace of technological change. A limited clause on technological change had been negotiated in 1966 following the introduction of ReserVec, Telpak, the automated passenger name record system and the automated call distributor. The contract language stipulated that in the event of technological innovations that would affect the condition of employment of workers in the CALEA bargaining unit, the company was obliged to enter into discussions with the union as far in advance as possible before making changes in order to provide every possibility of continuous employment for those affected.¹⁰⁰ This clause was obviously very weak and thus did not effectively ensure the union's involvement in this matter of fundamental importance to passenger agents. Even though the union regularly sought to provide input at the initial study stage and before final decisions were made, it generally was notified only later in the process without having been consulted.

In the early 1980s, with the development of highly sophisticated automated systems and work reorganization which threatened the job security of all passenger agents, the union began placing greater emphasis on matters pertaining to technological

change. Because of the rapid growth of the industry until the late 1970s, the productivity increases flowing from technological innovations had never resulted in massive layoffs for passenger agents. The new technologies, compounded by a rapidly evolving airline industry, were giving rise to major job security concerns, however. Delegates to the 1983 general meeting adopted a policy resolution on technological change that called for the establishment of a committee to develop background material for use in bargaining and for educational purposes at the district level. Given that labour laws did not adequately protect workers in the event of technological change, the convention also mandated the union to press for legislative reforms in this area. Finally, it was resolved that one of the CALEA's main priorities during collective bargaining was to obtain strong contract language prohibiting the implementation of new technology until the union and the company had reached an agreement.¹⁰¹

Because of impending and far-reaching workplace technological innovations, the issue of technological change was of fundamental concern during the 1984-1985 round of collective bargaining. The union managed to considerably strengthen the contract language on technological change. For the first time, a definition of technological change, albeit relatively weak, was incorporated in the contract. Technological change was henceforth held to mean the introduction of equipment or material, different in nature, type or quantity from that previously utilized or modifications to the manner in which work was carried out related to the introduction of such equipment, both of which affected a significant number of workers. The agreement also resulted in the setting up of a joint technological change committee at the national level which was required to meet at least once each quarter and at least 160 days prior to the implementation of new

technology to discuss the overall impact on employees and the implications for retraining and the reorganization of work. The definition of technological change was the same as that provided by the Canada Labour Code,¹⁰² but the advance notice provision of the new contract was a slight improvement because the Code only required the employer to notify workers of technological changes 120 days prior to implementation. The committee was further mandated to explore the possibility of expanding the work available to passenger agents and of including within the scope of the collective agreement tasks created through the introduction of new technologies. The company was required to provide members of the committee with materials pertaining to technological change which would ensure that the fullest discussions take place.¹⁰³

The new contract clause, which included a definition of technological change, a requirement of advance notice for such change and provisions for the establishment of a joint technological change committee, offered the union a better means to monitor the effects of technological innovations on members and address issues of major concern. It also somewhat lessened the company's discretion in defining what was to be considered technological change. There were, however, significant limitations to the contract language. The definition of technological change did not cover modifications to work methods unrelated to the introduction of new machinery or equipment. Furthermore, the union was unsuccessful in obtaining guarantees that employees displaced by new technology would be retrained at the employer's expense. Finally, the union did not participate in setting the parameters of technological change and had no input in decisions on the nature of new technologies chosen. It was not consulted when plans for bringing in new technology were being made, but was informed only following major decisions.

Moreover, the union had no power to halt the introduction of new technologies once investment decisions were made.

The limitations of the new language were revealed during the decision-making process concerning the new reservations selling stations first introduced in the late 1980s. Despite the fact that the company held user discussions with agents from five major reservations offices, thus allowing worker input before the final implementation decision was taken, this involvement, though unprecedented, was within strict limits. While notification of the change was provided to the union through the joint technological change committee as stipulated in the collective agreement, the union was not invited to participate at any stage in the overall process. During the early 1990s, however, the union did participate in the designing of new workstations and work counters.¹⁰⁴

The second major strategy adopted by the union to counter the erosion of passenger agents' job security consisted in promoting job expansion programmes. In 1978, in order to reduce the impact of concessions agreed to that year whereby other company and non-company workers could undertake certain passenger agent tasks, the CALEA negotiated a contract provision which allowed for the expansion, on a non-exclusive basis, in the type of work performed by agents in areas not covered by the contract.¹⁰⁵ While the terms and conditions were subject to discussions between the company and the union, management nonetheless retained total discretion over work assignments and the number of jobs created. Under this arrangement, a number of different jobs were made available to passenger agents on a long- and short-term basis.¹⁰⁶ Even though the union expected that the provisions would lead to a permanent expansion in the type of work being accomplished by passenger agents, this objective was

never achieved.

During the 1984-1985 contract talks, fearing that the fundamental restructuring of the airline industry and the pending introduction of new forms of technological change would significantly reduce the work of passenger agents, the union successfully negotiated a stronger job expansion clause. The provisions of the 1978 letter of understanding dealing with this matter were split into two distinct letters of understanding. The first granted passenger agents full-time, long-term positions outside the scope of the collective agreement in areas such as customer relations, training, quality assurance, staff planning and assignment, and external sales solicitation. Some of this work had been carried out under the old job expansion clause or under provisions governing relief assignments. With this new clause, vacancies were filled on a seniority basis subject to qualifications, an improvement over previous language under which the company enjoyed greater discretion in selecting employees. The second letter of understanding was somewhat similar, but was intended to cover assignments of a short-term or intermittent nature. The terms and method of filling positions were determined through discussions at the local level.¹⁰⁷ Under these provisions, several agreements were reached to expand passenger agents' tasks and duties, particularly in the areas of training, quality assurance and sales, thereby providing more interesting and challenging work for a small number of agents.¹⁰⁸ The union expressed concern, however, that some regions were not taking advantage of the letters of understanding. Moreover, disputes arose because passenger agents felt selection was based on favouritism rather than qualifications or seniority.¹⁰⁹

As a means of achieving a permanent expansion of the work performed by the

membership, the union attempted to bring these special assignments within the scope of the agreement on an exclusive basis through the creation of new job classifications. It especially sought to include the training function, given that the application of the letters of understanding had resulted in most of the training tasks being undertaken by passenger agents.¹¹⁰ While the union was unsuccessful in its efforts, it was nonetheless able to obtain, in 1986, a guaranteed minimum of thirty-five positions across the system under the letter of understanding covering long-term assignments.¹¹¹ This number was raised to fifty jobs following contract talks in 1988.¹¹² These numbers, though significant, were considerably less than that sought by the union. With the exception of the maintenance of these minimum numbers, assignments were subject to unilateral modification by the company. Although the number of jobs created fluctuated, in November 1991, sixty-two assignments were reported throughout the system.¹¹³

To further secure jobs for passenger agents and partly reverse the trend towards the transferring of bargaining unit work to travel agencies, especially in the wake of the loss of the government travel service contract, the union succeeded in negotiating the creation, in 1986, of a union travel service which would provide a unionized reservations facility for Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) affiliates making travel arrangements.¹¹⁴ Prior to the establishment of this new programme, the CLC's 1984 convention had adopted a resolution tabled by the CALEA which encouraged its member unions to make reservations and purchase tickets through unionized travel outlets.¹¹⁵ Given the lack of unionization of travel agency workers, this policy was aimed at directing business to airline companies where sales workers were unionized.

The union travel service was initially successful, with support received from the

trade union movement and Air Canada management. In some larger cities, a specialized union travel service work function was created, dedicated telephone lines were provided and passenger agents were trained as sales representatives to solicit union business. Many unions were signed up as commercial accounts with some business being directed away from travel agencies and, as a result, a number of passenger agent jobs were salvaged.¹¹⁶ However, by the late 1980s, the programme's success was hampered when the company decided to discontinue the dedicated telephone lines assigned to union travel calls and channel them through the special accounts sections of reservations offices because it was estimated that call volumes did not justify the cost of maintaining these lines. Consequently, in some locations, managers began cancelling the entire programme.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, in a few locations, the programme continued to expand. When the special accounts office in Ottawa was closed in the summer of 1991 and calls were telpaked to Montreal, the CAW local 2213 pressed the company to transfer the union accounts to Winnipeg where the union travel service was well established. In response to union demands, Air Canada implemented a national toll-free number for easy access to the union travel service in the Winnipeg reservations office.¹¹⁸

The union's experience with the letters of understanding and the union travel service indicates that it was only slightly successful in bringing about more full-time employment through the expansion of permanent jobs in the bargaining unit. The innovative programmes put forward by the union also faced major challenges, especially in the wake of massive layoffs in the early 1990s.

The third major job security enhancement strategy pursued by the union consisted in negotiating stronger layoff and relocation provisions. During the 1984-1985 and

subsequent rounds of contract talks, the union successfully bargained for improvements in this area in order to protect passenger agents' employment and create more acceptable options in the event of staff reductions. The collective agreement signed in 1985 incorporated some of the most significant changes. Advance notice of layoff was increased from fourteen to twenty-one days and passenger agents forced or electing to go on laid-off status retained and accrued seniority for a period of sixty months instead of the twenty-four months provided for in previous contracts. Subject to certain seniority conditions, both full-time and part-time agents affected by staff reductions in a location or a base could elect to fill a vacancy or bump a junior employee in the other status in the location or the base instead of relocating or being laid off. In addition, laid-off employees could select recall to their base in either full-time or part-time status, or both. In the event of staff reductions at the base level, the company agreed to augment payment of relocation expenses from 50 to 100 percent for those employees choosing to move. In cases where employees opted to terminate their services with the company rather than take laid-off status, severance pay was increased from one week's to two weeks' pay for each full calendar year of service or parts thereof, up to a maximum of fifty-two weeks' pay.¹¹⁹ In 1990, the union succeeded in improving the severance package for workers who opted to terminate their employment with the company when the latter ceased to operate a scheduled air service. They were now entitled to a severance allowance of three weeks' pay for each full calendar year of service or parts thereof, up to a maximum of sixty-nine weeks' pay.¹²⁰

In 1988, the contract was modified to allow workers who were being relocated as a result of a staff reduction to request an intra-base transfer as soon as they were

advised of their new location of employment. With the elimination of the mandatory waiting period of twenty-six weeks, requests were to be processed as though the transferring employees were already at their new base when vacancies were being filled. Moreover, those employees who relocated to another base because of downsizing would be offered a vacancy at their original base in their status, ahead of regular transfer requests. Their recall status was in fact equivalent to that of laid-off employees at the original base.¹²¹ In 1990, passenger agents at Air Canada won increased job security with the inclusion of a contract clause which guaranteed that existing passenger handling contracts with alliance carriers would be continued as long as Air Canada retained majority ownership of these carriers and operated flights at the bases in question.¹²² This clause effectively protected passenger agents for the short term against increased contracting out of work to alliance carriers.

When the collective agreement expiring in late 1992 was extended for a one year period, only a few clauses were modified, including the ones dealing with staff reductions and transfers. When agents chose to relocate to another base following staff reductions, they could request a change of status at the new base without being subject to the usual time requirements. This change was especially intended to address situations where part-time workers from smaller communities who were relocating to a larger city could not subsist on the salary of a part-time employee. In addition, agents who moved to another base due to staff reductions would now be offered a vacancy at their original base in either part-time or full-time status, ahead of regular transfer requests.¹²³

In addition to the job expansion programmes and the many amendments to the layoff and transfer clauses, the union also succeeded in negotiating enhanced severance

and early retirement packages as well as improved leaves of absence opportunities. These initiatives resulted in reduced staff overages and therefore fewer layoffs. Although these various programmes and changes to the collective agreement served to protect the jobs of a number of agents, they were not sufficient to cushion workers against the massive layoffs of the early 1990s. With job loss occurring at other Canadian airlines and in other economic sectors, passenger agents faced poor labour market conditions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined job security as an important element of the employment relationship. While the two preceding chapters discussed the effects of the introduction of new workplace technologies on job security, this chapter has focused on the contracting out of passenger agent tasks to non-company workers and the cross-utilization of company employees, two management practices which have resulted in others performing passenger agents' duties. In some instances, especially in the case of the contracting out of work to travel agencies, technological innovations have been used to modify the employment relationship by eliminating labour and by facilitating shifts in the location of work. These changes in employment practices are an integral part of the process of proletarianization of passenger agents. I have demonstrated that the outcome was influenced by workers' actions.

For passenger agents, job security concerns revolving around the contracting out of work and the cross-utilization of workers emerged in the 1960s in the context of the transformation of the labour process. As a result of struggles by the union against threats of worker substitution, job security, in the form of work jurisdiction, became entrenched

as a contractual right governed by rules and regulations. Despite the union's ability to initially win a strong job protection clause, the terms were weakened over the years as the employer sought to regain control. In the wake of the crisis-ridden economy and the restructuring of the airline industry beginning in the late 1970s, management achieved increased flexibility in the allocation of passenger agent work to non-scope workers. While the union had always relied on the collective bargaining process and the grievance system to fight ongoing threats to members' job security, it recognized the need to adopt different strategies to reverse the trend towards the weakening of employment security, especially given structural industry and workplace changes. Through the development of innovative programmes and negotiated changes to the collective agreement, the union managed to somewhat strengthen the internal labour market, beginning in the mid-1980s. The employer's practices have nevertheless led to layoffs and thus in the depletion of the bargaining unit.

The cross-utilization of workers and the contracting out of work have been attractive to Air Canada as well as to other employers because they have either facilitated the interchange of staff responsibilities to maximize productivity or enabled management to avoid maintaining continuity of employment. Both strategies have contributed to an overall reduction in direct labour costs. Moreover, contracting out has represented a means of minimizing and externalizing risks and costs when faced with competitive pressures and market uncertainties. Capitalism is not only defined by production, but also by the selling of goods and services. The realization of surplus through the sale of commodities and services can be problematic, especially in periods of economic downturn. For Air Canada, the intensification of competition for market share made cost

cutting and increased productivity critical. Managerial decisions and practices concerning product markets have had deep implications for the employment relationship as well as for the nature and organization of work.

While labour process theorists such as Friedman,¹²⁴ Edwards¹²⁵ and Burawoy¹²⁶ (in his earlier work) pointed to a general historical shift towards more consensual forms of workplace control institutionalized through internal labour markets which served to effectively integrate workers, it is clear that an increasing trend towards contracting out has led to the weakening of such markets, thus resulting in reduced employment security for passenger agents and in the shifting of control mechanisms. Indeed, with contracting arrangements, the permanent employment relationship is eliminated and the external labour market serves as a means of control. The employer therefore avoids some of the expenses related to maintaining bureaucratic structures of control that ensured the transformation of labour power into actual labour.

The ability of Air Canada to actively pursue these employment practices is a clear indication of the disposability of passenger agents, most of whom are women. While passenger agents, like other subordinate primary workers employed by large corporations have, until recently, enjoyed relatively high job stability, the company's more extensive use of contracting out has facilitated an increased reliance on reserve army discipline, thus rendering their employment position more akin to that of workers in secondary labour markets where women abound. Studies of broad employment trends by Armstrong,¹²⁷ Connelly¹²⁸ and others have highlighted the precariousness of the paid work situation of a large majority of women. My inquiry provides an important insight into the intricacies of the material reality reflected in such statistics.

The ease with which Air Canada could contract out tasks and cross-utilize employees underlines the deskilled nature of passenger agent work. These practices of parcelling out work also led to further deskilling. While passenger agents were not the only group of company employees witnessing the contracting out of some aspects of their jobs and the loss of work through cross-utilization, they were nevertheless extremely vulnerable to these managerial initiatives as they were to the employer's decisions to introduce technological innovations that modified the organization of work.

The contracting out of work has become a fundamental feature of the contemporary employment relationship for a growing number of workers. There are indications that this trend will accelerate in the future and could potentially take a variety of forms for different groups of workers. Indeed, in the context of the present phase of capitalist restructuring which has strengthened managerial prerogatives, employers can more easily alter employment practices to gain greater leeway in deploying their labour forces. Declining profit margins and competitive pressures have been used to justify a more aggressive stance towards labour, a move leading to what Burawoy¹²⁹ describes as hegemonic despotism.

Even though contracting out of work has become a major issue for unions which must grapple with major threats to the job security of their members, this employment practice has largely been neglected by studies of work under advanced capitalism. Despite its invisibility in this literature, contracting out does have a long history. In the past, this practice has usually involved manual workers. Littler,¹³⁰ for example, has provided an insightful analysis which demonstrates that the avoidance of a direct employer-employee relationship through subcontracting was an important feature of early

industrialization. Studies by Mercedes Steedman¹³¹ and Laura Johnson and Robert Johnson¹³² have pointed to the heavy reliance on the putting out system in the clothing industry. Managerial initiatives, facilitated by new technology, are now being directed towards the spread of contracting arrangements in areas of employment involving not only blue-collar workers but also white-collar workers. While microelectronics and telecommunications technologies are being used to modify the employment relationship in all areas of work, there are indications that white-collar work will be a main target for profound transformations. The scope and rapidity of change could result in major labour market dislocations. Given sex-based segmentation in the workforce, women will be disproportionately affected by new patterns of employment.

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7. WORKPLACE TRAINING AND MONITORING

This chapter investigates two important elements of the labour process of passenger agents, namely job training and workplace monitoring. In the first section, I provide a general overview of the training programmes introduced by the company and show that despite the growth and rapid change in products and in markets beginning in the late-1970s, overall training remained inadequate, a situation that did not encourage the development of agents' interpersonal, service-oriented and sales skills. I point to the contradictions inherent in the company's approach to training, given the necessity for agents to acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of products in order to be an effective sales force, and to achieve a high level of 'people skills' in order to provide quality service as an essential component of the airline's product. I discuss workers' dissatisfaction with the company's training programmes.

The second section of this chapter traces the fundamental changes in TCA/Air Canada's approach to the monitoring of passenger agents. I demonstrate that in the early years, when paternalistic relations prevailed, traditional methods of supervision were used whereby monitoring was more sporadic and intermittent. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, Air Canada introduced highly sophisticated electronic equipment and altered its monitoring practices in order to generate more constant, detailed and accurate data on agents' performance as a means of increasing productivity and more effectively controlling its workers and products. These changes in workplace surveillance contributed to the intensification and standardization of work. Notwithstanding these new modes of monitoring workers, management continued to make use of old methods of workplace control. In this chapter, I also discuss resistance to intensifying managerial control. I demonstrate how workers fought these practices on an individual basis in

order to create space for themselves and gain some control over their immediate work environment. Moreover, I address the union's strategies, which centre on the legislative and collective bargaining processes, to struggle against the employer's various systems of monitoring and measurement.

The Training of Passenger Agents

During the first few years of the company's existence, agents learned how to perform their duties through on-the-job training. In the absence of formal training, office managers and agents-in-charge as well as experienced staff were responsible for teaching the basic elements of the job to new workers.¹ A training school was established in Winnipeg in early 1942 for city traffic employees and airport passenger agents.² The company was satisfied with the new training programme and felt that:

A comparison of the work of employees who graduated from the classes with the work of employees brought directly into the various stations and traffic offices without preliminary training has proven the benefit of providing such a course. Graduates of the class have shown that once on the job they have required less practical experience to carry their own weight than employees who did not have the benefit of the course.³

In the summer of 1943, courses were also introduced for reservations personnel working in space control offices.⁴

During the mid-1940s, with the growth in traffic and the hiring of a larger number of workers, the company changed its practice of sending agents to Winnipeg for basic training and instead held classes in the regions. Agents-in-charge were appointed to assist supervisors and regional instructors in the training of staff. The central training department continued to coordinate training programmes.⁵ Nonetheless, given that most

field offices did not have the facilities nor the expertise to provide the necessary basic training and because too much of the supervisors' time was being spent on the training of new employees, the company transferred training functions from the regions to Montreal and, once again, created a centralized traffic training facility in 1950.⁶ This change allowed for a greater degree of standardization of instruction throughout the system. By the late 1950s, a second facility for initial training had been established in Toronto and other larger bases occasionally offered such training for new employees.⁷

The provision of adequate training to passenger agents was essential to enable them to sell company products and provide service to customers. Initial training usually lasted three to four weeks. During the first week, trainees studied the basics, including an overview of commercial aviation, general geography, the history of TCA and its policies, routes and services. This programme was followed by specialized courses to instruct new passenger agents on the specific tasks they were to carry out, either in telephone sales offices, reservations records sections, city traffic offices or at airport counters. Once initial training was completed, agents returned to their assigned location and were instructed in local procedures. They then worked under close supervision for the duration of their probationary period. Passenger agents also received follow-up training whenever changes in working procedures occurred. In addition, bulletins were circulated concerning new and revised policies, promotional campaigns about new destinations, fare changes, recently acquired types of aircraft and other related information. When agents transferred to different work locations, they usually received further training.⁸

In 1952, as part of a new on-the-job training programme aimed at ensuring a

higher standard of service to the public, the company established the lead agent classification to assist supervisors in helping workers improve their technical proficiency, overall knowledge and performance.⁹ These agents, who were appointed by local management, received a \$15 monthly pay differential.¹⁰ Under this scheme agents benefitted from better overall training and were less reluctant to seek assistance.¹¹ In 1957, the programme was discontinued and some of the 'lead agents were promoted to supervisory positions while others were returned to their previous passenger agent category. Supervisors thus became once again responsible for follow-up training.¹² The union criticized management's decision to eliminate the programme, arguing that the loss of lead agents would result in inadequate training for workers.¹³

In the late 1950s, training began to emerge as a contentious issue between the union and the company. The findings of a survey launched by the SEA in 1962 indicated that although agents were generally satisfied with basic training, they were unhappy with secondary training. Agents reported much variation in terms of the type, method, quantity and quality of follow-up programmes, with the smaller bases offering little formalized training. In many instances, agents were forced to acquire additional training on their own and often resorted to requesting assistance from more experienced colleagues, a situation that made the job of senior agents more demanding and also caused conflict between workers. The following letter from a SEA officer to TCA management lends testimony to passenger agents' criticisms of the state of training in the early 1960s:

There is no doubt in my mind that you are utterly sincere in presenting to me the facts, which no doubt appear on paper fairly satisfactory from an academic glance. Whilst at the same time I take the liberty of presuming

that you in turn view the efforts of this Association, in obtaining a satisfactory level of training for its members, as a sincere attempt to gain for the benefit of the Company and its employees, a level of job knowledge that will enable us to dispense promptly and intelligently the information and services which we are obliged to supply to the public for the purpose of maintaining and expanding a sound market for our product. However, given agreement on these preliminaries, there would still appear to be considerable divergence of opinion between employer and employee on what constitutes adequacy in training... [The training] has largely been a matter of what the new agent could pick up on his own, combined with a tendency to lean heavily on any experienced agents who happen to be on shift... If the passenger's first contact with TCA is not an easy one in which we can display some measure of assurance and efficiency how may we hope to establish his confidence, let alone retain it for the future?¹⁴

The union expressed concern about the general lack of follow-up training on several occasions, but never so forcefully as when a summary of its survey on training was presented to the company. Management's response, which is well worth quoting at length, clearly reflects the disagreement and tension over this aspect of the passenger agent job:

We look upon the Summary which was prepared from the results of your Training Questionnaire as an interesting cross-section of employee viewpoint on the subject. It is of course an expression of opinion only and not necessarily valid or objective information on which to base conclusions about the adequacy of training at a particular location, or in support of a particular plan of local or system character. The District Sales Manager and his subordinate Supervisors are responsible for maintaining performance at an acceptable level. Accordingly, they must decide when and where training is required to support or improve performance. They must also decide what form the required training will take, whether it be in the nature of self-instruction or the more formal types of off-the-job classroom training. Obviously, there can be differences of opinion about what is necessary to achieve or maintain the desired level of performance. However, the responsibility of management to make these decision is exclusive. The responsibility of Passenger Agents is a personal one; that is, to ensure that they make best use of any available means, formal or otherwise, to become competent and to maintain individual performances at an acceptable level. Naturally, the Passenger Agents' interest in this area is desirable and their opinions about what is taking place is useful information. However, I think we agree that

the views expressed in response to your Questionnaire would possibly be more useful if they were relayed to local management by the employees concerned.¹⁵

The oft-repeated statement that the level of training was below an acceptable standard referred not only to the inadequate provision of information on new products, policies and procedures, but also to the poor level of instruction given agents to help them acquire and develop effective selling and servicing skills. Even though service to customers was mentioned frequently during training, emphasis was on mastering the many technical details of the job. The limited level of training on how to deal with customers consisted in role-playing, the taping and replaying of simulated passenger telephone calls and discussion sessions.¹⁶ The public-contact work of passenger agents required solid product knowledge as well as strong interpersonal skills to effectively sell the company's products and service customers. Excellence in service to the public was a much promoted objective. That passenger agents were keenly aware of the importance of sound training in helping them deliver quality service as a means of ensuring passenger loyalty and growth is clearly illustrated by the following letter from a union district officer to a company manager:

I was most distressed to find that such a lack of interest existed, on the part of management, in the betterment of its sales staff... If we are to give service to the travelling public and sell TCA, which I assume is our job, isn't it obvious that the better trained the agents, the better service will be given.¹⁷

Indeed, insufficient training of agents contributed to inadequate levels of service. Passenger traffic was growing rapidly in the mid- to late-1960s and disgruntled clients who felt they were not receiving the customer-oriented service that they had been promised did not hesitate to complain. Customers expressed discontent with the attitude,

offhandedness and 'couldn't care less' approach of the airline's staff.¹⁸ Employees were criticized and in some cases disciplined when low standards of passenger service became the subject of complaints.¹⁹

In early 1967, as part of an overall programme to improve customer service, the company designed a sales and service training kit to help supervisors promote friendly and courteous service to customers. A major goal of this effort was to address the often heard comment that 'Air Canada is good in the air, but poor on the ground'. The company believed that better service would bolster its market position, increase revenues and reduce the cost, time and effort involved in handling and processing complaints and claims.²⁰ Ground hostesses working at airports, who were called upon to offer a more personalized service, required training that was strongly people oriented. In order to satisfy this need, Air Canada instituted formal non-technical seminars for ground hostesses in 1968 as part of a continuing customer service training programme aimed at improving passenger satisfaction.²¹ In 1969, following a global evaluation of employee training, the company acknowledged that training for public-contact workers was extremely technical. It attributed the lack of specifically people-oriented instructional programmes to:

limited training time and the extensive technical training that is required in the airline business, even in public contact positions. It is reinforced by a long-prevailing belief that warm and friendly service is a likely by-product of technical competence. Consequently, while service to the customer is mentioned regularly in training, it does not generally get the coverage that it otherwise might. This is now well recognized by both trainers and line management, and all concerned expressed a desire to see additional emphasis placed on customer-consciousness behaviour.²²

In order to ensure the development of skills conducive to the delivery of friendly and

courteous service, customer service seminars were immediately extended to include airport passenger agents and ultimately all sales agents. Clearly, Air Canada was compelled to respond to mounting public dissatisfaction with some aspects of its service, especially given that CP Air and the regional carriers were beginning to make inroads in the domestic marketplace.

During the early 1970s, basic training was decentralized as regional and local offices took over the responsibilities of providing, not only follow-up, but also initial training for passenger agents. This change resulted in overall cost savings as agents were no longer sent to the major training centres.²³ Moreover, this move helped resolve problems associated with a centralized programme not completely geared towards variations in the size, functions and procedures of local offices. The training department in Montreal, however, remained responsible for the overall coordination and direction of training and the provision of general training material which was adapted to local needs by training instructors or supervisors.

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, the introduction of new hardware, the continual innovations in computer software as well as the ongoing changes in procedures, products and fare types and rules altered the manner in which passenger agents carried out their work. These developments influenced Air Canada's training programmes. The duration of basic training was gradually extended so that by the late 1980s, courses ran for a period of between four and six weeks in most locations and up to nine weeks in the Toronto and Montreal reservations offices. During these sessions, much of the time was spent instructing newly hired workers on the use of computer transaction codes to obtain required information. While training courses were highly

technical, they were not geared towards the broadening and deepening of general computer skills despite the upgrading of computer systems.

The company occasionally offered refresher courses on specific aspects of the job, especially when agents repeated the same type of errors. Ongoing training was also provided to allow agents to keep up with the numerous changes constantly being implemented. More specifically, instructional sessions ranging from a few hours to a few days were offered when new transactions, fares, products and procedures as well as new software packages or hardware equipment were introduced. Sales briefings, consisting of a five minute informal exchange of information on specific changes, sometimes took place. Team meetings were also usually held on a monthly basis to discuss job-related topics. In addition, agents were expected to read handouts and the daily electronic information bulletin boards pertaining to system enhancements, product updates and other matters in order to keep abreast of all company and industry-wide changes affecting their jobs.

Many of the training-related problems encountered during the 1960s worsened throughout the entire period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. During this time, passenger agents and their union repeatedly expressed concern about the inadequacy of training and the consequences for the provision of service to customers, especially given the ever changing airline industry. Complaints were voiced that the absence of refresher training prevented workers from carrying out their tasks and duties effectively. Consequently, errors were made which resulted in poor customer service and, at times, proved costly to the company. Agents were equally dissatisfied with training packages for new products, procedures, transactions, fares and equipment. Moreover, courses

were sometimes conducted only after changes had been implemented. One particular source of frustration was the lack of information provided to agents prior to the announcement of seat sales, a situation which inevitably caused problems because workers did not always have the proper tools to sell the product. Furthermore, agents questioned the company's expectation that they keep abreast of a variety of industry changes by reading the daily electronic information bulletins and handouts. They felt shortchanged because this practice did not compensate for inadequate formal training. Workers maintained that the company did not provide them with sufficient time to thoroughly read and assimilate these messages. With the reduction in time between calls, agents in reservations offices could only keep up with the frequent changes by reading the bulletins during their meal and break periods. This situation gave rise to cynicism, with some agents arguing that if the company was not prepared to provide them with adequate training time, there was no reason for them to go beyond the call of duty to ensure superior service. The requirement for additional training was confirmed by a survey conducted by the union in 1989 which found that approximately 90 percent of respondents wanted more training than that provided by the company.²⁴

During interviews, agents systematically complained about the lack of training. The following excerpts are representative of agents' concerns. Two agents clearly expressed the view held by most about the poor levels of training:

Training is not sufficient, not at the airport. It's totally insufficient. It's what you pick up and whether you're interested. And if you're not interested, you don't pick it up. You can fumble through there for years, but really not be operating efficiently. It depends on the person, but it is very poor as far as training goes. They just don't have the time, it seems, to get people in for a training course, and there's just too many, now. I think they're just throwing their hands up and saying, "oh, it will all fall

into place, we hope," and hope it does. It isn't though. It's a shame.

It relates to the fact that there is no ability to take people out. Even experienced people need the odd refresher courses. Like, it's winter season again, here's a refresher on 'irrops' [irregular operations], let's take a look at it. There's nothing, absolutely nothing. The agent just goes by guess and by golly and by what the person next to them thinks is reasonable. And then you have Mr. Jeannot [then president and chief executive officer of Air Canada] going around the system telling everybody about how we're going to have the most highly trained agents in the world. We're not. We're going downhill, not uphill.

Moreover, agents were frustrated when they heard about changes through sources other than the company:

I'm always amazed when a prestigious company like Air Canada introduces a new product. They seem to approach it in a sort of a lackadaisical manner. Other people know about it long before we do. When new fares come in or special fares come in, the passengers know, The Globe and Mail knows about it long before we ever know about it. There seems to be a lack of communication.

A reservations agent talked about the difficulty of trying to grasp the information on new fares and procedures between calls:

We get handouts, saying this new fare, that new fare. But I hardly ever read them because you don't have time between calls. So a lot of people don't want to put themselves on not ready to read this ten page briefing on new fares because you're not getting credit for it. If they give me fifteen minutes, fine I'll read it. For example, a couple of months ago, when we had a new transaction in the computer, they gave us a handout and said, "do this twenty minute exercise." But they didn't give us any time to do it. So no one did it. I skipped through it, but of course I couldn't go through a transaction that a call would come in and I had to cancel again. There's no way I could do a twenty minute exercise. Sometimes we are taken off the floor to go into training. We had a day, about a month ago. There was a new way of converting currencies, so they took us in and they gave us three or four hours training on that. They took us off the floor. They do take us off occasionally for perhaps half a day or a day if something comes in that you couldn't pick up on your own. The classroom is much better than getting a handout. Most people don't read the handouts.

Airport agents also experienced similar difficulties, especially when there were constant lineups. This could sometimes cause problems, as is evidenced by the following account:

When you go out to the check-in counter and punch in every morning, what you really have to do is type 'transaction' to find out what the news of the day is or whatever. But you don't have one second to do that because you have a lineup in front of you. Or by the time you might get around to do this, which is one hour later, you've missed the fact that you should have been putting a passenger on another flight or something like that. But if someone doesn't tell you, or the supervisor doesn't come around quickly and let you know, you miss. Unless someone tells you, it's the only way you find out. It's because everything is so fast. When you come in, in the morning, there should be some flashes on the board as you're punching in, that you can see. Because, as soon as you sign in, there's a person in front of you lined up with his bag, in a hurry. You don't know, for example, where were the people being put off the cancelled flight from last night? Well a passenger tells you. Most times a passenger tells us what's going on. That's the awful part, that's the embarrassing part.

Complaints also surfaced because of uneven access to training. Agents, especially those working at public counters, were sometimes frustrated when, due to a lack of training, they could not provide information and services as effectively as their co-workers. Many agents felt that insufficient training did not allow them to maintain a high level of confidence and professionalism in order to adequately sell Air Canada products and provide service to customers.

There was widespread concern that training courses were too technical and did not provide sufficient instruction on how to deal with passengers, particularly under trying circumstances. The problem of overly technical courses had been raised during the 1960s, but the situation worsened beginning in the 1970s because of the proliferation of products and the mushrooming of computer transactions. Developing people skills

should have been a priority because travellers were increasingly knowledgeable about air travel products and aware of their ability to obtain satisfaction regardless of the rules. They were becoming more demanding and expected high levels of service at the lowest cost possible. The ever changing conditions in the airline industry led to high stress levels. Very few initiatives, however, were developed to assist agents in handling these situations. As one passenger agent expressed it:

When I first came to Air Canada, I had training in Halifax. They'd show us a video on how to deal with customers. They do have those, but I know a lot of people don't get them. It's out of the manager's budget to show this tape, to get time off, so a lot of time, people don't get to see them. There's actually a two or three day training session I had on how to deal with customers, on how to deal with irate customers, on how to deal with 'no beating around the bush' customers. We do have it but not everyone gets it. They don't really go in-depth on how to deal with an irate, how to do this and how to do that. They don't give a lot of telephone technique. Some people just are constantly irate, they're not happy unless they're complaining. You have to realize that and you have to know how to deal with that. But most people don't get the sort of training that would help with that.

Even though many had acquired the interpersonal skills required for the job, either through their work as passenger agents, in prior employment or through other non-paid work-related experiences, there was clearly a need for ongoing training to retain and enhance skills.

In the early 1980s, in order to meet the challenge of increasing competition and boost sales, Air Canada introduced a new training initiative called passenger sales effectiveness. This programme was developed to broaden passenger agents' knowledge and understanding of products and services and enhance training to ensure that agents possess the skill and motivation to aggressively sell the company's products and provide exceptional service to customers.²⁵ Given that the union had been demanding higher

levels of training for many years, it initially supported the passenger sales effectiveness effort. Although the programme, with its promise of upgraded and ongoing training, generated much enthusiasm at the outset, it quickly proved somewhat disappointing.²⁶ Except for a two to three day seminar offered to most passenger agents, very little passenger sales effectiveness training was provided. Sales techniques were dealt with only in a limited way during the courses and priority was not placed on developing interpersonal and people-oriented skills. Both, however, were essential in the new era of intense competition. Management fully expected agents to deliver quality service and perform as highly skilled salespeople despite the lack of adequate training. Even though most welcomed the chance to develop new skills to sell Air Canada products, many complained that the training sessions on passenger sales effectiveness did not provide them with new abilities to become effective sales people. The following passages from interviews with agents illustrate the disappointment with the programme:

They started to supposedly shift their emphasis a little bit more to sales. Now they didn't use PASER [passenger agent sales effectiveness reports] more for it, but brought in this quality thing, the PSE [passenger sales effectiveness]. We all got our three days training, which was kind of a joke, it was really too general to help. Most of the people who went in were so cynical that they didn't listen to a word. Now, I was probably a lot more enthusiastic than a lot of the other people because my father is in sales, and they really get into that stuff and their whole brainwashing techniques. I was always kind of interested in psychology and I thought they're going to talk about how to motivate you and all this. And they really didn't. It was pretty Mickey Mouse. All they really did was give labels to things, this is an objection so therefore you have to overcome an objection. This is called closing a sale. But they really didn't help you to find a way to do any of it. It seemed to me they just put labels on all of it. And they had some videos and stuff which were just sales in general, none of them were airline. So, again, a lot of times I think people kind of felt they didn't get much out of it because it would have been better if it had been more specific. Also telephone sales being more different than when you're one-on-one with someone, say you're selling

a car, it's a totally different situation, the time you're spending with the person. What Air Canada was getting at was the business, you know, that you've got to kind of capture that person in five seconds, you don't have an hour of test driving.

I went through the course and I would say 95 percent of the people found it horrendous. I remember the teacher asking us to playact a service call or a reservations call. We would not do it, we just couldn't do it. We were pretending, it's too phoney. I guess we felt that it was insincere, that it was a form that you had to memorize and it wasn't natural. It just wasn't natural. They spent a fortune doing this. I would say that we found it was just another gimmick. And we always felt gimmicks just don't last, it's a trend. We just couldn't deal with it, as mature people we couldn't. We found that the younger people were much more flexible because they were just coming out of school, they were more adaptable too. They hadn't set ideas, they could be moulded. When you've been with the company for twenty, twenty-five years, they've already moulded you about eighty-nine times. There isn't much moulding left. They haven't realized that. I wonder why they've never ever thought of that [laughs]. We've all joined at nineteen or twenty and we've been moulded and changed and moulded and changed. But they don't realize that. Eventually it all comes around and they're doing the same mould again, but they're doing it differently.

In late 1991, when Air Canada revised its customer care programme, it offered all passenger agents a two day training seminar aimed at honing service skills. While the initiative was well received, concerns were raised that productivity demands sometimes came into contradiction with customer care objectives.²⁷

The union constantly clamoured for more frequent and thorough training, but decisions on these matters were a management prerogative. During a period when the company was seeking to keep labour costs as low as possible in order to remain competitive and prosper in the new economic reality, training was hard hit. Indeed, in the recessionary climate of the early 1980s, most of the local management training staff were displaced. There was an increasing trend towards assigning passenger agents to the training function, especially beginning in the mid-1980s following the signing of letters

of understanding aimed at expanding their work. During an interview in 1989, a member of management acknowledged the problems with the company's training strategy:

Up to about five years ago, all instructors were management people. Then it was decided to go this route [of having agents on special assignments to provide training]. I guess it was economics, I suppose. At one point they virtually eliminated the entire training department, about five years ago, and there was absolutely nobody around. The first people that get cut back are always the support people, and of course training is part of the support group. And it wasn't until they eliminated everybody that they suddenly realized, hey! There's nobody around to train the people any more. We just lost all the expertise that we had. It's taken awhile to build up the training resources. Training is one of those things that's taken for granted, it's one of those necessary evils. Once you train them in basic training, you very rarely see them back for follow-up training because they just won't release them. People don't understand what's involved in training. If the people aren't properly trained, they're not producing for you.

Although the company recognized the need for continual and enhanced training, especially given the ongoing changes in the industry throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, the union and even some members of local management felt that sufficient resources were not being made available to meet requirements in this area. Even when local managers were quite willing to provide extra training, there was usually a shortage of instructors and supervisors to fulfill the task. Staff reductions also had a profound effect on training. Because there were sometimes inadequate levels of personnel to handle the workload, agents could not easily be removed from their positions for much needed training. Clearly, there was a disjuncture between company policy and practice.

The Monitoring and Measurement of Work Performance

Employers have traditionally considered it a management right to monitor

employees and to keep records of their work activities and performance. From the early years, TCA managers and supervisors monitored and evaluated the work of passenger agents. Monitoring tended to be sporadic and dependent upon time availability and the personal inclination of individual members of management.

By the early 1950s, service observers were being hired in the larger reservations offices to provide additional monitoring in order to ensure that company service standards were being met. These analysts sampled telephone contacts to assess the quality of service being provided to customers.²⁸ By the end of the decade, with the introduction of a new quality assurance programme, the company developed service performance indexes and standardized the type of data collected by quality analysis representatives (previously called service observers). Under this programme, which underwent minor modifications over the years, agents were assessed on their telephone technique, manners, technical aptitude, knowledge of company products, accuracy of reservations files and sales effort. Quality analysts gathered information on an anonymous basis and reported on group results while supervisors used similar types of measurements to evaluate individual agents' telephone contacts.²⁹ Following the Second World War, TCA also adopted methods to evaluate the promptness of service to customers calling reservations offices. Initially, analysts sampled telephone contacts to estimate the average amount of time it took to answer calls. By the mid-1960s, the larger offices had been equipped with telephone registers which enabled management to more easily measure the promptness of service to callers and keep a count of the number of callers getting a busy signal. The company standard was for 80 percent of the calls to be answered within twenty seconds.³⁰

5

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

In the late 1950s, TCA also established a new quality assurance programme in the larger airport locations and city sales offices in an effort to standardize the various methods in use throughout the system since the 1940s to assess the performance of workers. Indexes were developed to measure various aspects of service delivery and quality analysis representatives carried out assessments. Passenger agents were evaluated on how well they fulfilled ticketing, check-in, flight announcement, pre-boarding and post-flight duties. They were further assessed in terms of their deportment, appearance and general handling of passengers. In addition, check-in and ticket counter waiting time was measured and flight delays and mishandlings were reported and analyzed.¹¹ During the 1960s, new standards were added to the quality assurance programme requiring that agents begin serving 80 percent of customers within five minutes at ticketing counters and 90 percent of customers within five minutes at airport check-in counters. By sampling passenger contacts, quality analysts accumulated and analyzed information which was summarized and presented on a regular basis to management who made use of the data to review agents' overall performance.¹² As in reservations offices, supervisors continued to evaluate passenger agents on an individual basis.

While the quality assurance programmes developed in reservations offices, airport locations and city sales offices facilitated the development of more consistent standards of service to customers, they also tended to increase managerial control over workers. Beginning in the 1960s, there was mounting criticism of the company's monitoring practices, especially with regard to the tapping of telephone lines, the tape-recording of conversations, the observation of interactions at public counters and the assessment of public announcements. A number of agents expressed concern that quality performance

programmes were being applied in a negative manner. They argued that employees were seldom given any recognition for a job well done, but were quickly criticized for not attaining the standard. Moreover, the union complained that variations in company standards across the system led to unevenness in the evaluation process.³³

The Intensification of Workplace Monitoring

During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Air Canada introduced new electronic equipment to measure passenger agents' performance while simultaneously revising old methods of monitoring and workplace surveillance. These practices resulted in the intensification and standardization of work, and radically altered the overall evaluation process of passenger agents. Modifications to the monitoring of work performance, many of which relied on enhanced technical capabilities, were part and parcel of a shift in managerial authority and gave rise to conflictual labour-management relations. These changes reflected, to a certain extent, the increasing attention being paid to profit making, a corporate shift formalized in the new Air Canada Act of 1977.

The introduction, in the 1970s and 1980s of electronic monitoring equipment to track individual productivity represented a far-reaching change in supervisory practices throughout the industrial world. Advances in computer and communications technologies made new forms of workplace surveillance feasible. Indeed, computer tools became available that allowed managers to keep tabs on workers to an extent that had never been possible in the past. Management increasingly made use of rapidly developing computerized equipment to monitor employees as a means of improving the productivity of office labour which lagged behind that of industrial labour. The performance of work

using on-line systems facilitated the adoption of more intensive automated forms of supervision. Computer technology could be easily programmed to continuously monitor workers and collect and tabulate a wide variety of detailed information on their work. Because electronic monitoring generated constant, precise, detailed and accurate statistics on an individual employee's performance, it represented a more sophisticated tool for improving productivity and increasing control than previous forms of supervision.

Air Canada first adopted electronic surveillance systems capable of measuring the individual productivity of reservations agents in the summer and fall of 1978, when it cancelled the work improvement programme launched in the Toronto reservations office in April 1976. The company, which had suffered a loss in productivity with the introduction of the quality of working life project decided, in late 1977, to implement two electronic measurement programmes, the passenger agent sales effectiveness reports (PASER) and the system for telephone administration response (STAR), to track passenger agents' productivity.³⁴ The replacement of the work improvement programme (referred to as the WIP) with these computerized surveillance systems led reservations agents to remark that Air Canada had put the 'H' back into the W(H)IP.³⁵ With these new systems, the company increased its control over the labour process of agents as the measuring became continuous and everpresent, compared to previous forms of monitoring which were more sporadic, unsystematic and less reliable. These new methods of workplace surveillance, which were implemented in the midst of a serious crisis in the airline industry, were the first in a series of fundamental changes to the monitoring of reservations agents.

The PASER

The PASER was initially introduced in a few of Air Canada's main reservations offices in the summer of 1978 and was later extended to other locations. The system, an automated process contained in ReserVec II, was designed to capture performance statistics relating to the key passenger agent activity of making reservations. When the PASER was first implemented it calculated, for each worker, the number of passenger name records booked, the number of passenger name records modified, the number of passengers per passenger record, total passenger revenue generated, call volume, the number of calls handled per passenger booked, the number of computer transactions and error rates. The programme was enhanced in the early 1980s to collect additional data such as the number of tickets-by-mail arranged and the number of hotels and cars booked. In addition, the system was able to totalize agent VDT time to compute monthly ratios of passenger name records booked per hour, passengers booked per hour and revenue per hour. Periodic reports were available which compared the performance of individual agents to that of the entire office.³⁶ Previously, management had no way of keeping track of the output of agents except to directly verify the work and count the bookings or have employees fill out forms to record the amount of work done.

Because of deficiencies with its reporting capabilities, the PASER was discredited by both the union and the employer, and the statistics produced by the system remained largely unused in many locations. The union was concerned that because the PASER failed to allocate credit for changes made to existing reservations, it gave a false representation of the individual's contribution.³⁷ Management placed little confidence in the programme's ability to accurately measure the sales effort of individual agents.

A supervisor noted:

PASER is redundant and it can be manipulated easily. If I had an agent that was not doing that well and I reviewed his PASER report and said, "gee, I'd really like to see this dollar value increase from \$200 an hour up to \$780," all he does is go to the machine, book a bunch of reservations, cancel them, and he's got his revenue and I lay off. I'm not saying people would do it, but it's that easy to manipulate the system.

As a passenger agent remarked:

PNRs [passenger name records] booked, that means that they look at how many you actually filed. So, if you booked a lot of PNRs, obviously that's great, they look at that. The only thing is, it's not a very accurate statistic because some people who have a problem with fares, what they'll do is they'll book a phoney PNR and just cancel it afterwards. So it still shows a PNR booked, although they didn't actually book it, they cancelled it right after.

In general, little pressure was exerted on passenger agents to improve their performance on the basis of these reports.

Telephone Time Measurement

Two other electronic monitoring programmes, the STAR and the SL-1 (stored logic) telephone system, played a more salient role in the measurement of individual agents' productivity and, from their inception, were a constant source of conflict between the company and the union as well as between agents and supervisors. The STAR, a computerized management information system which interfaced with the automatic call distributor and was designed to monitor the telephone time of individual passenger agents, was installed in the Toronto reservations office in the fall of 1978.³⁸ In the early 1980s, Air Canada introduced the more sophisticated SL-1 electronic telephone system, which was marketed by Northern Telecom Canada Ltd. as a total management

information tool, to monitor the telephone time of reservations agents.³⁹ All major reservations offices eventually operated with this system, including the Toronto location where the STAR was displaced. These electronic systems replaced older methods whereby agents' productivity was measured more sporadically.

The STAR and SL-1 systems recorded the number of incoming and outgoing calls as well as the total amount of time spent on each type of call. They also kept track of the amount of time spent waiting to receive the next call through the headset as well as the amount of time spent completing a file after the call had ended which was referred to as post-call processing or clean-up time. Finally, agents' lunch and coffee breaks were electronically monitored. The systems were programmed to compute, on the basis of this data, a variety of statistics such as the average post-call processing time, average call length and average waiting time. The most important statistic calculated was the in-line availability or in-line time which represented a measure of the proportion of time agents were actually taking calls or available to do so. This statistic, which was continuously updated like other telephone time measurements, constituted management's primary measure of individual agent's productivity.⁴⁰

Under these systems, agents in the Toronto reservations office were expected to be taking calls or available to accept calls during at least 70 percent of the total workday, whereas the productivity standard in most of the other reservations offices was set at 80 percent of total work time which referred to total hours on shift minus rest and lunch periods. Local management sometimes varied the standard. In 1992, the Toronto office modified the calculation of the productivity standard to bring it in line with that used in the other locations.⁴¹

The 70 percent in-line availability, equivalent to approximately six hours of an eight-and-a-half hour shift, was considered productive time because during this period revenue was being generated for the company. Included in the remaining 30 percent of the total workday were sixty minutes for negotiated rest and lunch breaks and ninety minutes of manageable time used to complete files (post-call processing) and to carry out other work activities. This ninety minute period, which also allowed for brief rests called fatigue time, was not considered productive time by the company.⁴²

With the STAR, computer reports on agents' performance were available in print format only. Though the SL-1 telephone system generally produced the same measurement data on individual passenger agents as the STAR computer used in Toronto throughout the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, this new, highly sophisticated electronic surveillance system greatly facilitated the tracking of each worker's daily activities. Updates on the performance of individual agents could be called up by management at any time for viewing on the VDT or for printing. In addition, display terminals at supervisors' desks or at control centres were used to monitor the exact status of individual passenger agents at any given time. The screen revealed the names and floor positions of all agents on duty, whether each worker was waiting for a call, handling a call, doing post-call processing or otherwise not available to answer the telephone. The programme allowed for thresholds to be established and when these were exceeded, the statistics associated with the thresholds were highlighted on the screen. Management had established that the screen display would be intensified if an incoming call lasted more than five minutes or if an agent was not available to take calls for more than three minutes. The control was omnipresent, as workers were under constant machine

surveillance, a situation which led one passenger agent to refer to the computer as "the boss that never blinks."

The company considered these systems and standards as necessary and argued that if they were not in place productivity would suffer. With increasing competition in the industry, Air Canada aimed to reduce labour costs and improve productivity. According to management, the individual productivity standard was fair and relatively easy to attain, given that an in-line time of 70 percent left agents with approximately one-and-a-half hours per workday to clean up files, read information bulletins and take small breaks. They further argued that these measures provided an objective assessment of agents' work performance and offered employees an insight into their individual contribution to office productivity. A company supervisor in the Toronto reservations office talked about the need to electronically measure individual workers:

The one beauty of electronic monitoring is that you can fairly establish who's working and who isn't. If you don't have an electronic monitoring system, you've got some people that are just working like dogs and other people that are doing nothing. 'Cause you really can't do it except by observation and it's really pretty tough to observe what someone is doing over the phone... We would just die [without electronic monitoring]. I'm positive of it. The productivity would fall, the bottom would fall right out of it. We've done a couple of little tests in the past whereby we've told people that were complaining about STAR, "okay, your team will not be put in," or, "the whole office will not be put in," and the place within two weeks is in ruin because people just know that there is nothing there, there's no stick. It's terrible to say, but it's true, especially for an operation this size. I wish there was another way we could motivate people, but telephone sales is the type of thing that you could lose track of pretty easily, when you're supposed to be working and when you're not. And it's the only real tool we have to keep people working all the time.

Passenger agents generally regarded these individual work measurements in a different way. Despite the fact that most agents agreed that the company had a right to

monitor its employees, many raised concerns about the electronic systems introduced for this purpose and the manner in which they were being used. Agents argued that by tracking work so closely, management treated them like children and demonstrated a total lack of trust in their commitment to the job. Moreover, they felt that the systems placed restrictions on their freedom to move, given that even when there were no customers waiting to be served, agents were unable to leave their workstations. This drastically limited socializing between co-workers as agents were tied to their telephones under the ever-watching, ever-recording computer. Because of the monotonous nature of the job, worker interaction was an important element of job satisfaction.

For many agents, the in-line time was a poor measure of their productivity because it did not reflect the total time actually spent working. Indeed, agents were only considered productive when they were taking a call or waiting for one to come in. Time spent finishing a file after a call had ended, reading information bulletins, obtaining fare quotes from agents at the tariff desk, calling back customers or completing other tasks was not considered part of management's productivity measure and therefore could not be used to meet the in-line standard even though these various activities were essential in fulfilling passenger agent duties. Ironically, taking time to perform these important aspects of the job negatively affected agents' in-line statistics.⁴³

With the proliferation and growing complexity of fares and products, many agents believed that the amount of manageable time allotted to complete other duties was not always adequate. The type of calls dealt with also had an impact on manageable time. When agents answered a series of relatively simple and straightforward calls, the allotment was sufficient. However, if complex calls were processed, completing the files

could consume a significant amount of time, thereby either reducing the amount of time available to complete other duties or preventing agents from meeting the in-line availability standard. Handling difficult calls - such as demanding and irate customers, of which there was a growing number - could also be taxing and require extra time out of the telephone system to recuperate. In the context of these various exigencies, the in-line measure could become unattainable. Agents thus argued that under the demanding conditions encountered in the industry of the 1980s and early 1990s, the productivity standard should be more flexible as it was too exacting on agents processing calls for over seven hours a day. The measure was seen as being too rigid because it did not take into account the variability in a day's work and did not recognize that passenger agents were individuals with different personalities who did not respond to work situations in a preprogrammed way. As well, it tended to disregard the effects of the vagaries of people's lives outside the workplace on their work performance.

Some agents felt that although the in-line standard was not difficult to meet, knowing that one was constantly being supervised created tremendous stress on the job.

As an agent explained:

The other day, I asked myself, okay, how am I doing, because I'm cleaning up my files and going out of line after I finish every call. I was reaching 65. I thought, gee. So, I don't think it's difficult to maintain 70. It's the stress of, where am I? I went to the bathroom and I saw one of the girls and I chatted for five minutes, where am I? Should I cut my coffee break short by five minutes? Oh God, I feel like a coffee, but I can't because I spent five minutes here when I was with this client. I don't feel like going to my supervisor telling him I was on the out line calling Vancouver to get his hotel situation fixed up. I can't find him anyway. That's the stressful part, it isn't the 70. I think that if they had a monitor on your computer that you could tap into, that you could say, "I've been real sloppy the last four hours, let me see where I am." I do an average job. They know that you're not going to make me into an 80

percent agent because you can't do that to me, you can't make me give up any more than I have.

Electronic monitoring reduced passenger agents' flexibility in organizing their working time. Agents, however, developed systems to maintain some control over their work. One of the main means to achieve this control was through the tracking of their own in-line time. Keeping a record of the use of their time enabled agents to plan their workday, to a certain extent, according to their needs and personal dispositions, an exercise which helped alleviate boredom. The following excerpts from conversations with passenger agents illustrate some of the techniques adopted to manage work time:

Some people have watches and they know exactly how much daily time they have. Say for example that they want to take a forty-five minute lunch break, well they'll not put themselves on not ready [telephone button to measure post-call processing time] for the entire morning so that they can get that extra fifteen minutes. They play the numbers that way. You're supposed to put yourself on make busy [telephone button to measure negotiated breaks] if you're going for your breaks or lunch, or anything over five minutes. I don't actually ever put myself on make busy because when you put yourself on make busy, they can actually see when you clocked out and when you clocked in. But with not ready, I think it's just a general figure that shows the percentage of time you're on not ready. I can manage my own time, I don't want someone coming to me and saying, "hey you took a thirty-eight minute lunch instead of thirty minutes." I think, well if I could keep my numbers where they should be, I don't want somebody knowing exactly what I take for breaks or my lunch. So, I don't actually use make busy, although they say we should. So, it does give you some flexibility.

You are tied to a standard. What happens is that agents develop systems for work and they will say, "my day is divided into sixteen half-hour blocks. If I do a half hour block and I'm in-line for 100 percent of that time, I don't take any break between calls, don't do any clean up between calls, I simply am in-line for that half hour. That will give me a certain percentage. If I do enough of those half hour blocks, that will give me 70 percent. After that my time is my own." There's a lot of those systems on the floor. I'm not talking about the majority, but people will often go through a phase of doing that. Not too many do it regularly, they do it for awhile, see how it works and let it go. For one thing, it's

very difficult to stay in-line 100 percent of the time for any given period of time, because you have a lot of things in the way.

Management frowned upon these practices which reduced its control over workers and upset staff planning.

In an effort to increase their in-line time, some agents resorted to keeping customers on the telephone while completing files instead of making use of the post-call processing allowance to do so, a procedure even recommended by some supervisors who had to answer to higher level management for the productivity results of workers. Many agents, however, felt that this was an unacceptable disservice to customers and refused to engage in such practices. Workers were sometimes faced with the impossible choice of providing less than adequate service or not meeting the standard. This is clearly illustrated by the following passage from an interview with a passenger agent:

It doesn't engender good customer service because there may be something that you have to go out of line to do, like you may have to put in detailed information on a file that will take time out of line, but if you're committed not to take any in-line out in that half hour, then you're not as likely to put that information in. So what happens to the information. It gets dropped, it's not there. Don't get me wrong. The agents on the floor are good agents and they are concerned about doing the job properly. But the pressure to chase the 70 is incredible, there's a lot of pressure there. And you'll find from all the support teams, they'll all tell you that in the last couple of years, the quality of work has slipped dramatically. That affects two things. First, it affects the customer who's not getting the service. If you say, "I need a wheelchair for my mother who's travelling to Miami," and you say, "yes, I'll have a wheelchair at the airport for you," and you get to the airport and there's no wheelchair, because the person was so busy chasing the 70 that they didn't have quite the time to get the fare and the rule information and the wheelchair into that file before the loud beep into your ear comes. Then that's customer disservice or that's not good customer service. Second off, it impacts on the co-workers. For example, you'll take a call and say, "good afternoon, Air Canada," and you'll have somebody screaming in your ear because they've just talked to another agent, or they booked their once-a-year vacation last week, and they say they were quoted \$245 for the trip and

you bring up the file and there's no fare information whatsoever on it. So there's no information on the file about what fare was quoted because the agent didn't have the time, and you figure out the fare, and it's no less than \$450, that's the best you can possibly do. You have to tell the person it's not the right price. And this person is screaming at you now because of someone else chasing the 70. I believe that incompleteness of files is much more caused by chasing the 70 than by laziness or incompetence.

In order to meet the productivity standard, agents also regularly requested that management adjust their in-line availability statistics to account for work done out-of-line. In some instances, the only way to achieve the required in-line statistic was to work through lunch and break periods. Some of the agents who were dubbed 'achievers' consistently strove to perform well above the norm because a high productivity score was key in obtaining special assignments or promotions. Getting away from telephone answering duties for short periods of time was a welcome break from the monotony and stress of reservations work. The following excerpt from a conversation with a passenger agent, which touches upon some of the major problems with this reward system, is worth quoting at length:

In-line availability is the link to the reward system. The most tangible reward around here is getting off the floor to do something else. The most common way is to do relief for the support groups, for example relief at lunch or breaks for rates [section], or for full days for vacation and illness. That's totally under the control of the supervisor. So what you find is the same people doing relief in four or five different places. It's not spread around, it's not equally distributed, because the only real reward the supervisors have is the ability to get the agent off the floor. There's not one person in there who wants to answer telephones, I think, maybe a few, but not many. Of course, the go-getters and those who are favourites of supervisors expect those rewards. They're also people who get the majority of them. And you'll find that a supervisor will be very willing to adjust that person's in-line availability stats upwards so that that person is always reflected as having a 70 or above, or very close. So when it comes around to it, if there is ever any question, the supervisor can justify giving that person all the rewards because they have an in-line

availability that's standard or above. The other point there is that when someone is off the floor for an extended period, let's say you do ten out of twenty days off the floor - twenty days is a month - it's a lot easier to get 70 and to be fresh and clean and chipper on the phone for ten days out of the month than for twenty. So the person is, in the first place, getting the in-line adjusted upward so that they can get the reward if their in-line is a little bit lower than the standard. They're getting the reward of being off the floor, so they're on the floor less which increases your ability to stay in-line. The less you work [on the floor] the easier it is to stay at standard or above. So that pretty soon, you don't have to adjust them any more because they're off the bloody floor so much, they don't have to worry about, day in day out, keeping that 70. Meanwhile the guy who's on the floor twenty days a month, which is every day, is slogging it out and he's getting a 65 consistently, every day, and he goes to the supervisor and says, "I'd like to do queues." The supervisor says, "well, once you get your in-line up to 70 we'll think about it." And then when he gets his in-line to 70, the supervisor says, "oh, well I haven't got any room for you because I have all these other people who are at 70." You've got the ones known as actors, and you've got the ones who don't act. You've got the ones who say, "screw it, I'll just come in and do my job and get out of here." And at the end of the year, in the performance review, it says, "doesn't show initiative." Why should you show initiative. I know people who have worked here for two-and-a-half years, have really good performance standards, but didn't catch the eye of the supervisor for some reason or another and never got anything for what they were doing, although they may have asked several times. Then the motivation drops, satisfaction in the job drops, the vision of something better than answering the telephones dies. And so the production standard of 70 starts dropping. Next thing you know the supervisor's at your desk saying, "hey, you were a 70 agent for two years and now you're slipping, what's wrong with you." The agent turns around and says, "hey, I performed for you, but you didn't perform for me, you gave me nothing for two years of 70 in-line." And the supervisor says, "don't blame me, I've got all these other people who are at 70, and they all want something too, I haven't got enough rewards to give out." Sorry guy, you can't have it both ways. You can't reward those who are ten days on the floor. And the other guy who's there every bloody day and who gets 65, you can't say you need 70. Because I gave you 70 for two years and you didn't give me anything. I'm going to get 65, I still get my paycheque at the end of two weeks, I don't get any discipline, I have an asshole in my ear once or twice a week saying, "get your in-line up." Other than that, I don't care, if I can take that nonsense. So then, if your in-line slips below 65, you've got the asshole in there every day, you've got the guy taking you in the back room saying, "hey, you got a financial problem, you got a marriage problem, you got this problem, you got that problem,

let me help you." Well that's the last person you would want help from. Then you start getting this complex that this guy is on my case, and he is on your case, because he goes into a meeting with his manager and with his peers, and they say, "hey, you've got someone below 65, what are you doing about it." And the manager will ask every time somebody goes below 65, the manager asks, "what has been done to improve this person's in-line." And if someone is consistently below 65 or below 60, the guy can't get promoted because he has a guy on his team who's doing 55 or 62. He can't get a promotion, he's getting no recognition from his peers, the manager's on his case. The whole bloody system is driven by one number, 70. In my opinion it is. They'll tell you differently, but the whole thing is tied to it.

Many agents raised similar issues and complained about the favouritism and inequality. Clearly, they were well aware of the problems with the reward system. This state of affairs led to cynicism and a low level of motivation, a situation which inevitably affected performance and productivity.

During busy periods, agents sometimes made their telephone line unavailable for a few extra seconds after completing a call in order to take a break, even if this meant not reaching the productivity standard. Moreover, a minority of agents did engage in practices such as disengaging telephone calls as a means of avoiding having to deal with customers. In referring to these incidents, a member of management remarked:

I don't think there is a great deal of abuse. Unfortunately there is some, and to be quite honest with you, I think it's because of the pressure that they're under. There would be no telephone abuse if there was no monitoring system in place, there would be no need to. But then, the productivity would fall.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, managerial efforts to increase agents' in-line time intensified. One practice adopted by some supervisors was to drop report cards at passenger agents' workstations on a regular basis, with low productivity days highlighted and with disapproving comments and directions to work harder in order to attain the

norm. Some supervisors would also deliver daily reports to agents during their shifts advising them to speed up. At times, supervisors patrolled the office and directed workers to answer calls. In addition, when agents were in the not ready mode while updating a passenger name record, some supervisors released the not ready button without warning, thereby forcing agents to take calls before they had completed the previous file.⁴⁴ In the late 1980s, the Toronto and Montreal reservations offices assigned a supervisor on a full-time basis to monitor a terminal displaying agents' telephone status and productivity. Should an agent not be available to answer calls or be absent from the workstation for longer than the permissible amount of time, the control supervisor would immediately notify that agent's supervisor. The latter would then advise the agent to begin taking calls. This practice was dubbed 'Fern alerts' by workers in the Montreal reservations office, based on the name of a control supervisor.

Beginning in the late 1980s, adjustments to in-line availability statistics to reflect time spent out-of-line finishing other tasks usually required supervisors' preapproval. These requests were increasingly being denied. Moreover, agents were encouraged to complete the transaction during the initial call in order to avoid having to call back customers. The company also attempted to reduce the time agents spent on other usually more interesting tasks and make them available to answer calls for a longer portion of their workday. In addition, supervisors in certain offices began monitoring rest and lunch periods diligently and disciplinary action was sometimes taken when agents were late in returning from breaks.

Agents, at times, received letters concerning their performance which they felt was a form of discipline. On one occasion, a number of agents in the Montreal

reservations office were handed productivity reports stating that their performance needed to be improved. Taped to the letters were vitamin pills. Following this incident, the company cancelled the sick leave benefits of some agents, an action which prompted a group of workers to initiate an information picket outside the Air Canada office and to begin taking health breaks.⁴⁵ Agents were sometimes warned that disciplinary measures would be imposed if performance expectations were not satisfied. Though workers were not often officially disciplined because of their failure to meet the standard, the in-line availability results were systematically referred to during interviews and evaluation sessions with supervisors as a means of pressuring agents into improving their performance, a practice many workers felt was a form of intimidation and harassment. Supervisors occasionally restricted or threatened to restrict agents' ability to shift trade when they failed to meet the production quota. This denial could be devastating for workers who made use of such trades to gain some control over their work time in order to cope with the monotony and stress of the job, make more adequate childcare arrangements and plan other non-paid work activities.

It should be noted that the importance placed on electronic surveillance varied throughout the system. Generally, in the smaller reservations offices, workers were subjected to such forms of supervision, but local management did not put as much emphasis on the statistics generated by the system, whereas in the larger reservations offices, electronic monitoring was used more systematically as a tool to improve productivity and maintain control over workers. The following excerpts from conversations with passenger agents illustrate the difference between locations:

In Winnipeg, they wanted you to be answering any calls that were

waiting, but there wasn't the same stress on making sure you have a 70 percent in-line time, making sure you're converting a percentage of your calls into sales, all these statistics that in Toronto they expect you to perform up to, didn't exist in Winnipeg. In a sense, you felt more like you were being babysat though in Winnipeg. Because they could tell on their little computer how many calls were waiting, and they'd kind of walked around and see who wasn't taking calls, and kind of individually point you out. When I moved to Toronto, at first I thought it was paradise because nobody bothered you individually. They just told you what they expected of you, and then you just went ahead and did it. And you basically felt like, now I have some responsibility of my own as long as I do what they want. I found out after awhile it maybe was not quite as it may appeared because they had other ways of letting you know whether or not you're performing in a manner which they want you to. There was more direction in Winnipeg, but less reliance on the stats. In Winnipeg, I never once was told what my in-line time was, never once. In Toronto, when I first came, they gave it to you monthly and then they came out with a system where at the end of every week they showed what it was, every single day... In Toronto, the emphasis is mainly on, okay, are you performing up to the standard, why aren't you, what can we do to entice you - that's not really the word - what can we do to help you achieve those standards. Is there some reason why you're not. In Winnipeg, it was more of a general subjective idea of how they thought you were doing, not really based on any specific statistic.

It's quite different in small bases. This 70 is a standard across the system in res offices, but res offices in smaller stations have a much lower call volume and much lower manpower. But because of the call volume versus the manpower, there's a lot more wait time between calls, which is judged productive time. You can have an agent in Halifax who takes one call and has a two minute wait between calls. And that goes on all day long. Well that agent is going to pull 70 with no problem at all. But you've got an agent in Toronto, with calls waiting and the red light flashing all day long, from nine to five every day. And the only way that the person can get a break from the travelling public is to go on not ready and harm his in-line availability statistic. It doesn't take much to see that it's a lot harder to get a 70 in Toronto than it is in Halifax. There's also the management mentality in other places as well. Management mentality in Toronto is very, very sales oriented and very aggressive and you don't get that same kind of attitude in a place like Halifax. Here, there's no room for informality or relaxation, it's just like, get the job done, I've got thirty people I've got to get up to scratch or I'm going to get shit from my manager, I'm not going to get to my Place Air Canada job, you know, and so on. Whereas the managers in the smaller stations are just saying, "we'll get the job done, we'll take care of passengers, we'll get to them

as soon as we're having them here." And they're not, I guess, getting the pressure from above because all the money's in Toronto, all the business is in Toronto, all the growth is in Toronto and you have to have that kind of managers to sustain that kind of growth.

With the trend towards the centralization of reservations offices in the late 1980s and early 1990s, all passenger agents were concentrated in four large reservations centres where they found themselves subjected to more intense electronic monitoring practices.

With the introduction of the STAR and SL-1 electronic monitoring systems, the managerial goal of increasing productivity was being achieved. Though computer equipment could be programmed to supply management with an ongoing record of agents' performance, the specific manner in which the technology and statistics were used reflected the growing attempt to more effectively control labour in order to increase productivity and profits. The union accepted that some measurement and monitoring of work was necessary to determine employee performance, staff requirements and training needs, but argued that group measures were generally sufficient to achieve these objectives. Moreover, it was felt that the time spent by supervisors dealing with the vast amount of statistical information gathered could be used more productively developing and delivering training sessions.

Promptness of Service

The promptness of service indicator, which had for many years been the basic measure of overall office productivity and the main tool in determining staff requirements in reservations locations, was another important element in Air Canada's drive to intensify passenger agents' work beginning in the late 1970s. The SL-1 telephone system

introduced during the 1980s included a built-in capability to calculate promptness of service to customers calling reservations offices, thereby simplifying the overall monitoring process. The promptness of service standard was labelled the telephone service factor (TSF) by Northern Telecom Canada Ltd. which marketed the SL-1 technology.

The promptness of service or telephone service factor effectively regulated the speed of reservations office work. Agents' telephones featured a red light which began flashing when a certain threshold number of calls waiting to be answered was reached. This level was set by management and could be modified. Beginning in the late 1970s, but especially in the mid-1980s, the company placed more emphasis on the attainment of the standard. Agents were often urged to work faster and increase the number of calls handled by reducing call length and cutting back on manageable time. In some locations, efforts to cut back on manageable time and augment the number of calls handled by each agent led to the introduction of an hourly quota on calls. Beginning in the late 1980s, in order to improve the telephone service factor, management in certain reservations offices instructed agents to stop offering to book cars and hotels for passengers.

When the red light was blinking, workers felt pressured into handling calls promptly. Despite these productivity demands, agents were nonetheless called upon to perform their tasks accurately and be friendly, courteous and generally helpful. An agent expressed her feelings about the light in the following way:

I don't even think there needs to be a light. Like to me, psychologically, I think if your light's flashing, you think you need to speed up your call to get off the phone and go on to the next, but if customer service is what the job's all about, then you shouldn't have to feel that way. So I don't know why there is a light.

Many agents contended that because of the emphasis placed on achieving the standard, they were sometimes left with less time to provide personalized service to customers and perform the job of selling in an effective manner. In addition, errors were made when employees did not take the time to properly complete the calls or the reservations files because of the constant pressure to accelerate the pace of work. Customers were at times required to contact the reservations office more than once for the same transaction because they had not received all the necessary information during the initial call. Callers were sometimes very annoyed and took out their anger on agents when they were provided with incomplete information or when mistakes were made. This affected agents' enjoyment of the job because contact with the public was the most satisfying part of their work. These demanding conditions led agents to refer to the TSF as the telephone stress factor.

The company argued that it was crucial to maintain a high promptness of service standard in order to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty, especially in an era of intense competition. Agents questioned management's commitment to customer service, given that so much importance was placed on systems that measured quantity rather than quality of work. Indeed, some argued that the quality of customer service was suffering as a result of the overwhelming emphasis placed on quantitative data. They further pointed out that if the company was genuinely interested in quality of service, more resources would be put into the ongoing training of agents. Finally, it was regularly observed that understaffing usually made it impossible to achieve the telephone service factor. The increase in the variety and complexity of fares aggravated the situation. Clearly, if the company was unprepared to hire extra staff, increasing the workload of

individual agents remained the only alternative for raising the office telephone service factor.

Passenger Sales Effectiveness

Not only did Air Canada electronically measure passenger agents' individual and group productivity but, as previously mentioned, it also monitored the calls handled by agents in order to assess the quality of the interaction with customers. Beginning in the early 1980s, the quality assurance programme was applied more systematically and took on important new dimensions. Agents continued to be judged on their trade knowledge and telephone technique. The measure of trade knowledge focused on the accuracy of the information provided to customers and the agents' product knowledge as well as the procedures for constructing a reservation. Agents' telephone technique was evaluated in terms of manners, the use of common courtesies and the development of the call.

In addition to these performance indicators, the quality assurance programme was extended to include passenger sales effectiveness. With this new standard, agents were evaluated on how effectively they tried to book customers. Of the three basic categories of calls, namely booking, service and sales potential, the latter type was the focus of this new evaluation criterion. A sales potential call referred to any customer query indicating a possible intent to travel, such as inquiries about fares or flight schedules. During training, agents were provided with instructions on how to handle these different types of calls and how to quickly identify those of a sales potential nature. They were then expected to develop the call by asking specific questions to determine the customer's needs and make use of their knowledge of the company's products to convert the inquiry

into an actual sale. Passenger sales effectiveness represented a measure of how closely agents met the criteria established for handling sales potential calls. It evaluated the effort expended in persuading callers to book with Air Canada.

Initially, for a sales potential call to be graded as effective, the agent was required to offer to make a reservation. Subsequently, the attempt to overcome the customer's objections to booking the flight was added as a second criterion of sales effectiveness. If guidelines were properly followed, the call was deemed sales effective even though an actual booking was not completed.⁴⁶ A member of management spoke of the changing requirements of the quality assurance programme in the following way:

We've always had quality assurance, but I think we were much more satisfied in years gone by with a call well serviced. Nobody would really be encouraged to make the sale. If you gave all the fares and schedule and said, "would you like to make a booking?" that was terrific ten years ago. But now with our quality assurance, if you say, "would you like to make a booking," and the customer says "no," we now have a policy that you have to try and overcome that objection somehow, in the best way possible without irritating the customer. So in that regard, quality assurance has become much more stringent and the standards are much higher than they used to be.

In order to measure sales effectiveness and assess trade knowledge and telephone technique, quality analysts evaluated a sample of incoming calls using a rating sheet which included several evaluation categories. This telephone monitoring was conducted in random fashion without individual agents being identified. Data gathered during this process were presented in aggregate form on a team basis with scores combined into an office total. The information was available daily and written reports were issued weekly to supervisors who reviewed results during team meetings and set new sales effectiveness objectives.

While some reservations offices placed little importance on these results, others prominently displayed their passenger sales effectiveness statistics. Supervisors often included comments on the reports inciting team members to improve their sales effectiveness. At times, supervisors added derogatory remarks to completed rating sheets that showed individual cases of poor passenger sales effectiveness. A passenger agent recounted her experience of this supervisory practice as follows:

I'm on a very senior team. There are quite a few people who have ten, fifteen, twenty years. My supervisor is so keen on sales effectiveness, he's just to the nth degree. I think he's trying to get ahead and he's really worried about his numbers. So, for example, for awhile, calls were not being efficient, so on our little sheet for these calls, he would say, "what's wrong with you! Can't you offer to book? This is so easy I can't believe you didn't get this call." And everyone was really upset by that because we're grown adults, he was talking to us like children. That really is frustrating. No one likes that, to be talked down to.

A number of workers believed that low scores did not necessarily reflect their selling efforts, given that the sample of calls monitored only represented a small fraction of total calls handled.

The passenger sales effectiveness performance measurement was part of management's attempts to transform Air Canada from its service orientation of the pre-deregulation era to a more sales-driven organization, a change precipitated by the company's efforts to survive in a highly competitive environment. This programme aimed to transform agents from order takers and information providers into an aggressive sales force predisposed to treating each call as a sales opportunity and skilled at converting callers into passengers, thereby improving sales performance and productivity. The new computer terminal, the reservations selling station introduced in reservations offices in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was also designed to promote passenger sales

effectiveness by placing agents in a sell mode. Moreover, in 1985, passenger agents were renamed customer sales and service agents to reflect the company's greater focus on sales.⁴⁷

With passenger sales effectiveness included as a performance criterion, the handling of calls tended towards standardization. Call types were broken down and carefully patterned as part of an effort to maximize sales and ensure uniformity of service throughout the system. Although agents retained some flexibility in structuring the conversation, certain components of the call were mandatory, including the identification, the opening, the initial question, the sales presentation where workers offered to make a reservation and tried to overcome objections, and the closing. Because a production process based on a conversation is less predictable than the production of a concrete object, tightly structuring calls tended to minimize variation, thus further removing decision-making and discretion from passenger agents. As a result, management could more easily influence the direction of the relatively private and invisible exchange between passenger agents and callers and thus effectively increase its control over the labour process. This form of control was particularly important to the company in the context of growing competition and the proliferation of complex products.

Unhappy with the push towards standardization and uniformity, many agents argued that strict call definition did not take into account the variability in passengers and calls. Agents felt management did not trust their judgement nor recognize their ability to handle calls effectively and perform the job well. Despite the fact that the selling of products hinges primarily upon the effectiveness of passenger agents, management did not allow them much responsible autonomy. The following quote clearly illustrates

agents' frustration with management's tight control over their work process:

The problem comes when you've been an agent on the phone for two to three years and you know the customers pretty well. And you get a call from a guy who wants the cheapest seat, he's seen the ad in the paper, it's says \$129 to Vancouver return. And he's calling for a \$129 seat and you look for five or ten minutes, you can't find it, they're all gone. I mean, this typically happens the last days of a seat sale, there ain't no more. All you've got left is executive class which is \$550 one way. So you say, "no, I haven't got any \$129 seat left, but would you like to book a \$1,050 seat," and you have to do it, or you're not effective. So there's no room for the agent to say, "I know this guy doesn't want a bloody executive class seat." So you compromise your judgement and your experience to satisfy a dictated line from the company. It belittles you because then they'll come back and they'll say, "all you had to do was offer to book." You want to say, "you offer to book, you offer that guy who wants a \$129 seat and who thinks that's too much money." The airlines have created a mentality among the travelling public that airline seats should be cheap, cheap, cheap. Who would think about paying \$1,000 return to Vancouver and back. But customers know that if they wait long enough, there will be a seat sale, there's always a seat sale. And yet, the company's telling you, "well you have to offer that \$1,000 seat." So your ability to use your own judgement is hindered, you're told in effect not to use your own judgement. They'll tell you, "you offer to book in 100 percent of cases, regardless." It's the mentality of when you walk into a clothing store and there's someone on your back the moment you're there, hounding you, you don't feel like you want to talk to that person. And yet this is what we're being forced to do more and more and more so.

Agents also raised concerns that making passenger sales effectiveness the main performance criterion of the quality assurance programme resulted in the quality of service to customers being compromised. Indeed, passenger sales effectiveness did not measure the quality of service to customers, but only the sales effort of agents. Workers who felt pressured into offering to make a reservation and overcome customers' objections experienced much frustration at having to satisfy the programme's objectives when they sensed the caller did not wish to book a seat. Some agents believed that the sales approach underlying the passenger sales effectiveness, which approximated the

hard-sell strategy of large American airlines, was inappropriate and that this aggressive practice was a form of disservice which could annoy callers and potentially lead to loss of sales. As one agent explained:

I didn't feel comfortable pushing. Canadians are not used to that kind of thing, they would just like [exasperation sound], they would just get mad if anything. They [management] put in the quality assurance, which is someone sitting in the backroom, listening and grading and supposedly it's all anonymous, but of course they always recognize your voice, they know perfectly well who you are. For one particular call they had the sheets and all the notes on what took place. This woman said, "look, I don't want to book anything, I just want to find out what the price is." The woman was almost hostile about this. They went through the whole thing and at the end the person offered to book. The lady went [mimics], "I told you, just stop saying that." I mean, she was so pissed off. And the poor agent was just trying to do the job. But really, I think that was more detrimental because you see, if I was the customer, I'd feel like that lady. Now there's one where it was the same kind of thing, I had a call, this lady was really mad. She didn't understand it, she'd been given information and none of it matched. She was so pissed off. So I went through the whole thing, and I didn't offer to book, because I knew if I did that would be really an insult to her. And my call was graded as an inefficient call because of that. I went to the supervisor and said, "give me a break, that's my call and I'm not going to insult somebody or make a worse impression, and I don't think she would call back if I had said these things that were inappropriate." And I think I did the best thing in that situation. And of course, no, no, you can't do that. There was no room for your own discretion. They had certain ideas and that's the way it was. Even, I think, sometimes the supervisors personally really agreed with you, but they had to do it a certain way and that was that. So I didn't have much respect for it, I just found it kind of stupid, a bit too structured. They didn't know to give you leeway, that you had any brains to use your own judgement.

A passenger agent commented on some of the problems associated with the new criterion of overcoming objections:

Overcoming objections means, if I say, "would you like to book this seat," and you say, "oh, no I have to talk to my husband before I do." You can't say, "fine, call me back when you make a decision." You have to say, "but there are very few seats left, I can hold the seat at no obligation to you for seven days and then you can call me back." It's not

a hard thing to do, usually. Nevertheless, the necessity to say that all the time, to always overcome that objection, first it makes it more difficult to have an effective call, which gets the supervisor on your back. And second, when you're doing seventy, eighty, ninety, a hundred calls a day, sometimes you just can't go through all those steps. You know the guy doesn't want the seat, you just know it, you just have a feeling in your bones. You have to offer it anyway, you have to overcome his objections and you don't know whether that person from QAP [quality assurance programme] is listening to you or not. There's always been overcoming objections, but to overcome objections has never been a requirement for an effective call. Now, you can offer to book, it's not enough any more. In effect, you really have to offer to book twice, although QAP will tell you that, "no, no, no, that's not the way at all, you overcome the objections and offer to book in the same breath." Which is fine if you want to write up the call yourself and decide exactly how it should go. When you're dealing with customers live, things don't always go that way. In effect, you have to offer to book, then you've got to overcome objections and offer to book again. And if he stills says no, then you can let go knowing you tried and you're effective.

Paradoxically, failure to make an offer to book and overcome objections resulted in a deficient sales call as defined by company criteria. Sales effective calls usually required more time to complete, but agents were increasingly being pressured into processing a larger volume of calls and reducing call length in order to improve the promptness of service statistics. Workers thus found themselves trying to satisfy potentially conflicting company objectives embodied in the different monitoring systems.

Agents were also sceptical about the claim that the quality assurance programme was anonymous because individual agents were sometimes singled out concerning their performance.⁴⁸ In addition, certain initiatives implemented by local management whereby quality analysts were called upon to randomly select sales effective calls and identify, for award purposes, the agents who handled them, contradicted the claim that this data collection process was anonymous.⁴⁹ Finally, when the new SL-1 telephone system was made available to quality analysts, they were able to immediately identify the

agent being monitored by looking at the VDT screen.

Individual Monitoring by Supervisors

Notwithstanding the problems with the quality assurance programme, agents raised more questions about the individual monitoring process and the coaching and counselling sessions carried out by supervisors. The latter, who listened in on agents' calls to ascertain the quality of performance and level of service to customers, determine training needs and identify candidates for performance awards, made use of information collected during individual telephone monitoring along with individual in-line availability statistics to evaluate workers during coaching and counselling sessions. Although evaluation sessions between supervisors and workers had always taken place, a number of agents felt that the tone of these meetings changed noticeably beginning in the 1980s. This was especially the case in the larger reservations offices where most of the revenue was generated and a stronger focus was placed on achieving sales. A number of passenger agents complained about the negative nature of these sessions and felt that they were not supportive and did not generally provide positive reinforcement, help improve skills and increase motivation. The union expressed concern that "a clear pattern of 'punitive feedback' and 'low level harassment' had developed."⁵⁰ An agent commented on this problem in the following manner:

Harassment was the number one technique, that was the only one they could master. They tried to make you feel like an idiot, they tried to make you feel guilty, and hopefully that would make you improve. They really didn't know how else to do it. There were people that they really did harass, you know, they would bring you in constantly and say, "you know you're only at 65 and we expect 70 percent on your STAR, you're only 65 percent, this isn't good enough." And you'd go, "yeah, yeah,

yeah, yeah." And that would just go on and on and on. And some people would be in tears and be really upset. But mostly, I remember just kind of sitting there and thinking, well I'll just play the game, I'll say all the right things, "oh, yeah, yeah, I'm going to really try." And then you'd go and just do the same thing all over again. But what are they going to do about it. They really don't want the hassle. They just really want you to kind of say the right things so they have an out, they can write on their report, "she's making a real effort to improve," and that gives them their out and then they can walk away and leave it.

The union's minutes of the 1986 contract negotiations highlighted some of the problems associated with individual monitoring and coaching and counselling sessions:

[District officer]

- man crying in my office because he doesn't know what's wrong
- if I go to supervisors they want to know why agent didn't come personally
- final line is agents soon won't give a damn - not an environment conducive to selling
- Union saying monitoring is supposed to be for something positive - 1 supervisor said "I have the power don't make me use it"
- agents wouldn't have problem if supervisors came with ways to correct problems - they don't
- they'll [agents] do anything to get out of reservations⁵¹

[Union member of bargaining committee]

- what is general reaction re stress related monitoring

[District officer]

- it creates stress because of negative approach
- a line like "unacceptable" with no positive creates stress
- EAP [employee assistance programme] rep has reported increase in calls to her

[Union member of bargaining committee]

- do people come to you and talk about stress

[District officer]

- 90% people talk about stress
- all talk about fear for their jobs
- they think they are only one with a problem
- agent went home sick following a session with supervisor
- agent was off for two weeks
- now people talking about it, now they realize they are not only one with a problem

[Union member of bargaining committee]

-examples of intimidation

[District officer]

-supervisor has the power to fire them, of course they're intimidated

-[name of supervisor] threatened to take action against officer for soliciting problems

-officers are watched - asked to leave the floor

-supervisor/agent rapport now is important - social rewards for good performance - new agents are having a problem coping but never in front of supervisor because they're suppose to be friends

[Union member of bargaining committee]

-you can now take all of this back to your principals

[Company member of bargaining committee]

- I'll investigate it⁵²

Agents also objected to infringements on their privacy. Call monitoring allowed supervisors to listen to private conversations between co-workers and thus acquire personal information on agents rather than on their work. Furthermore, agents raised the problem of supervisors recording personal calls during the monitoring process and using the information contained on the tapes to question workers on private matters during coaching and counselling sessions.

Clearly, passenger agents working in reservations offices were constantly measured and monitored, especially beginning in the early 1980s. Electronic measurement was continuous and everpresent whereas call monitoring was intermittent. What happened on the telephone and how effectively time was used were critical factors in the production of reservations services. Surveillance systems provided a wealth of detailed information, thereby making the work of reservations agents more visible and controllable by management. They also served to intensify the pace of work and increase output. The manner in which electronic measurement and monitoring was used made

workers more efficient, not by providing them with improved tools to perform the job, but by establishing a regime of constant supervision, especially in the larger reservations offices.

Most agents interviewed talked about being frequently stressed at work and many felt it was due to the level of monitoring and measurement that made an already demanding job even more difficult. The stress brought on by never-ending surveillance affects work performance, but also has consequences for life outside paid work as is evidenced by the following statement made by an agent:

Des femmes qui pleuraient, qui expliquaient qu'elles étaient tellement stressées. Y'en a une qui m'a dit ça, elle est venue ici, puis elle pleurait, elle m'a dit, "j'suis tellement stressée d'être surveillée que j'arrive à la maison, j'suis tendue, j'frappe mes enfants," des enfants de trois ans et quatre ans. J'veux dire, moi j'ai un coeur, j'frissonnais.

When questioned about the monitoring and measurement aspects of the job, no agents unequivocally stated that they felt totally comfortable with these practices. One agent emphatically stated, "it just seems like you're an animal in a cage."

Work Monitoring in City Sales Offices and Airport Locations

This totally controlled environment was in sharp contrast to the situation that prevailed in airport locations and city sales offices. The quality analysis programme developed during the 1950s whereby analysts carried out random checks was maintained throughout the years in these locations. Monitoring by quality analysis representatives and supervisors was less conspicuous and agents were often unaware that checks were taking place. More traditional means of worker supervision were used instead of the electronic monitoring and measurement systems found in reservations offices. Relations

between management and workers were not necessarily harmonious and conflicts did erupt over work performance evaluation. Agents nonetheless enjoyed greater freedom of movement and some flexibility to organize their workday as they generally did not remain in one position throughout the shift and were not constantly tied to a machine that monitored them. Because of the greater mobility required by the job, supervisors could not follow workers around constantly to determine if work time was being used effectively. A member of management talked about the greater freedom from supervision enjoyed by airport agents:

Les gens sont toujours plus heureux dans les aéroports, le travail dans un aéroport étant plus facile, je pense, qu'un travail de réservations. La nature de la bête, quand même, est difficile. La personne est assise là. Je n'ai jamais travaillé dans les réservations, j'ai toujours été strictement à l'aéroport. J'ai eu une promotion sans passer par les réservations, ce qui ne se faisait pas dans mon temps. Si tu voulais avoir une promotion, il fallait que tu passes par les réservations, et j'ai été chanceux en ce sens-là, je ne suis pas passé par là. Mais c'est plus facile dans un aéroport. C'est moins enfermé. Si tu vas faire un départ, c'est bien sûr que tu vas revenir, puis tu vas peut-être t'arrêter pour voir ce qu'il y a comme nouveaux livres. Puis t'as un cinq, dix minutes ici et là. C'est bien normal aussi. Mais dans les réservations, tu ne peux pas aller bien loin, t'es contrôlé. C'est peut-être injuste. Par contre, on entend tellement d'choses. S'il y a des gens qui sont plus disciplinaires, moi je ne l'suis pas. J'aime mieux donner l'exemple.

This mobility also favoured a greater degree of sociability. Because of these better working conditions as well as the absence of electronic monitoring and measurement, many agents in reservations offices sought a transfer to airport locations. Passenger agents' ability to transfer, however, was significantly diminished due to base closures and major layoffs in the early 1990s. Inter- and intra-base movement was further limited following a contract change in 1990 whereby agents were required to work in a location for eighteen months instead of six before being allowed to transfer.⁵³ This union

concession was secured following company attempts over the years to restrict transfer rights.

The Struggle Against Workplace Monitoring

The use of electronic measurement systems has been at the centre of an ongoing battle between labour and management at Air Canada ever since the introduction of the STAR and PASER in the late 1970s. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, conflicts also erupted over the more intensive monitoring of calls and the greater emphasis placed on promptness of service statistics. The union decried the use of the information gathered through these means to pressure and harass workers into intensifying the pace of work and increasing output.

The union's fight against the monitoring and measurement of workers was part of a broader struggle to resist mounting attacks by the company on passenger agents' working conditions. It was also part of a growing battle waged by the labour movement against such employer practices. Beginning in the 1980s, the union sought protection from automated surveillance through legislation and collective bargaining. The CALEA was one of several unions which made representation to the 1982 Labour Canada Task Force on Micro-Electronics and Employment and pressed for legal safeguards against individual monitoring.⁵⁴ Such demands were never met even though the report of the task force entitled In the Chips: Opportunities, People, Partnerships had strongly recommended the adoption of legislation prohibiting or controlling such practices and stated:

The Task Force regards close monitoring of work as an employment

practice based on mistrust and lack of respect for basic human dignity. It is an infringement on the right of the individual, an undesirable precedent that might be extended to other environments unless restrictions are put in place now. We strongly recommend that this practice be prohibited by law.⁵⁵

The CALEA also tabled a resolution, adopted by the CLC's 1984 convention, which called for the Congress to fight for the legal banning of the practice of machine monitoring and to develop a public campaign to help achieve this end.⁵⁶

The union began its fight to win contract provisions prohibiting individual monitoring and measurement in the mid-1980s. In its struggle to eliminate these forms of supervision, the union argued that they were a cause of high levels of stress amongst workers and exacerbated already stressful working conditions for VDT operators. During a meeting with the company in 1983, it made reference to a number of studies and reports to support its claims.⁵⁷ It also pointed to the results of a major survey on the health effects of working with VDTs completed by the CLC in 1981 in which approximately 300 Air Canada reservations agents participated. The study concluded that electronic monitoring significantly increased the frequency of stress problems for VDT users.⁵⁸ The company advised the union that it felt these research findings were inconclusive and did not intend to revise its policy regarding electronic monitoring.⁵⁹

During the 1984-1985 contract talks, the union was unsuccessful in its efforts to have the company cease individual monitoring and measurement, but a letter of understanding was signed which stipulated that the primary purpose of these practices was to provide a supportive process for employee counselling, training and development and that this form of evaluation should not be a source of stress for workers. The company further agreed to establish a special joint review board to investigate complaints

and seek solutions to the broader aspects of problems created by monitoring and measurement.⁶⁰

The new language was relatively weak and did little to protect agents. Indeed, workers continued to report being harassed and threatened with discipline because of their performance. Some agents' shift trade rights were restricted. As problems persisted, the union concluded that neither the understanding reached nor the review board established to investigate complaints with respect to monitoring and measurement had satisfied the members as the practice remained a major source of stress.⁶¹

During collective bargaining in 1986, contract language was strengthened in an effort to ensure that the results of monitoring and measurement of work performance would not be used to discipline workers nor to restrict or remove any rights, privileges or benefits they enjoyed. In addition, the letter of understanding was modified to specify that the purpose of monitoring and measurement was also to provide the necessary information to determine the level of service to customers and to establish staff requirements. This merely formalized existing practices. The role of the review board was expanded to include the examination of current and future uses of monitoring and measurement equipment and processes.⁶²

Notwithstanding these changes, problems with monitoring and measurement continued unabated. The union representatives on the review board expressed frustration with the committee's overall approach because joint meetings did not result in the discussion of the broader context of monitoring and measurement, but simply became a process for dealing with complaints.⁶³ Furthermore, the review board's effectiveness was reduced because many agents were not aware of its existence or mandate while those

who knew of the board were not always willing to file formal complaints out of fear of harassment.⁶⁴ The large number of problems encountered in the Toronto and Montreal reservations offices prompted the joint review board to hold meetings in March 1988 with passenger agents from these locations in order to provide a forum where workers could express their concerns.⁶⁵ During these sessions, instances of monitoring- and measurement-related harassment and intimidation were raised.⁶⁶ An agent in Montreal recalled this meeting:

Il y a eu des dizaines et des dizaines de personnes qui sont venues témoigner pendant toute la journée. La compagnie a démontré un irrespect total pour ces gens-là. Premièrement, ils sont arrivés en retard à cette réunion-là, puis y'avaient des exigences pour pas qu'il n'y ait les cry babies, comme ils disent. Ils ne voulaient pas que ce soit sur le temps de la compagnie, ils ne voulaient pas que ce soit sur le lieu de travail. Ça fait qu'il y a des gens qui se sont déplacés, sont allés pendant leur lunch, avant leur travail, après leur travail ou pendant une journée de congé. Ils sont venus se plaindre. Mais à un moment donné, la haute direction s'est en allée pendant une heure et demie, ils sont allé, j'sais pas, luncher ou boire un verre, j'sais pas trop. Et puis, moi j'ai vu des femmes pleurer, décrire leur situation, comment elles se sentaient surveillées. A un moment donné, un agent est arrivé avec un tape, puis quand c'est venu l'temps d'parler, il a parti son tape, c'était la chanson de The Police, Every Breath You Take, Every Move You Make, I'll Be Watching You. C'est big brother's watching you, ici, sauf que l'grand frère, c'est un écoeurant. Ca n'a pas d'bon sens.

The vagueness of contract language also raised concerns about the manner in which monitoring and measurement results were being used during coaching and counselling sessions with agents. As previously mentioned, the practices of some supervisors led agents to question where employee counselling ended and harassment began. One district chairperson stated:

L.O.U. 11 [letter of understanding on monitoring and measurement of work performance] prohibits formal discipline based on monitoring or measurement, but informal, unrecorded discipline occurs on a daily basis

in the form of subtle harassment by supervisors. This harassment usually takes the form of regular, lengthy meetings between supervisors and agents in private, which are called Coaching and Counselling Sessions. In fact, very little coaching is done. The agents are berated for low in-line availability, T.B.M.'s [tickets-by-mail], etc., and emerge from these meetings feeling humiliated and very stressed.⁶⁷

At the union's request, the contract was modified in 1988 to clearly differentiate between monitoring and measurement, thereby delimiting the specific purposes of each form of employee assessment. The former (which generally related to call monitoring by quality analysts and supervisors) was to facilitate employee counselling, training and development activities, whereas the latter (which generally related to the electronic measurement systems) was to provide data to determine staff requirements and the level of service to customers. The company further agreed to give passenger agents advance notice when their work performance was to be monitored by supervisors or managers on an individual basis for coaching and counselling purposes. This was aimed at reducing the stress associated with monitoring.⁶⁸

Problems were encountered with the interpretation of the advance notice provision and supervisors continued to monitor agents without prior notification. In some offices, workers were solicited about opting out of their right to advance notice.⁶⁹ In other locations, as part of sales effectiveness contests, management monitored agents individually without notice in order to assess workers' performance for the purpose of granting awards.⁷⁰ Individual agents were also monitored for quality control.

While the union argued that confusion about the circumstances under which advance notice was to be given would be clarified if the terms coaching, counselling, training and development were defined, the company disagreed that such confusion

existed and therefore maintained that no useful purpose would be served by defining these concepts.⁷¹ The union grieved the company's monitoring practices, arguing that they were used to circumvent the provisions of the letter of understanding. It felt that because certain awards and quality checks clearly supported the process of employee counselling, training and development, advance notification of monitoring should be provided. Air Canada dismissed these grievances stating that the contract only required that supervisors give advance notice if monitoring was to be used for coaching and counselling purposes and that there was no connection between the awards and the coaching and counselling process.⁷² It thus reaffirmed its position that individual monitoring could take place without prior notification to ascertain fraud and abuse, evaluate individual performance, determine the quality of service provided to customers and identify candidates for sales effectiveness awards. Should the results of this monitoring be unsatisfactory, supervisors could then, with advance notice, monitor individual agents for coaching and counselling.⁷³ Clearly, the company's claim to a unilateral right to distinguish between monitoring for coaching, counselling, training and development purposes and monitoring for other purposes, as well as its contention that much of the monitoring it carried out was for reasons other than coaching, counselling, training and development of passenger agents seriously put into question the advance notice provision of the letter of understanding.

When Air Canada and the CAW local 2213 met to renew the collective agreement in the spring of 1990, the union condemned management for not living up to its commitment on the issue of electronic surveillance. The union demanded once again that individual monitoring and measurement be completely eliminated and that an extended

meal period and additional hourly breaks be provided in locations where workers were subjected to greater stress due to constant use of VDT equipment and monitoring and measurement.⁷⁴ The union backed its demands for increased breaks and the banning of individual monitoring and measurement with a survey of its membership conducted in 1989 which found that 67 percent of general reservations agents felt that call monitoring was associated with higher stress levels and 62 percent felt that electronic measurement made work more stressful.⁷⁵ While the union had earlier made reference to other studies on the negative effects of working with VDTs and of individual monitoring in order to pressure the company into eliminating these forms of supervision, its 1989 study unequivocally established the existence of major problems in Air Canada reservations offices. The union also based its demands for modifications to the company's monitoring practices on gains made by the Communications, Electronic, Electrical, Technical and Salaried Workers of Canada (CWC) which succeeded in 1989 in eliminating individual computerized surveillance for most telephone operators employed by Bell Canada Enterprises. This achievement followed a joint union-management study which showed that such monitoring was one of the biggest causes of stress for workers.⁷⁶

The union's arguments convinced the company to make some changes to its monitoring practices. A memorandum of understanding committed management to discontinue monitoring in the Toronto reservations office on a trial basis for the 1991 calendar year, except for the purposes of the quality assurance programme and to support the process of employee counselling and training (in the latter case monitoring required advance notice). The memorandum also granted agents in the Montreal reservations

office, again on an trial basis for the 1991 calendar year, an additional ten minute rest period. The experiments were to be extended to other reservations offices if they proved satisfactory.⁷⁷ These concessions, though significant, fell short of the union's demands that individual monitoring and measurement be completely eliminated in all reservations offices and that all agents working for long periods of time with VDT's be provided with extra rest breaks.

The trial project proved somewhat disappointing. Due to a number of problems which prevented the parties from properly evaluating the experiment in the Montreal reservations offices, the pilot project was moved to the Winnipeg reservations office for a six month period beginning in January 1992.⁷⁸ Citing a loss of productivity, the company cancelled the Winnipeg initiative at the end of July despite the union's objections to the manner in which productivity was being calculated.⁷⁹ In the case of the Toronto trial, the union succeeded in expanding the scope of the memorandum of understanding to include not only monitoring but also measurement. As per the initial agreement, any individual monitoring was to be conducted only following advance notice and for the sole purpose of supporting the process of employee counselling, training and development. In addition, transcripts of calls prepared by quality assurance representatives were to be released on a weekly basis only, in order to better ensure the anonymity of the programme. Moreover, electronic measurement results were to be used only to determine staffing requirements and the overall office level of service to customers. Even though supervisors could continue to access individual agents' daily in-line statistics, they were not to communicate these results to workers. Instead, staff could be informed of team in-line performance at bi-monthly meetings.⁸⁰

In late November 1991, shortly before the trial was to be concluded, management informed the union that the experiment would be discontinued as of December 1. The company felt that the programme had adversely affected productivity.⁸¹ The union expressed disappointment with the company's decision and undertook its own assessment of the experiment. It uncovered that while office productivity based on in-line performance statistics had decreased from an average of 69 percent in 1990 to 66 percent in 1991, the decline had actually begun prior to the trial. Moreover, other factors may have contributed to the deterioration in productivity, including a reduced staff complement, an increasing complexity of calls (which was partly the result of the influx of calls from other regions following the centralization of reservations offices) and a lack of training for new procedures. An examination of other performance statistics indicates that agents in Toronto were actually more productive in certain respects than they had been prior to the trial. For example, the average number of calls taken per agent in 1991 was up 11 percent over 1990 levels, and the number of calls answered per work hour increased by slightly more than 5 percent.⁸² Responses to a union questionnaire revealed further weaknesses with the experiment in the Toronto reservations office. While the majority of agents reported that supervisors were following the call monitoring guidelines, almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that there was no significant change or no change at all in the use of in-line statistics during the trial.⁸³ In responding to the survey, one agent commented:

I feel that a facade of cooperation to the M & M [monitoring and measurement] experiment was put up initially. However, supervisors still assessed in-line as the most important indices for agent performance. In short, they relied on what was easiest for them and hardest for the agent to measure up to...in-line. The underlying threat that if in-line was not

kept up was ominously present always as a means of reprimanding an agent, or showing them up as not working. In all fairness, during this period I have worked harder than any other period; simply because call volume was up and it didn't matter how you measured it, at the end of the day you were driven and brain-dead!⁸⁴

Obviously, the union was thwarted in its attempt to demonstrate that electronic surveillance was not needed to ensure an effective and sales-oriented workforce and the achievement of productivity standards.

Despite the union's desire to improve contract language on measurement and monitoring during the 1992 round of collective bargaining, the parties' decision to extend the agreement for one year precluded this possibility. Clearly, even though the company made some concessions, it strongly resisted encroachments on its right to monitor and measure employees as it saw fit. Management insisted that monitoring and measurement was needed to increase productivity and ensure consistent standards of service if the carrier was to enhance its competitive position in the deregulated and rapidly changing airline industry.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have dealt with training and monitoring systems, both of which deeply affect the work environment of passenger agents. For many years, training has been a contentious issue between management and labour. Indeed, workers have systematically complained about the inadequacy of the employer's training programmes. Despite its repeated attempts, the union failed to gain control over any aspect of the training of passenger agents. As was the case with the organization of work, the company strongly resisted encroachment on its right to define both initial and on-the-job

training programmes.

My study reveals that the company's training initiatives have had implications for passenger agents' job experience. Lack of proper training has resulted in frustration, job dissatisfaction and a loss of control over work, especially in the context of changes within the industry. It has also affected service delivery. Moreover, the employer's training practices have had an impact on passenger agents' labour market position. The type and level of training available to passenger agents have not facilitated the development of broad and transferable computer, interpersonal and sales skills, a situation that has negatively affected agents' promotional opportunities in both internal and external labour markets. Generally, training has been viewed as an indicator of skill. Unlike other groups of airline workers such as pilots and mechanics, passenger agents have never been licensed, and their basic as well as on-the-job training requirements have not been subject to regulation. They have thus never been considered highly skilled. Despite these circumstances, the job of passenger agents requires a broad range of 'people' and selling skills. As noted previously, the employer has generally assumed that workers possess the non-technical abilities needed to perform their tasks. This has often been the case for sales, service and clerical jobs where women predominate. The complex social and communications capabilities that many women have developed have been denied because they are seen as personality and not skill. As a number of feminists studying women's work have noted, definitions of skill can have more to do with ideological and social constructions than with competencies.

Even though it would seem that the overall training provided to passenger agents was generally insufficient to allow them to carry out their tasks in a consistently

competent manner, this did not prevent the company from implementing an arsenal of monitoring techniques to evaluate workers' performance. Much of this chapter has been devoted to a discussion of changes in monitoring and measurement systems introduced by TCA/Air Canada over the years. My analysis has reinforced the conclusions drawn in the three previous chapters where I established that the structure of control has undergone a shift whereby new means of managing workers have been introduced and old means modified. The growing attempts by management to control and pump surplus from workers, and the extensive use of various forms of monitoring systems to achieve these ends point to an ongoing process of proletarianization of passenger agents.

I have focused on the company's increasing use of technical control to direct, pace and evaluate workers, a trend which intensified with the crisis and restructuring of the airline industry beginning in the late 1970s. I have shown that new forms of machine-based monitoring have served to bolster the technical control associated with the introduction of workplace technologies that reorganized the overall method of production. The new surveillance practices were aimed at improving productivity and profits. This could be achieved by standardizing the job, intensifying the pace of work and increasing output, thereby reducing the porosity of the working day. The sophisticated surveillance systems adopted by the employer further removed effective control of the productive process from workers. These monitoring systems helped to minimize the problem of transforming labour power into labour and have contributed a powerful and extremely flexible element to structural control.

In her study of telephone operators, Joan Newman Kuyek⁵⁵ has described similar monitoring practices. Available evidence points to a growing trend towards the

electronic supervision of sales, service and clerical workers, a large proportion of whom are women. Many of the jobs involve dealing with information and people and require a certain amount of privacy between the worker and the customer. Until recently, such work has been more difficult to closely monitor. New sophisticated and flexible technologies have facilitated more pervasive and invasive surveillance, thus providing management with a more accurate measure of how workers spend their time. By generating a wealth of detailed information, electronic surveillance systems make work more visible and more controllable by management. Despite the fact that automated supervision is a fundamental aspect of the job experience of a growing number of workers, it nonetheless remains hidden from public view. It can also obscure power relations at play in the workplace as it tends to be presented as neutral, unavoidable and necessary for economic prosperity. Clearly, even though the computer equipment introduced by Air Canada could be programmed to supply management with an ongoing record of passenger agents' performance, the specific manner in which the technology and statistics were used reflected the attempt to more effectively control labour in order to improve productivity. The technical capability needed to be harnessed so as to be incorporated into these managerial goals.

For passenger agents at Air Canada, the move towards computerized supervision has accompanied a trend towards greater bureaucratic control. It has also contributed to the spread of this form of control through new sets of rules and rewards related to work performance. This finding suggests that Edwards'⁸⁶ contention that bureaucratic control systems supercede technically-based ones needs to be somewhat qualified. Moreover, despite a heavier reliance on structural control, old methods of simple control have not

been eliminated, but have been modified and enhanced. Indeed, much of the information gathered through technical means has been used to manage reservations workers individually on a personal basis. Workers at airport locations and city sales offices continue to be controlled through more traditional, albeit intensified, means of supervision. Other studies have pointed out that different types of control are often used in combination. In her research on fast food workers, for example, Ester Reiter⁸⁷ found that the employer relied heavily on direct control along with a myriad of rules and regulations to manage the workforce. The existence of various systems of control means that management exercise authority over workers in often contradictory ways.

There is a wide range of choice as to the techniques adopted to monitor workers. The use to which the information gathered is put is also based on choices. All forms of monitoring systems bear the imprint of the social context in which they are developed and embedded and are not technologically or structurally inevitable. That workers are rarely involved in setting performance standards and determining monitoring techniques is not surprising given that workplaces are not organized democratically under capitalism. This does not mean, however, that workers passively accept workplace oppression. I have shown that the union representing passenger agents at Air Canada has actively opposed the new electronic monitoring systems as well as the overall increase in surveillance. The union's struggle against these types of workplace control has been formalized through collective bargaining, a strategy that has somewhat limited its effectiveness in bringing about fundamental change.

Individually, passenger agents have also resisted the new monitoring techniques. Although workers sometimes developed systems to manage and control their own time,

they could not deviate significantly from established procedures in order to meet or beat the quota according to personal preference, given the real-time nature of the labour process that prevented the stockpiling of customers. Thus, contrary to the machine shop workers in Burawoy's⁸⁸ study, passenger agents could not systematically engage in the game of 'making out' (with its connotation of sexual conquest) to create free time for themselves. The promise of rewards also compelled workers to meet the company's performance standards. The limited availability of rewards tended to foster competitive individualism in the workplace, a phenomenon which obscured the process of exploitation. However, the scarcity of rewards and the manner in which they were granted sometimes led to cynicism and to the breakdown of the control system. In such cases, the disciplinary approach could be relied upon to regain control.

While the reward system usually served to coordinate the interests of managers and workers, the company could also rely on the ideology of service provision to ensure performance. However, even if workers wished to offer quality service, they had to deal with the company's contradictory demands whereby service to customers was heavily promoted, but quantity and productivity were emphasized and quality was equated with standardization. The immediacy of the relationship between passenger agents and consumers of the air carrier's products made it relatively difficult for agents to do or say things that would negatively affect customers. This direct relationship between the producer and consumer is different from the mediated relationship that exists between the producer and consumer of a good. The ability of customers to register complaints against the actual producer of the service represents another form of workplace control.

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8. WORK SCHEDULES, PART-TIME WORK AND HOUSEHOLD DIVISION OF LABOUR

This chapter examines work schedules which constitute a fundamental but often overlooked aspect of the experience of paid employment. Workers attach great importance to this dimension of work because of its impact on the quality of life at work and outside of the workplace. Work time is also significant to the employer because of its implications for day-to-day operations and because it determines, to a certain extent, the extraction of surplus labour.

In the first part of the chapter, I trace major modifications to different aspects of work time such as the length of the working day, shift work, the establishment of work schedules, employer requested shift changes, and overtime. The second section of the chapter, is devoted to an analysis of part-time labour. I focus on the growing trend in the use of part-time workers, their working conditions and the impact of this form of labour on the job security of full-time agents. I also highlight the union's ambivalent stance on the issue of part-time work. In the third part of the chapter, I discuss shift trades which represented a means by which workers succeeded in gaining some control over their hours of work. Throughout, I demonstrate that the various issues related to work schedules and shifts became a major source of friction in the workplace as the union and its membership fought to have a greater say in the determination of this very important aspect of the job.

In the final section of the chapter, I examine how maternity leave and childcare are dealt with by the union and the company. I also explore the sexual division of household and childcare labour and discuss its connection to work schedules and part time work. Finally, I reveal the importance of shift trades in balancing the requirements

of home and workplace.

Work Schedules and Shifts

During the early years, the company had complete control over the establishment of agents' work schedules and shifts. Agents usually worked a forty-four hour week over five-and-a-half days, with any overtime credited at straight time. Because the carrier operated seven days a week from early in the morning to late at night and at times on a twenty-four hour basis, agents were required to work day, afternoon or night shifts. Hours of work was one of the main issues raised during negotiations for a first collective agreement between the TEA and TCA in 1946. At this time, the union tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a decrease in hours of work.¹ A reduced workweek was finally secured in early 1951 when the company established the forty hour week for all its employees in accordance with the growing trend in Canada at the time.²

As early as 1949, the union sought compensation in the form of pay differentials for employees working afternoon and night shifts. It was felt that the burden of shift work was not shared equally because some agents worked only day shifts while coverage requirements made it necessary for others to work day, afternoon and night shifts.³ This improvement was obtained in 1950,⁴ with better provisions gained over the years. In addition, a greater degree of equity in the distribution of work shifts was ensured with the inclusion, in the 1951 collective agreement, of the stipulation that employees would be rotated periodically between day, evening and night shifts.⁵ This contract rule, however, was not always followed.

During the early years, the union also attempted to improve overtime provisions.

Initially, agents were credited at straight time for all time worked in excess of their weekly hours of work (this was changed in 1954 to, in excess of hours scheduled on any working day); they were required to take compensatory time off in lieu of pay.⁶ In 1947, agents acquired the right to receive a four hour credit in cases of recall.⁷ The following year, they were granted payment for overtime instead of time off, but only for those hours which were in excess of a fifty-six hour quarterly surplus time record.⁸ In 1950, the union was finally able to achieve payment on a time-and-a-half basis, but only for overtime beyond fifty-six hours at the end of the quarterly period.⁹ By 1953, all overtime was credited at time-and-a-half and by 1959, employees working more than twelve consecutive hours were credited on a double time basis for any additional hours on duty.¹⁰ Over the years, the surplus time record method was modified and by 1973, all overtime that was not taken as time off was compensated on a cash payment basis and any undertime was deducted from employees' paycheque.¹¹ Beginning in 1977, however, the possibility of accumulating time credits and debits in a time bank was included in the agreement.¹² The time bank ensured the equalization of paycheques and also allowed workers to store hours for use later as time off. Moreover, with this feature of the agreement, management was able to compensate employees for overtime worked by giving them time off during off-peak periods rather than by paying cash, a practice which translated into savings for the company. Minor language changes over the years gradually modified workers overtime conditions.

During the early 1950s, the union campaigned for a scheduled meal period because agents were complaining that they sometimes went without such a break or were compelled to take time off to eat whenever they could.¹³ In 1951, agents were

guaranteed a meal break between the third and fifth hours of work; this did not apply to those agents whose meal period was on company time.¹⁴ The clause was further weakened by loopholes which allowed for local agreements. It was not until 1966 that the union was successful in strengthening meal period provisions. Passenger agents working afternoon or night shifts were thereafter guaranteed a thirty minute meal break on company time.¹⁵ In 1968, the inclusion of meal pauses as part of the standard working day was extended to all workers regardless of shift, thus resulting in the reduction of daily hours of work.¹⁶

The Struggle Over Work Time

From the beginning, there was a great divergence in the types of shifts and schedules being worked by passenger agents. Although the standard workweek was forty-four hours until early 1951 and forty hours thereafter, the length of the workday was not specified in the collective agreement, thus leaving room for flexibility and potential conflict. In the mid- to late-1950s, agents reported having to work a ten hour shift with a two hour lunch period, a situation made possible because the duration of the meal period was not specified at that time.¹⁷ There were also problems with the issue of days off. The collective agreement stipulated that agents were to be allotted one-and-a-half days off (changed to two days off in 1951 when the forty hour week was established) over a seven day period, but when it was not practical to meet these conditions due to extensive shift work, the number of days off could not be less than six (changed to eight days off in 1951) in any four periods of seven consecutive days, unless mutually agreed upon by the company and the union.¹⁸ Agents complained, however,

that time off was sometimes being allocated in units of hours rather than half or full days. They were also unhappy because they were not always being provided with consecutive days off.¹⁹ During an interview, a passenger agent who had been with the company since the 1950s described a typical work schedule at that time:

Reservations shifts were in those days dreadful, because you used to work one day, two days off, work two days, one day off. There was no sequence to it, you know, and you never knew for very long what you'd be doing.

When the president of the SEA began touring the districts after taking office in 1958, he expressed concern about the scheduling of shifts in many locations.²⁰ Some agents were regularly working seven days or more consecutively before getting a day off. At times, agents were given single days off duty. Daily shifts ranged from six to ten hours duration, with "totally unacceptable times for taking duty."²¹ The president of the union wrote to TCA headquarters management that this state of affairs was:

at variance with accepted industry practise as a shift being 8 hours, further these shifts of 6 and 10 hours are payable at the straight time rate only and are not subject to the overtime payment. This association does contend that such shifts in excess of 8 hours are incorrect and that they in themselves violate, the agreement, company regulations and basic labour principles... It had not in the past been the intention of this Association to specify in the agreement that 8 hours would constitute a working day, as in our opinion, this matter was amply covered in the company manuals. If we were to permit this pattern of shifts duration to be accepted, this could quite easily be the forerunner of even more disagreeable shifts in the future, due to the fact that we of this Association had condoned such practise.²²

Beginning in the late 1950s, the union fought to improve the organization of passenger agents' work time. The 1961 collective agreement placed more stringent limitations on shift duration with the standard working day now set at eight consecutive hours, although employees could be scheduled to work up to nine consecutive hours if

the standard day did not prove practicable due to the requirements of the service.²³ Although the standard work schedule was five days on and two days off, which was referred to as the 5/2 schedule, the new clause allowed for the development of a regular shift schedule of six days on (of nine hours duration) and three days off and was referred to as the 6/3 schedule. Even with these provisions, work schedules were nonetheless developed that included shifts of six or seven hours duration. Moreover, agents in some of the smaller bases were working four hour shifts to staff city sales offices which were open only on a half-day basis. Arguing that passenger agents could not be scheduled to work less than eight consecutive hours a day and should be granted full calendar days off duty, the SEA called for the elimination of half days and short shifts.²⁴ For its part, the company insisted that the contract only set an upper limit to hours of work and indicated that it would not have agreed to the new clause if there had been any intention of setting a lower limit because it was unwilling to tie the hands of local managers.²⁵ When the SEA threatened to submit the issue of hours of work to arbitration, the company requested further discussions to solve the problem.²⁶ A letter of understanding signed in November 1962 stipulated that a scheduled day off had to be provided as a full day and could not take the form of two half days, but should a location require half-day coverage, days off could be given as half days as long as the majority of employees affected were in agreement.²⁷ This arrangement merely ratified the status quo.

Work Schedule Establishment

Union involvement in schedule determination became another major contentious issue related to the organization of passenger agents' work time. During the early years

of its existence, the union attempted to gain some control over the establishment of work schedules in order to ensure that agents receive sufficient notice of change to their hours of work and to prevent management from enforcing undesirable shifts and schedules, especially when it was possible to devise alternative arrangements that secured the required coverage and were more acceptable to employees.

In 1951, the union won a minor concession that provided for schedules to be mutually acceptable to the company and the majority of employees in the location and, in 1955, it succeeded in negotiating a clause that called for new schedules to be posted normally one month, but not less than two weeks in advance.²⁸ Both provisions were relatively weak and did not significantly reduce management's power as far as the determination of work schedules was concerned, mainly because any schedule could be overridden should extenuating requirements of the service so dictate. This ill-defined phrase could easily be used by the company to justify changes. Grievance files and union-company correspondence reveal that agents were not always notified of schedule alterations within the time limits. In addition, workers could not decline a company work schedule. The following statements by two district chairpersons attest to this problem:

The airport agents have a problem on their hands over shifts. Our supervisors insist on posting a shift which is not mutually acceptable. We have in turn submitted alternate shifts which have been rejected by management. Now management have posted a shift which we are not given any choice on at all and are more or less ordered to work. The foregoing paragraph and pressure by the agents are what prompted me to give you a call by phone last night.²⁹

The P. and S.M. [personnel and services manager] called me at home around 1200 May 10th to advise of the changes they were able to make and to get my approval. I advised him that S.E.A. would not accept or

endorse any shift that exceeded eight hours and that I, as an agent at the airport would not accept it either. When I came on duty at 1430 the Airport Manager had contacted each agent individually in person or by phone to obtain their approval of the revised shift schedule. After being contacted in this manner the majority of the agents at the airport accepted the enclosed schedule, which makes our position that much weaker in obtaining an eight hour shift.³⁰

In 1961, slightly improved contract language granted employees in a location the right to propose an alternate shift schedule to meet the coverage requirements established by the company should the majority not accept management's schedule.³¹ The president of the union complained that this clause did not deter local management from arbitrarily imposing schedules, but he nevertheless chastised officers and members alike for being party to violations by accepting to work schedules contrary to the intent of the agreement.³² He also remarked:

We seem to have been inundated recently with what I tend to call petty complaints and I think that this is not good enough. It should be possible to settle these at the local level. Many of these affect shift changes and shift schedules, and as far as I am concerned insufficient thought is being given to such issues at the outset. If greater SEA participation was taken when shift schedules are due to be changed, then I am sure we could eradicate most problems. It surprises me the large number of Districts who pass no comment, and take no part in the compilation of such schedules at their locations. A shift cycle is not Management's sole prerogative.³³

By the mid-1960s, with the growth of the airline industry, work schedule development was becoming increasingly complex and the union continued to fight to obtain more control in this area. In 1966, major gains were made with the inclusion of a contract clause that established that following the determination of staffing needs by the company, joint discussions were to be held to reach agreement on an acceptable schedule.³⁴ Two years later, the language was further strengthened with the stipulation

that efforts be made to ensure that consultation commence six weeks prior to the introduction of new schedules. Management was also obliged to furnish the district union chairperson with detailed company-established daily staffing requirements. Schedules were to be posted three weeks in advance for the purpose of recording majority acceptance, with final schedules announced two weeks prior to their implementation.³⁵

Even though the collective agreement allowed for the input of district union officers and, to a lesser extent, of passenger agents in the development of work schedules, complaints registered by chairpersons throughout the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s reveal that the provisions for advance discussions were not being systematically applied by management in many locations. Moreover, procedures were not standardized across the system in terms of the timing of discussions and the identification of staffing needs. In some cases, local management refused any union input whatsoever. Numerous grievances were filed concerning the company's attempt to limit the union's involvement in the scheduling process. In several instances, the union successfully argued its position, but contract language on schedule determination was too weak to ensure that meaningful discussions take place.

Scheduling-related issues figured prominently during the very difficult and lengthy round of collective bargaining in 1973-1974. These negotiations concluded with the inclusion of more precise language which secured a greater role for the union in schedule determination while placing further restrictions on the employer. From then on, local management was compelled to meet with the union twice yearly and no later than six weeks prior to the introduction of major flight schedule changes to review coverage

requirements and develop work schedules. In addition, the company was obliged, at the first meeting, to present staffing needs in detail for each period of thirty minutes of the workday.³⁶ These stipulations replaced much vaguer wording which only called for management to make every possible effort to ensure that discussions commence six weeks in advance and which did not specify the number of times the parties were to meet during the year. Furthermore, the company did not have to supply the daily staff requirements in such detail under previous collective agreements.

Although the contract language delineating the union's role in work schedule determination had become much less restrictive, clauses in collective agreements do not guarantee effective participation. Local conditions and the state of labour-management relations greatly influenced the schedule determination process. At times, schedule discussions were carried out in an atmosphere of cooperation and were concluded to the general satisfaction of the majority. At other times, district chairpersons did not insist on any union involvement whatsoever. In some locations, management continued to resist the steady infringement on what it considered to be its rights and was not always willing to abide by the rules of the contract. The union frequently complained during joint meetings at all levels, during collective bargaining and through the grievance process that local management refused or was unable to provide detailed staffing requirements, thereby diminishing passenger agents' involvement in the scheduling process. At a grievance hearing the union remarked:

In dealing with every Reservations work/shift schedules there is basic information required to effect a suitable and acceptable schedule... With continuing changes in staff levels and work requirement, this information is in constant flux and requires constant updating. Without the basis for a work/shift schedule, the employees are not in any position to propose

alternate schedules and management's presentation of a finished and unilaterally established schedule voids the requirement for mutually acceptable schedules.³⁷

Beginning in the 1960s, with the growth of the airline and the concomitant increasing complexity of work scheduling, union-management discussions on this issue often turned into major confrontations. Grievance files and minutes of negotiations indicate that conflicts frequently erupted over staffing levels. The union maintained that the company staffed to budget as opposed to requirements and, because it did not properly plan for management relief, illness, vacation, leaves of absence and training, there tended to be an underestimation of the number of agents needed to perform the job satisfactorily. Indeed, passenger agents claimed they could not always meet the service standards set by the company, given inadequate staffing levels.³⁸ In 1969, the CALEA's pacific region director wrote:

The staffing situation seems to be a problem at several locations and it is our understanding that the Company is going to try to keep the employee level at a minimum. This being the case they might have to change their service requirements and Q.A.P. [quality assurance programme] standards. As a matter of fact the Company will soon be investigating this very thing. While this is being done, our position is that an agent is only required to do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. The Company has only themselves to blame if the service standards are not being met due to understaffing.³⁹

For its part, management argued that the union was seeking input into decisions on staffing levels and thus was requesting more information than the company was obliged to make available. It systematically maintained that the determination of coverage requirements was management's responsibility and sole prerogative, but that the establishment of schedules based on those requirements was a matter for discussion.⁴⁰

The union stated, however, that it:

does not dispute the Company's right to establish the levels of manpower required in order to perform all phases of duty: the Company cannot, however, dispute the right of the Union to Challenge these levels, especially when the figures given are based upon false or unrealistic premises which will affect reasonable working conditions, reasonable levels of staff and reasonable manpower distribution and when these figures represent a threat in relation to the scope of duties under Article 2.03 and also a threat to the quality of the passenger agent's work.⁴¹

Company Requested Shift Modifications

Another main area of shift- and schedule-related conflict revolved around local management's practice of revising shifts once the schedule had been published. While agents complained early on about this problem, it was not until 1958 that the union finally obtained a clause limiting the employer's absolute power in this matter. From then on, local management was obliged to give two weeks notice for shift alterations. A waiver was included which granted the company some flexibility to rearrange shifts where extenuating circumstances prevailed.⁴² Because the mandatory two weeks notice was not always given and one to two days advice or last minute revisions were common practice in some locations, the union accused management of misusing its right to alter shifts and insisted that neither party had intended for shifts to be changed on a whim. Moreover, the term extenuating circumstances (changed to requirements of the service in 1966), which lacked precise definition, left much room for interpretation. Indeed, different criteria were applied throughout the system.⁴³ This situation was partly addressed by a clause in the 1969 collective agreement which required supervisors or managers to fill out a special shift alteration form advising agents of the reason for changes as well as the new shift times, with a copy forwarded to the union

chairperson.⁴⁴ This procedure facilitated a closer monitoring of shift modifications, but did not resolve the problem.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, battles ensued over the very definition of shifts and schedules. The union argued that the shift alteration clause in the collective agreement allowed the company to modify an employee's shift (the working time within a day), but that advanced and detailed discussions were compulsory whenever an employee's work schedule was altered (which involved a change in days on/days off). Passenger agents, it seems, did not strongly object to shift alterations within their regularly scheduled workday. They nonetheless complained when their days on/days off sequence was changed.⁴⁵ Agents found it difficult enough to organize their home and family activities around shift work, but to have their days on and days off rearranged sometimes made it next to impossible to plan their lives.

The company was, however, adamant that the agreement imposed no restrictions on its ability to rearrange an individual employee's days on/days off sequence. According to management, the term 'shift' embraced both commencement and termination time of work and days on/days off. The term 'work schedule', on the other hand, meant a projection of all passenger agents' shifts in a given location. A work schedule change thus referred to the basic schedule revision for all passenger agents which occurred, usually twice yearly, in consultation with district union representatives. The company argued that forcing local management to enter into advance and detailed discussions with the union when only one or a few workers were affected was unrealistic and untenable. These types of discussions, the company maintained, were for the purpose of implementing a major work schedule change affecting a large percentage of

passenger agents in a location.⁴⁶

Important amendments to the collective agreement signed in late 1971 brought to a halt the many arguments and grievances concerning these definitions. New provisions required management to give at least two weeks notice before making a change to a passenger agent's work schedule, which was defined as the projection of the employee's shifts with regard to days worked to days off (as opposed to all employees' shifts, which were rearranged during major schedule discussions). Nevertheless, the company gained the ability to alter an individual worker's shift with only seventy-two hours advance notice. The waiver allowing management to make adjustments without prior notice when the requirements of the service so necessitated was deleted.⁴⁷

Although the collective agreement imposed time restrictions on the company's ability to modify passenger agents' shifts and schedules, much discretion remained in the hands of local management, especially because the reasons for which alterations could be made were not specified. Indeed, passenger agents in some locations complained that management was taking advantage of the revised clause and was making use of various pretexts to adjust shifts.⁴⁸ In response to union demands, the circumstances under which the company could modify shifts and work schedules were clearly outlined in 1974.⁴⁹ Despite the union's attempts to limit the reasons for changes, exemptions were added over the course of the next few years

During the first four decades of its existence, the union struggled to improve the working conditions of agents in the area of shifts and schedules. Contract language was negotiated which limited management's right to unilaterally adjust agents' hours of work and which provided the union with the ability to participate in the work schedule

establishment process. The more stringent restrictions imposed on the company, however, did not act as a panacea as evidenced by the many grievances that continued to be registered alleging that local management rearranged work schedules and shifts for invalid reasons, did not give passenger agents appropriate notice, neglected to make use of the mandatory shift and schedule alteration form and attempted to restrict the union's involvement in work scheduling decisions.

The 1984-1985 Battle to Define Work Schedules and its Aftermath

When the two parties entered into negotiations to renew the collective agreement ending in September 1984, demands for concessions regarding work scheduling figured prominently on Air Canada's agenda. This round of collective bargaining, the first in four years, occurred in the midst of major industry changes. The company negotiators insisted on the need for increased flexibility in terms of shift and schedule revisions and overtime practices. They also wished to effect fundamental modifications to the clause on schedule discussions in terms of frequency, advance notice and method of developing work schedules. It was felt that these discussions were too frequent, lengthy, costly and restrictive and tended to be a source of numerous disputes and grievances. In addition, because Air Canada had reduced the number of management positions, these sessions created a heavy workload for the remaining staff.⁵⁰

The settlement reached following a three week strike in the spring of 1985 went a long way towards streamlining the whole process of schedule determination to suit Air Canada in the context of a newly deregulated airline industry.⁵¹ The company was successful in expanding the list of reasons for which an individual's shift or work

schedule could be altered (the union was able to resist further demands in this area in 1986).⁵² While management sought the ability to adjust passenger agents' shifts with twenty-four hours advance notice instead of the seventy-two hour requirement, the union, under pressure to allow increased flexibility but unwilling to give carte blanche to local managers and supervisors to disrupt passenger agents' scheduled work time and thus their time away from work, conceded to a reduced advance notice of forty-eight hours for shift modifications. In addition, the advice of shift/work schedule alteration form was removed from the collective agreement, but the company still had to provide advance confirmation in writing. Furthermore, the obligation to meet twice yearly for work schedule development was eliminated. Instead, the parties were to convene for such sessions only when it became necessary to revise or establish work schedules. In many locations, particularly reservations offices, where schedules did not have to be reviewed biannually, management wished to maintain work schedules for as long as possible. In other locations, however, especially airports, the work schedule needed to be changed more than twice a year. Increasing competition, the company argued, was forcing it to make quick schedule adjustments. In this context, sitting down six weeks prior to schedule adjustments for discussions several times a year could cause major problems.⁵³ Air Canada succeeded in obtaining further concessions on this clause by having the deadline for talks reduced from six to four weeks prior to the implementation of new schedules and the advance notice for posting schedules reduced from three to two weeks. As well, the stipulation that work schedules be acceptable to the majority of employees involved was deleted from the contract. Consequently, agents were no longer able to propose alternative schedules. The employer argued that the ability to do so tended to

favour maximum employee convenience to the potential detriment of productivity objectives.⁵⁴ The new collective agreement only called for work schedules to be established after the fullest discussions between the company and the union.

During interviews, some passenger agents expressed the view that the modified clause merely ratified the status quo because committees were set up by both parties to develop work schedules and few agents had participated directly in discussions in the past. Moreover, they argued that a large proportion of agents failed to partake in the schedule acceptance process. Others, however, were angered by these changes to their working conditions and felt their rights had been reduced, as they could no longer play any role whatsoever in schedule determination. Agents did nonetheless continue to protest, sometimes successfully, undesirable schedules by such means as refusing to work overtime.

During the 1984-1985 contract negotiations, the employer was also successful in obtaining a clause that exempted it from paying overtime credits until agents completed the number of hours in their scheduled shift.⁵⁵ This meant that if agents reported late for a shift and were subsequently kept on to work overtime, they would be compensated at straight time until they had completed the full hours of their scheduled shift. This concession was important to Air Canada because the CALEA had successfully processed a grievance through arbitration in September 1981 which upheld its position that regardless of whether employees reported late for work for their regular shift, overtime commenced as soon as they worked beyond the scheduled stop time of their regular shift.⁵⁶

During the rounds of collective bargaining following the 1985 strike, the union

sought to recover some of the work scheduling-related losses. It attempted to obtain an increase in the notification time for employee shift alterations (back to the previous amount of seventy-two hours), given that the 1985 reduction created an imbalance between the needs of the company and the rights of passenger agents and resulted in a lack of flexibility for workers to adequately fulfill their family and social responsibilities. It also tried to negotiate a relief premium to compensate agents who suffered this disruption to their family and social lives in order to meet company requirements.⁵⁷ It was, however, unsuccessful on both counts. It did nonetheless resist company demands that advance notice of change to shifts and schedules be reduced even more.⁵⁸

Following the 1985 settlement, several problems began surfacing with the new contract language restricting passenger agent and union involvement in work scheduling. During bargaining in 1986, the union argued that adjustments be brought to the method of preparing work schedules to ensure automatic review twice a year so that work patterns and schedule rotations could be revised to meet employees' changing needs and wishes. The union also called for more employee input in order to develop work schedules that met workers' desires.⁵⁹ Both of these contract demands were successfully resisted by the company.

A number of district chairpersons reported that work schedules were being established without the fullest discussions having taken place and were being implemented with less than the mandatory fourteen days notice. In this context, the union wished to amend work schedule development provisions to allow for proper input on its part.⁶⁰ In 1986, a minor adjustment called for alternative schedules to be discussed.⁶¹ Notwithstanding this clause, complaints were voiced that local union committees were

not being provided with sufficient time to propose alternative schedules. The situation was particularly difficult at large airport locations, given the complexity of work schedule development. During an interview, a union officer explained the situation in the following way:

We only have fourteen days to do it, where they have six months to do it, you see. We say, "give us the requirements whatever you have, fine, we'll work out a schedule based on your requirements that you gave us." Because it's getting to be too much after awhile, though. They give requirements, you check the requirements and they're totally wrong. So you can't prepare a schedule on those, you have to correct those requirements before they give us flight schedules. It's time-consuming, frustrating sometimes too. We're talking about when they didn't even plot for a flight, a gate block or anything at all, and they left it out by error, and we've had to find those errors because, otherwise, your whole manpower schedule, it's useless. But now we've informed them, "no, the time you give us, we're going to take it as being the right one. If there are problems with the schedule, when you have solved your problems, come back to us and we'll open talks again." Because they have the resources, they have the six months prior to us. We have fourteen days once the information goes out. Time is getting so narrow, it's getting too nerve-racking for everybody.

In the early 1990s, the situation surrounding work schedule determination deteriorated significantly. The union criticized the company for ignoring its proposals. It also noted that, at times, work schedules were being established with no union input whatsoever, which was in violation of the contract. Moreover, the union accused the company of refusing to supply the information required for proper schedule development.⁶²

One of the most difficult issues that emerged during the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s concerning work schedule development revolved around schedule types. At the root of the problem was the company's attempt to replace more 6/3 with 5/2 work schedules, especially at larger airport locations. Since the late 1970s, the company had argued against the use of 6/3 work schedules, but the union had succeeded in opposing

demands for their removal.⁶³ By the mid-1980s, however, the company maintained that it could more efficiently deploy its workforce by placing all employees on 5/2 cycles and that the higher cost of 6/3 cycles could no longer be justified in the new era of deregulation and increased competition.⁶⁴ The union fought the elimination of 6/3 work schedules on the basis that their removal would lead to a deterioration in the working conditions of passenger agents who had enjoyed these types of schedules for many years.⁶⁵

While some agents favoured the 5/2 type cycle, especially when the schedule provided for most weekends off duty, in many locations 5/2 cycles were unpopular with agents who preferred working a 6/3 cycle because it ensured more days off throughout the year (due to longer daily shifts) as well as on weekends, and allowed for a greater flexibility in planning life outside work. Such scheduling also reduced the number of times agents commuted to and from work, a significant factor for workers who resided far from their paid workplace. Commuting time could indeed add a substantial amount of time to the workday.

The issue came to a head in the early 1990s when passenger agents in many locations, in a display of resistance and solidarity, took action in an attempt to preserve 6/3 work schedules in the face of a company decision to mandate a majority of 5/2 schedules at airport locations. The threat of irregular 5/2 schedules (no consecutive days off) was also being resisted. In one case, airport workers in Vancouver launched a letter writing campaign aimed at senior management to protest the implementation of 5/2 schedules.⁶⁶ The Ottawa district reported that the union work scheduling committee broke off the spring 1991 staffing discussions with the company on two occasions

because it felt the latter had manipulated its requirements unfairly thus making the production of an acceptable schedule impossible. Management then proceeded to impose a work schedule which would drastically increase the proportion of 5/2 shifts. The union claimed that there was a decrease in the number of agents willing to volunteer for overtime and accept acting assignments following these company decisions. In addition, some agents on employee-management committees resigned in protest. These actions prompted the reopening of work schedule discussions.⁶⁷ In another case, it was reported:

Our union officers are all battle weary from the ongoing war of keeping our 6/3. Local management seems unable to convey the reality of this airport's operation to the "powers that be" who decide upon the number of staff we are expected to work with. Positions continue to be cut and support functions are considered superfluous... Local management is disappointed with the discouraged attitude of the agents and urges us to work with a smile. Give us a schedule that allows for a life - you'll get a smile.⁶⁸

Local discussions undertaken in 1991 to determine winter work schedules also resulted in major confrontations. The union leadership called for a ban on overtime and acting assignments to pressure the company into abandoning its plans to implement a high percentage of 5/2 schedules. Following joint union-management meetings at the headquarters level that failed to resolve the issue, district chairpersons were instructed to strictly enforce the collective agreement.⁶⁹ At a meeting of district officers, it was unanimously decided to develop and implement union work schedules and ignore the company's schedules. This plan was strongly supported by the membership. In its campaign to mobilize the membership against 5/2 work schedules, the union developed slogans, designed T-shirts and produced a video.⁷⁰ Following a lengthy and bitter battle

between the union and the company, the impasse was finally broken in November 1991 when a memorandum of agreement was reached which removed any mandated percentages of shift types and allowed local joint work schedule discussion committees to determine the appropriate mix of 6/3 and 5/2 shifts. The agreement provided the company with greater flexibility in scheduling part-time hours where necessary to obtain improved schedules for full-time workers.⁷¹ The agreement resolved some of the work scheduling problems for a short period of time, but the conflict resurfaced the following year.⁷²

During the years following the strike, shift starting times also gave rise to much controversy. One major problem involved very early morning starting times which were in effect primarily at large airports (see Figures 1 to 4). An agent talked about the effects of early morning starting times on the body:

I find the work schedule is getting worse instead of better. You wouldn't think that it's possible but it is, for this day and age. You know, if we have to work early, then I don't see why one morning it's four thirty, the next morning five, and the next morning it's four thirty. Bring us in for four, four thirty at least. Your body is so screwed up out there, you go in at four, four thirty in the morning, you're eating your lunch at eight thirty, at nine o'clock. Now, you don't eat your supper till six at night. Now what does that do to your body, really.

Another source of frustration for agents at a few of the larger airport locations was the scheduled daily variation in starting times. A union representative described the situation at the airport in Toronto in the following way:

They don't like the shifts. They don't like having to start at four o'clock in the morning. They don't like having to have all these different start times. For instances, if you get, like this is what an international looks like, this is what the people are working [points to a work schedule]. Now, you imagine having to work this. Okay, on May the 5th, you're number 28, you tell me what time you start. See, you've got to look up

here, you've got to see 'C'. If it's a Wednesday, it's this, if it's a Thursday it's this. If it's a Friday, which means that if this happens to be Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, you've got a different start time every day potentially. Now, it may seem, the first time I heard somebody complaining about it, I thought, "come on, we're adults here." When you think about it a little bit, maybe it may not have so much of an impact on afternoon shifts, but on the morning shifts. You set the alarm for three thirty for one day, four o'clock the next day, and maybe five o'clock the next day. Every day you have to set that alarm, and then of course, there's that nagging feeling, "did I set it right." Every day, and you go through this for four, five, six months. It becomes a real problem, a headache. And look at all these permutations, this is unbelievable.

In the summer of 1989, when the company introduced a revised work schedule at the airport in Toronto, the union conducted a survey following indications of deep discontent amongst agents.⁷³ The results of the survey pointed to a very high level of dissatisfaction with work schedules. Indeed, for 68 percent of the respondents, better starting times were very important and another 21 percent stated that they were important. In addition, 70 percent reported that poor shift starting times reduced their capacity to perform equally well on all shifts. Over 60 percent admitted to feeling constantly tired and close to 35 percent indicated that they were unable to eat regularly.⁷⁴ The following comments of respondents to the union's survey are testimony to the difficulties encountered with daily changes to starting times:

Same start time every day would help reduce the stress created by having to reset your alarm every night and constantly checking your calendar to see when to go to work.⁷⁵

Shift work does place excessive psychological stress on all of us. There is little rationale in my opinion behind fluctuating start times by 1/2 hour intervals on any individual block. How many times have we bolted upright in bed at 0500, frantic with worry and then realized that it's the day you start at 0630, not 0600. Increased continuity would certainly create a more stable environment around which one could make plans for family and friends.⁷⁶

The results prompted local management to implement some of the union's proposals for the 1989/1990 winter schedule, including the elimination of all 4:00 a.m. starting times, a reduction in the number of 4:30 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. starting times and greater consistency in starting times.⁷⁷ Despite these changes, shift starting times remained a source of displeasure for workers.

The various scheduling-related problems that surfaced beginning in the late 1980s resulted in schedules becoming an extremely important issue for many passenger agents. The deterioration of this very important working condition affected workers' morale and motivation at work. As the union pointed out in commenting on the company's work scheduling practices:

It is very hard to understand why Air Canada would choose to alienate its sales force during these tough economic times when the only difference between Air Canada and its competitors could be the attitude of its workers.⁷⁸

Many agents argued that while working shifts made it difficult enough to integrate paid work time with family life and other obligations, some of the types of schedules that were being introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s aggravated the situation. The results of the above-mentioned CAW local 2213 survey conducted amongst members at the airport in Toronto indicated that for 72 percent of respondents, working shifts interfered with their participation in family matters.⁷⁹ An agent talked about the impact of such schedules on family life, a point raised by all interviewees:

For your whole life, you've got children at home and you got to go to bed at nine at night, you've got to get up at two in the morning. I mean, I'm an early morning person, I don't mind it, but I don't know how I got through this thing for thirty years with the wife getting up at the strange hours I did, you have to have a special wife for it. And you can see it out there at the airport, there's an awful lot of broken marriages because of

it. It was difficult for family responsibilities. This year, for some reason, I'm working everybody's birthday and most holidays. It's very hard to get one of those days off or to get a shift change. I'd say you have to have a special wife or husband that can understand that. Or if you go blind into it, boy it wakes you up fast. And if you have children, you have to get up at three or four in the morning to go to work. You leave a lot to your wife to do, and working those shifts, you can't expect your wife to have your dinner for you all the time. I find that I do most of the cooking now because of my shifts. She works nine-to-five so why should she be expected to get supper when I'm sitting at home.

Agents found it particularly difficult when they were unable to obtain consecutive days off or when the schedule did not regularly provide for days off on weekends. Such shifts made it next to impossible to enjoy quality and uninterrupted time away from work and did not ensure sufficient time off to recuperate.

The Conflict Surrounding Overtime

Throughout the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s, overtime represented another major work time-related point of contention. During this period, the union grew increasingly disturbed about the excessive amount of overtime being worked by both full-time and part-time agents in certain locations, especially at the larger airports where the company used overtime to balance workforce requirements. In a brief presented in June 1986 to the Ontario Task Force on Hours of Work and Overtime, the union pointed out that in the first ninety days of 1986, Air Canada had hired approximately 15,000 hours of overtime in Toronto alone. Under the averaging formula in the Canada Labour Code, the carrier was only required to report to Labour Canada cases where individual employees worked beyond 104 hours of overtime in a quarter. For a base the size of Toronto, the company was thus allowed to hire, without justification, over 370,000 hours

of overtime in 1986.⁸⁰ Air Canada reported that during meetings with officials of Labour Canada in early 1987, concern was expressed by the latter about the number of hours worked in excess of the quarterly allowance and the reasons for the overtime. Indeed, a total of 135 unionized employees represented by the CAW local 2213 and the IAMAW exceeded the 104 hours limit in the last quarter of 1986, some by more than 100 hours and many others by 40 to 70 hours.⁸¹

The union argued that the amount of additional time being worked by way of overtime was limiting the number of full-time jobs available, a situation which had an adverse effect on transfers and on changes of status from part-time to full-time. Indeed, the above-mentioned amount of overtime hours worked in Toronto translated into dozens of full-time jobs. The number of full-time jobs not being made available across the country on account of this practice was potentially over one hundred at the time. The union condemned what it considered a lack of social conscience on the part of Air Canada which chose to make use of overtime labour instead of creating additional employment.⁸²

The union also strongly opposed the mandatory nature of overtime work. Over the years, it had consistently argued that overtime should be voluntary in order to avoid cases of individual hardship which could and did emerge. Mandatory overtime clearly imposed an added burden on women, especially when compounded by shift work, given their responsibilities for childcare. The union's position that overtime be voluntary was strongly reaffirmed by delegates to the 1983 general meeting who adopted a policy which directed the union to try to obtain guarantees, through collective bargaining and the legislative process, that overtime not be compulsory.⁸³ While the company agreed that

every effort should be made to provide the necessary overtime coverage with agents willing to work the extra hours, it systematically affirmed its right to retain workers on overtime in the event of service exigencies. The union recognized that some overtime was necessary due to the nature of the business. It nonetheless remarked that extra hours were becoming increasingly available, not through unforeseen and emergency circumstances, but as a result of poor planning and understaffing. It also felt that management in some locations were meeting a portion of the workload with scheduled overtime on a continual basis, thereby using overtime as a substitute for employment creation.

The seriousness of the overtime situation prompted delegates to the 1988 general meeting to adopt a policy calling for the union to make overtime less attractive to the company, an objective which could be achieved by increasing labour costs through the imposition of a levy on overtime to be set aside in a union fund.⁸⁴ Moreover, in light of its attempt to negotiate shorter hours of work, the union made efforts, beginning in the early 1980s, to educate the membership on the consequences of excessive overtime for full-time employment, especially because of high unemployment. Such a strategy became more pressing in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the context of massive layoffs. Obviously, overtime was a sensitive issue given that passenger agents and workers in general tend to accept overtime as a normal and desirable aspect of their jobs, even though these extra hours extend the workweek. The union was also well aware that many passenger agents worked overtime out of necessity. With the gradual shift in the structure of Air Canada's passenger agent workforce from full-time to part-time since 1984, a growing proportion of agents did not earn a subsistence wage and thus worked

overtime because part-time hours were insufficient to meet their needs. In addition, both part-time and full-time workers tried to supplement, through overtime, their regular income which was not keeping up with inflation. Finally, because pension income was based on the best five years of employment earnings, some senior members worked overtime to increase their salary to ensure a decent standard of living upon retirement.⁸⁵

The union faced a difficult task in its attempts to mobilize passenger agents to collectively resist management's practice of using overtime as a buffer for labour shortages because many eagerly accepted to work extra hours for a premium. However, the issue of overtime took on a different dimension for passenger agents who used the threat of bans on overtime or actually declined to work the extra hours in order to force management to address their complaints about poor working conditions. This tactic could be very effective because of the company's heavy reliance on overtime labour.

Part-Time Work: The Early Years

Since the early years of operation, TCA made use of casual employment to overcome the inflexibility of scheduling full-time workers to cover the daily, weekly and seasonal peaks and valleys characteristic of the air transportation industry. The union did not challenge the company's right to make use of such labour until the early 1960s, when Vancouver district management, in an attempt to reduce labour costs, began pursuing the practice of using part-time employees to cover overtime requirements and this, to an extent that some full-time passenger agents deemed unacceptable as it limited their access to extra income.⁸⁶ The frustrations created by this situation prompted the union's officers and membership to seriously examine the issue of casual labour. The

problem gave rise to conflictual relations between the union and the company. The SEA publicly denounced the growing practice of recruiting such labour and pledged "to do all that is possible to attempt to have this very unfair policy rescinded by the Company."⁸⁷ The membership in Vancouver was extremely irritated by the casual labour situation, to the point where the union's western region vice-president warned of the possibility of a wildcat strike if the issue was not promptly resolved.⁸⁸ For its part, management insisted that the use of casual labour was its prerogative and that the need to operate each district as economically as possible justified the use of such labour.⁸⁹ Because casual workers generally received less pay, were denied overtime pay and shift premiums and did not enjoy benefits or travel privileges, they could be used as a source of cheap labour.⁹⁰

As tensions mounted, a grievance was filed in early 1962 concerning the use of casual workers for overtime assignments.⁹¹ In a letter to TCA's senior vice president of sales, the union president wrote:

Moreover, the local management at Vancouver have seen fit to utilise such labour as a purely economic basis, in the event that complete shifts of duty required to be covered, and this in preference to the utilisation of the regular staff on a overtime basis... I agree that there might be a saving in actual dollars as far as wage and salary expense is concerned, but we maintain that the use of such labour in the example as stated is an unmoral and unprincipled thing, and is in contravention of the collective agreement, that does exist between our two parties.⁹²

The situation escalated further when the SEA decided to submit the issue to arbitration.⁹³ This represented quite a significant decision for passenger agents as it marked the first time in fifteen years that their union threatened to bring a grievance to the arbitration level. In order to avoid a major confrontation that would involve a third

party, the assistant vice-president of sales requested a meeting with the president of the SEA to discuss the matter, and the parties were finally able to reach a compromise.⁹⁴ While the agreement placed restrictions on the use of casual employees to cover overtime assignments, it did not resolve the complaints of passenger agents in the Vancouver district where the situation was reaching crisis proportions. Nor did it serve to quash the apprehensions emerging in other districts throughout the system.⁹⁵

During the early 1960s, numerous complaints were voiced concerning part-time workers. Some full-time passenger agents argued that these occasional workers were not fully qualified to perform the job adequately. They pointed out that this created an added burden because they were often called upon to instruct casual employees in the performance of tasks. It was felt that part-time workers proved, at times, to be more of a hindrance than help, especially when used to cover overtime requirements which could mean handling irregular operations.⁹⁶ The following statement by the Calgary district acting chairperson clearly illustrates the frustrations of full-time workers:

Locally Management have made permanent employees feel inferior to casual help and in the next breath ask that we make them (casual) feel welcome and assist them in every way.⁹⁷

In addition, passenger agents contended that casual employees were responsible for discrepancies and mishandling which resulted in the deterioration of customer service. The following excerpt from a letter to the TCA Vancouver district sales manager from the SEA district chairperson describes how some full-time agents felt about part-time workers:

Lack of initiative to learn the job requirements of a fully qualified passenger agent in as much as they do not plan to make their future with T.C.A. Their attitude towards the job is poor... Mistakes made and

misinformation given out as a result of lack of job knowledge create above average demands on regular agents in order to maintain efficient operations and proper handling of passengers.⁹⁸

The company, however, maintained that no deficiencies or disservice to the travelling public caused by the use of casual employees had been reported. Management did nevertheless make a commitment to increase the training of casual employees.⁹⁹

Animosity also surfaced because casual workers were sometimes allowed to select their own hours of employment. In some instances, preferred daytime shifts were covered by casual employees while the permanent staff had to work evening shifts.¹⁰⁰ Having to switch shifts to accommodate casual employees who refused to work certain hours jeopardized the morale of the permanent employees, as illustrated by the following:

So a casual was called upon to take over this shift. BUT, this casual does not want to work David's shift as her husband (who is in operations) does not work the same shift. She also is stating her own hours of work, which is not the normal shift. So it means a permanent employee has to switch shifts to accommodate the casual, and by doing so will be on a night shift from October 8th to the 31st inclusive. As it turns out it is my shift that the casual wants, and this situation, as far as I am concerned is highly undesirable, and I certainly intend to question management's stand on this one, as all the agents are finally "fed up" to the shuffling around so the casuals can have it nice and jammy.¹⁰¹

In the fall of 1962, the SEA surveyed its membership to determine the appropriate course of action on the matter of casual labour. The results indicated that some passenger agents were satisfied that if casual workers were adequately trained and their numbers and conditions of employment properly controlled, they would not pose much of a problem. Others were definitely against any use of part-time labour within their ranks.¹⁰² Indeed, the Vancouver district threatened to cease dealing with the union if it did not take the issue to arbitration.¹⁰³ SEA officials also disagreed on how best to

handle this increasingly thorny issue. Some representatives argued that consenting to the continued employment of casual workers would be tantamount to a compromise of the collective agreement, while others preferred to find a way to ensure union control over the utilization of casual labour.¹⁰⁴

During the 1963-1964 round of contract negotiations, the problem of casual labour figured prominently on the agenda. Protracted discussions concluded with the SEA bargaining committee agreeing, in the words of the union president, "somewhat unwillingly, with much apprehension, doubts and yes, fears" to a memorandum of understanding governing the use of part-time labour.¹⁰⁵ The union felt compelled to accept such a memorandum as it would otherwise have no control whatsoever over this form of labour. The company was obviously not about to discontinue hiring part-time workers.

Under the newly imposed contractual restrictions, part-time employees were limited to working four hours a day or three standard workdays in seven calendar days, rates of pay were not to be less than the minimum nor more than the maximum of those of full-time workers, permanent passenger agents were not to be laid off while part-time workers were employed (in 1968, it was specified that this clause was to be applied at the base level)¹⁰⁶ and overtime was to be covered by full-time employees before the company could call on part-time employees. Furthermore, local management was required to discuss its plans with union representatives prior to hiring part-time workers or before making adjustments to the number of such workers. The memorandum also stated that the union and the company should cooperate to "avoid, where possible, added burdens on full-time employees, because of inexperience on the part of temporary

employees and to avoid imposing any threat to continuous employment of permanent employees."¹⁰⁷ The main goal of the memorandum, from the SEA's perspective, was to restrict the use of part-time workers and protect the employment of the full-time membership. The working conditions of the minority of part-time employees were thus largely ignored. Though their pay rates could no longer be less than the minimum earned by full-time agents, part-time workers received no shift premiums or overtime pay and were denied fringe benefits and statutory holidays as well as job security in terms of seniority and layoff protection.

The numerous problems of the early 1960s were not about to disappear overnight or be readily resolved with the inclusion of a memorandum of understanding in the collective agreement. Some districts reported increasing conflict over the use of part-time employees which at times resulted in open hostility between full-time and part-time passenger agents working at public counters.¹⁰⁸ The Toronto district chairperson complained that part-time employees were being used to undermine the collective agreement and that the memorandum had not provided protection against the use of cheap labour on a wholesale basis.¹⁰⁹

A series of alleged contraventions to the memorandum also generated much animosity. The most serious of these violations, according to the union, was management's ruling at the headquarters level that casual labour could still be utilized, given that the memorandum covered part-time employees only. Local managers and supervisors were hiring employees to work eight hours a day for thirty consecutive working days, sometimes rehiring them for a further thirty day period.¹¹⁰ A union policy complaint pointed out that when the understanding on part-time labour was

reached:

The word "casual" was not considered an acceptable or "nice word" in the minds of many of our members and thus it was agreed to change the words "Casual Labour" to "Temporary Part Time" - documentary proof of this is in the possession of all members of the Association's committee.¹¹¹

The union thus argued that what the memorandum called part-time work referred to the old casual labour category. Following a series of headquarters meetings, it was resolved that:

there are only two types of employees, Viz: Permanent Full time and Temporary Part time and that the latter can only be hired under the provisions of the memoranda on such employees.¹¹²

The SEA also documented several instances where management violated the agreement by hiring part-time workers without advance discussion with district officers, and other cases where part-time employees were being used to cover overtime requirements before full-time agents had been contacted. In Vancouver, where the part-time problem had initially emerged, the situation remained serious as clearly evidenced by the following excerpt from a letter from the union president concerning contract violations:

Yet in Vancouver at this very moment, we have such Casual or Temporary Part Time employees who are supposed to work 4 hours per day, being permitted to work over and above the daily 4-hour shift to times varying from 5 hours one day to 8.5 only two days later. There are two so-called Casuals at the CTO [city traffic office] Vancouver who actually worked a total of 237 and 202 hours of overtime respectively in a 4 month period. Is there any need to investigate further as to why many of our senior and most valued employees are beginning to look to pastures somewhat greener. Is there any need to investigate further as to why many of our employees are asking themselves questions about the value of true worth of collective agreements, without the militant force to insist that a company who are equal partners to that agreement are living up to their side of the bargain. Should Unions and Associations continually have to monitor Management actions? Is there anything to doubt that certain employees are not even at this time considering the amount of trust

and faith that they as individuals can really place in the hands and minds of the various levels of Management in this Company?"¹¹³

Worsening circumstances in Toronto prompted the president of the SEA to write to TCA's sales headquarters:

When we agreed to the Memoranda re the Use of Temporary Part Time employees, we never intended that it should be used to the extent that the Toronto management either have done to date or envisage adding to these totals in the coming months."¹¹⁴

In the context of increasing animosity, TCA's assistant vice-president of sales and its director of industrial relations wrote to sales managers and supervisors:

The Temporary Part-Time question has generated a great deal of misunderstanding and unfortunate conflict. The Association would, of course, prefer to avoid part-time employment. We believe, however, that they now accept the fact that a certain amount of part-time employment will continue to be a part of life in the Sales Department. We, on our part, must exercise the use of this type of staff with extreme care. Every effort should be made to cover the work with full time employees and when part-time employment is resorted to, care should be taken to avoid deterioration of the working conditions of our full time employees. Cost of staffing is certainly important but we agree that the working conditions of our employees must also be given consideration. A certain amount of cost may well be justified where, as a result of early discussion, some compromise can assure acceptance and support of the schedule to be worked.¹¹⁵

The many problems arising over the issue of part-time work as well as the growing anxiety over job security brought on by the fear of substitution of casual workers for permanent passenger agents prompted the union, during the 1965-1966 round of contract talks, to press for further restrictions on the use of part-time employment.¹¹⁶ It was resolved that part-time employees could no longer work a regular eight hour shift and the four hour daily maximum became standard. New language to ensure that part-time labour would not be used if full-time staffing was possible stipulated that where

more than one part-time employee covered a period, the total combined coverage could provide not more than five hours of continuous coverage, and where more than one period of coverage was required, the minimum spread between periods could be not less than four hours.¹¹⁷ The letter of understanding, which included wording aimed at eliminating the potentially negative effects of the use of part-time labour on the working conditions and scheduling of full-time employees, also served to alleviate concerns about part-time workers obtaining the preferred day shifts. Nonetheless, there are indications that problems continued and, during negotiations in 1968, the union attempted unsuccessfully to have the letter of understanding on part-time work rescinded.¹¹⁸

Once the CALEA had achieved some form of control over the use of part-time labour (this was curtailed somewhat by the many contract infractions registered), full-time passenger agents faced the fundamental question of whether or not to accept part-time workers as members of their union. Persuaded by the argument that the inclusion of part-time employees in the bargaining unit would be condoning the use of this form of labour, some passenger agents strongly resisted such a move. On the other hand, the recognition that the use of part-time employees would not be discontinued invoked a fear that the IAMAW might legally be able to represent part-time agents if the latter so wished.¹¹⁹ Following much debate, part-time employees were accepted as members of the CALEA and became subject to dues check-off when a new collective agreement was signed in July 1969. A second letter of understanding outlining exceptions to the rules governing part-time employees was agreed to. Limited provisions for part-time workers were included, such as meal and rest periods, statutory holidays, vacation pay, life insurance and medicare payments in lieu of coverage, sick leave, and seniority

amongst part-time employees applied at the location level (this did not include layoff rights). Additional restrictions were imposed on scheduling, with each part-time employee limited to a total of twenty hours of work a week and continuous coverage reduced from five to four-and-a-half hours. Fearing that the company may be moving towards the wholesale use of part-time labour, the CALEA's negotiations committee insisted on the inclusion of a contract clause limiting the maximum number of part-time agents to 10 percent of the total number of full-time agents.¹²⁰ Indeed, the statistics on part-time work were not encouraging. During contract negotiations in late 1968, it was estimated that there were approximately 70 part-time employees, whereas at the outset of talks in the summer of 1969, the number had risen to approximately 190.¹²¹ Clearly, Air Canada was not about to give up its right to hire part-time workers.

The problems surrounding part-time labour during the 1960s proved to be quite difficult for all passenger agents. The union was constantly frustrated in its efforts to impose restrictions on the utilization of part-time employment. The growing number of part-time employees, combined with the decision to include them in the bargaining unit, meant that their needs and problems had to be taken into account. Gains had been registered, but the CALEA's weak commitment to part-time workers led to a curtailment of their job opportunities, benefits and seniority rights. Some part-time passenger agents felt they were being discriminated against by a union that collected their dues, but placed little importance on negotiating meaningful provisions to improve their overall working conditions. The director of the central region wrote to the union president:

The Part Timers at Malton are understandably annoyed and disillusioned over our apparent lack of interest for their welfare. As I told you before they want to know why they should belong to a Union. From their point

of view we charge them a considerable amount of money but we do not provide any value for it. I have heard that some want to investigate the possibility of withdrawing from the Association. From where I sit I can only sympathize with them. There is very little that I can do to offer any solace or hope as I am totally without any information as to the progress of these matters. The time is long past when we can say that they are entitled to certain things. The fact is that they do not have the advantages which we were supposed to be able to confer on them, but they have several liabilities they could do without quite nicely as a direct result of their inclusion in the bargaining unit.¹²²

Full-time passenger agents also displayed ambivalence towards the issue. Even though part-time workers represented a potential threat to full-time workers' job security, they were co-workers, friends and sometimes family members whose life situation mattered. Some full-time women passenger agents were aware that they could one day seek part-time employment in order to support themselves and their families. Indeed, a number of women who had previously worked as full-time passenger agents but left the employment of the company upon marriage or childbirth later returned on a part-time basis. While detailed statistics are unavailable on the sex composition of the part-time workforce during the 1960s, there is much indication that most of these workers were women. The following excerpt from a 1966 Air Canada staff bulletin in Ottawa suggests that the company perceived married women to be an available source of part-time labour:

As part of our planning for this winter period we introduced temporary part-time employment... An advertisement for temporary part-time personnel will appear in the newspapers within the next few days and we hope to get a training class started January 31st. Should you be aware of anyone interested in this type of employment, contact Mr. Watson immediately. We expect the type of individuals interested will likely be married women whose children no longer require full-time care and who would like to work up to four hours a day.¹²³

There were also reports that management in Winnipeg contacted former agents, especially married women, offering them casual employment.¹²⁴ Moreover, during

interviews, company representatives and passenger agents who had worked for the carrier for many years recalled that part-time workers had usually been women. A member of management remarked:

Je me souviens très bien, lorsqu'on a commencé à employer des temps partiels, moi j'ai fait de l'embauche. J'étais sur les comités au début. On nous avait dit, "c'qu'on veut, c'est vraiment la femme dans la quarantaine, ou trente-cinq ans, qui a laissé son emploi avant, qui a élevé ses enfants, puis qui est prête à revenir sur le marché du travail, parce qu'on veut que ces gens-là restent à temps partiel."

A passenger agent also remembered that women were a preferred source of part-time labour:

When you were hiring year round, on a lower level, what was happening is that we were hiring older women, ex-employees, ex-flight attendants for example, and they were married, not working and they just wanted part-time employment. It wasn't until we began to hire younger people - most of them were students who needed summer employment and this type of thing - that we began to see more men coming in.

Part-Time Work: A Growing Issue

Passenger agents' initial concerns that the company may be moving towards a part-time employee classification came back to haunt them during the early 1970s, when Air Canada indicated it was experiencing a great need for part-time labour due to sharply peaking demands arising out of the introduction of large body aircraft.¹⁷ At that time, the airline also introduced ReserVec II, a computerized system capable of dealing more efficiently with the increasing demands being placed on its reservations services. Because this labour-saving technology fuelled fears of potential job loss, the CALFA attempted to ward off company demands for an increase in the ratio of part-time to full-time positions that had been agreed to in 1969. It was obviously unsuccessful as

evidenced by the contract signed in 1974 when Air Canada obtained an increase in the proportion of part-time employees from 10 to 15 percent of the total number of full-time employees. Restrictions, however, were imposed at the base and location levels. The number of part-time passenger agents at a base was not to exceed 20 percent of all agents at the base and the number of part-time workers in a location could not be greater than 80 percent of the permissible number of part-time workers at the base.¹²⁶ The union found it necessary to negotiate these limitations in order to ensure that the system allotment was not being exceeded. Because management and the union at a given base were not aware of the requirements at other bases, they could not, with any degree of accuracy, establish part-time staff levels that would fall within the system ratio restriction. In the past, during schedule establishment discussions, the parties had occasionally agreed to a total number of part-time employees above the permissible maximum.¹²⁷ In 1977, the allowed proportion of part-time employees was increased to 20 percent of the full-time system staff levels.¹²⁸ In 1980, the system-wide numbers were removed and the contract spoke only of base and location ratio restrictions. The allowable number of part-time workers was now calculated as a proportion of the total number of full-time agents at the base rather than the total number of agents at that base.¹²⁹

The number of part-time workers employed by the airline approximated 9 percent in 1970, but fell to less than 3 percent in 1971 when layoffs occurred.¹³⁰ Although the company felt its part-time complement was insufficient following this reduction, it had a contractual obligation to lay off part-time employees before full-time employees in bases with staff overages.¹³¹ The union's insistence on including this job security

language for full-time workers in the contract during the 1963-1964 negotiations served to minimize the number of full-time agents laid off in 1971. Over the course of the next few years, the proportion of part-time employees gradually increased and, once again, reached 10 percent in 1975.¹³² Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the system-wide ratio of part-time to full-time passenger agents remained below the permissible level, generally hovering between 11 and 14 percent, although this proportion was higher in certain bases.¹³³ These part-time statistics were similar to those of the Canadian labour force in general.¹³⁴

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the CALEA felt strongly about maintaining controls over the utilization of part-time employees as it feared that the company would use part-time workers as cheap labour, thus undermining the job security of full-time passenger agents. Part-time agents, however, increasingly began making demands on the union to improve their working conditions. Because the proportion of part-time workers was growing, their needs had to be taken into account. Efforts to secure better working conditions for part-time workers culminated in important contract achievements throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.

One particularly significant issue addressed during the 1973-1974 contract talks concerned the ability of workers to change status from part-time to full-time or vice versa. Until then, it was common practice for the company to first terminate passenger agents in either status before hiring them into the other status, thereby cancelling accrued service credits (used especially to determine vacation entitlement and travel pass privileges). Language was included in the collective agreement which allowed passenger agents to change status within their base, according to seniority. Agents who wished to

change status were given preference over newly hired employees. When agents changed status, they now retained accrued company service credits and past service credits were reinstated for workers previously terminated.¹³⁵ The union, however, did not afford members who changed status with the same level of recognition in terms of seniority, even though this possibility had been raised earlier as evidenced by the following excerpt from a letter written by an officer of the CALEA in 1971:

Several months ago, I spoke to you about the possibility of converting seniority for part-time and full-time employees on the same ratio as we convert service i.e. 175 hours to equal one month... To recap my original comments, once we had granted a semblance of recognition and propriety to part-time employment, some of our full-time members began to look at it as an asset not a threat to employment. Before too many months passed one young married girl asked about the possibility of reverting to part-time employment for a few months while she assisted her husband in setting up a new business. Shortly afterward, two other employees enquired about the prospect of part-time employment while they went to school full-time in an effort to complete their education. In all instances they rejected the idea as it would entail a loss of seniority, which would not even be reinstated at the time when they returned to full-time employment... Conversely, there is of course resentment from those who have worked a considerable time as part-time and yet receive no credit for this when they become full-time. They feel that they have paid full dues to the Association and that they should be given full credit for their seniority.¹³⁶

During negotiations in 1977, the union registered significant gains for part-time agents such as the right to shift trade with part-time co-workers in the same location, guaranteed maternity leaves of absence, guaranteed pay increases on the same graded scale as full-time workers, a limited ability to transfer between locations within a base and the establishment of seniority amongst part-time workers at the base instead of the location level (but still not system-wide as was the case for full-time employees). Shift and schedule change restrictions were extended to part-time employees. In addition, sick

leave as well as vacation and statutory holiday provisions were improved.¹³⁷

In 1977, the CALEA initiated a study to examine the part-time employment situation and make recommendations on the issue. The report tabled in early 1978 concluded that there was no viable alternative to part-time labour and that discontinuing this form of employment could result in poor schedules for full-time agents and possibly the need for split shifts. It nonetheless recommended more rights and improved working conditions for part-time agents.¹³⁸ In light of these recommendations, the union continued to push for better contract language for part-time workers. In 1978, when guaranteed paternity, adoption and bereavement leaves of absence were negotiated for full-time agents, these benefits were also obtained for part-time members. Pay progression was no longer retarded by absences due to sick leave, holidays and vacations. Especially important was a clause which stipulated that when two or more employees commenced full-time employment on the same day, the amount of seniority accrued by part-time workers changing status would determine the sequence of seniority. It was made clear, however, that full-time workers' requests for transfers would be actioned prior to part-time agents being offered full-time vacancies.¹³⁹ In 1981, part time agents gained coverage under life and health insurance plans. This replaced the company's previous practice of granting them pay supplements in lieu of coverage. A vision care plan was also established for both full-time and part-time workers.¹⁴⁰ During the recession of the early 1980s, the CALEA managed to negotiate recall rights based on seniority for part-time workers affected by layoffs occurring at Air Canada at the time.¹⁴¹ This agreement, albeit of a short-term nature, was an improvement over past practices whereby part-time agents terminated because of a work shortage were at

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the mercy of local management who had total discretion as to whether they would be rehired.

An examination of studies on part-time work reveals that overall, part-time passenger agents' working conditions at Air Canada, like unionized part-time workers elsewhere, were superior to those of part-time workers without union representation. For non-unionized (and sometimes unionized) part-time workers, pay levels were usually lower, job security more tenuous and benefits fewer.¹⁴² Notwithstanding the relatively advantageous situation of part-time passenger agents at Air Canada, some important issues remained outstanding, including seniority retention upon change of status, permanent recall rights in the event of layoffs, transfer rights, equalized pay progression and participation in the company's pension plan. Moreover, even though the union had negotiated significant improvements to the working conditions of part-time passenger agents over the course of the 1970s and early 1980s, some of the controls it succeeded in imposing on the utilization of part-time labour to protect full-time employment were somewhat restrictive for part-time workers. There are indications that part-time workers were not fully satisfied with the union's performance and felt their interests were being ignored.¹⁴³

The subject of part-time work had always generated much controversy within the CALEA and without an official policy to provide direction, the union found itself ill-equipped to face the major challenges of the 1980s, many of which had implications for part-time work. Delegates to the 1983 general meeting debated resolutions concerning the union's strategy to deal with these issues. The convention accepted that part-time work was an integral part of the labour market and recognized that it provided

employment for those who would otherwise find it difficult to work full-time. Nonetheless, like other unions, it remained opposed to the spread of part-time work at the expense of full-time jobs. The CALEA recognized that the only effective way of dissuading the company from increasing its utilization of part-time employees was to negotiate the same benefits for both types of workers. Furthermore, it acknowledged that the needs and rights of part-time workers had to be fully addressed if equality of all union members was to be achieved. Minimizing the differences between the two categories of workers would strengthen the union by enhancing solidarity within its ranks.¹⁴⁴ A policy on part-time work adopted by the delegates to the general meeting clearly stated that full-time employment was to remain the union's first priority, but nevertheless set forth the principle that major improvements needed to be negotiated for part-time members.¹⁴⁵ The position adopted by the CALEA reflected a growing trend in the labour movement towards actively promoting the interests of part-time workers. The stronger participation of women in unions since the mid-1970s undoubtedly played a fundamental role in changing the labour movement's position on part-time work, just as it had served to promote the interests of women workers in general.

The 1984-1985 Battle Over Part-Time Work and its Aftermath

When negotiations commenced to renew the collective agreement expiring in the fall of 1984, the company was adamant that improvements in productivity and efficiency were required in order for it to survive and prosper under the newly deregulated skies. Increased flexibility, so much touted as the solution to the labour problem under deregulation, focused heavily on part-time work. In the face of concessionary demands

and difficult contract talks, the union called on all passenger agents to stand together and fight to prevent the erosion of job security and end discrimination that sometimes pitted part-time workers against full-time workers. The CALEA's policy on part-time labour served as a guiding framework for the union's proposals during these negotiations. Given its desire to reduce inequities between part-time and full-time members and prevent the further exploitation of part-time workers as cheap labour, the union's bargaining committee brought forth important proposals to ameliorate the working conditions of part-time passenger agents. Although the terms of employment of part-time workers had progressively been improved over the previous ten years, the 1984-1985 contract talks marked the first time that the overall betterment of part-time passenger agents' working conditions was so central to the union's agenda.

During negotiations, which lasted several months, part-time work figured prominently among the many issues to be resolved. After rejecting a final set of unacceptable company proposals which included an increase in the use of part-time labour and an ability to lay off full-time employees before part-time employees (a direct threat to the job security of full-time agents),¹⁴⁶ passenger agents, for the first time in their history, staged a full-scale strike against Air Canada in the spring of 1985.

The settlement reached registered some major gains for part-time workers, but the company was quite successful in obtaining greater labour flexibility through, amongst other union concessions, an increase in the proportion of part-time jobs and in the utilization of part-time labour. Contractual limitations on the number of part-time employees were not, from Air Canada's perspective, the most efficient way of doing business in a fiercely competitive industry. The company had initially sought total

elimination of the cap on the number of part-time workers, but by the strike deadline it had moderated its position and demanded an increase in the proportion of part-time workers to 40 percent.¹⁴⁷ The new contract, however, provided for an immediate increase from 20 to 30 percent of the total number of employees at the base (instead of the total number of full-time employees at the base, as was previously the case) and, effective April 1, 1986, to 35 percent of that total.¹⁴⁸ The company's proposal to eliminate the restriction that prevented all part-time employees from being used in any one location within a base was successfully opposed. Nonetheless, with the increase in the cap on the number of part-time employees as well as changes to the formula used to determine part-time employment levels, Air Canada considerably expanded its ability to make use of part-time agents.

Management also won the right to recall part-time agents for a maximum of four consecutive hours at time-and-a-half and to utilize part-time employees on overtime for up to a maximum of two hours in excess of their scheduled hours at straight time, two concessions the CALEA had strongly resisted. In addition, the union conceded to an increase in the utilization of part-time labour by allowing the total combined coverage of part-time shifts to be extended from four-and-a-half to five hours (a return to the pre-1969 level).¹⁴⁹ The employer's demands aimed at increasing continuous coverage to five-and-a-half hours and reducing the minimum spread between part-time shifts from four to three hours were resisted.¹⁵⁰ The company had argued that the letters of understanding governing the utilization of part-time labour reduced flexibility in staffing to workload by forcing local management to use full-time employees to cover part-time needs and by unnecessarily restricting their ability to employ part-time workers to meet

unforseen overtime requirements.¹⁵¹ Early on, the union had succeeded in limiting the extent of combined coverage allowed management when scheduling part-time employees, in imposing a minimum time lag between the end of one part-time shift and the commencement of another, and in restricting the use of part-time agents for overtime purposes. These conditions were meant to prevent the company from staffing near full-time requirement with some combination of part-time employees. Union concessions in these areas in 1985 permitted Air Canada to utilize part-time agents over a greater portion of the day, thus facilitating the substitution of part-time for full-time jobs.

Despite these concessions, some important gains were registered for part-time passenger agents. They were guaranteed fifteen hours of work a week which provided them with a minimum amount of work time and income. Restrictions on shift trades between part-time and full-time employees were eliminated, thereby giving part-time workers access to additional hours of work. Part-time agents were allowed to perform relief duties, fill temporary full-time positions, apply for personal leaves of absence and maintain a time bank.¹⁵² They obtained coverage under the dental plan, and the pension plan was to be made available to them on a prorated basis, by January 1, 1986.¹⁵³ Finally, benefits were won in the area of wages. Prior to 1985, part-time agents received pay increases after working the equivalent of twenty-six weeks at forty hours a week. They thus took at least twice as long as full-time agents to earn the maximum pay rate. Under the new agreement, pay advancement for part-time agents was based on calendar weeks, but only following the completion of each period of fifty-two weeks.¹⁵⁴

Other negotiated changes to the collective agreement had contradictory effects on

passenger agents' job security. With the exception that full-time workers with a seniority date of May 19, 1985 or earlier would be protected from mandatory change of status to part-time in order to remain at their base, relocation from their base or layoff while part-time workers were employed at the base, the company was now able to lay off full-time passenger agents before part-time agents.¹⁵⁵ For many years management had argued that the obligation to deplete part-time before full-time ranks was a totally inflexible employment practice. These contract modifications weakened job protection for more recently hired full-time agents, but slightly strengthened the job security of all part-time agents. With the above-mentioned exception, part-time workers now benefited from full transfer, layoff, bumping and recall rights. The union had resisted changes to the layoff sequence, arguing that the pre-1985 stipulations had served to protect both full-time and part-time jobs as the company used other methods such as leaves of absence, early retirement and other voluntary programmes to adjust its full-time and part-time labour levels.¹⁵⁶

Passenger agents also won the right to retain seniority upon change of status. In addition, part-time and full-time seniority lists were integrated and seniority was reinstated retroactive to October 1, 1973 for workers who had lost this important element of job security as a result of a status change on or after that date when the possibility to change status was first incorporated into the collective agreement.¹⁵⁷ Since then, portability of seniority between statuses had not been addressed by the union. The integration of full-time and part-time seniority lists, which provided for seniority to be adjusted to recognize continuous service in the bargaining unit in either full-time or part-time status, was a definite improvement in terms of job security and certain working

conditions for part-time workers, most of whom were women. However, following this contract modification, some full-time agents voiced complaints which generally focused on the retroactive nature of the change. An agent expressed her concern in the following way:

Seniority means a lot to us. That's one of the big things that we would never give up, and especially now when they got through this dreadful thing the union got through that the part-timers picked up all the seniority. You'd worked eight years part-time and now suddenly you go in as a full-time and you take eight full years, not four years. It's dreadfully unfair because if you've worked full-time all those years and then suddenly someone comes and they're passing someone who's been there for six years. That was very unfair. That caused a lot of animosity, and it still does.

Some agents argued that the retroactivity should have been established on a prorated basis, but the union rejected this position, stating that seniority had always accrued on a calendar day basis for both categories of employees and had never been related to the actual number of hours worked.¹⁵⁸

During the four rounds of contract negotiations following the turbulent years of the mid-1980s, the CAW local 2213 continued to press for improvements to the working conditions of part-time agents. Important gains were achieved in 1988 when the union negotiated a guarantee of twenty hours of work a week for these agents, with current employees given the option to continue working less hours. Furthermore, the seniority of agents who had changed status was reinstated retroactive to 1969 when part-time workers were accepted into the bargaining unit.¹⁵⁹

Especially significant was the equalization of pay progression for full-time and part-time passenger agents. Regardless of status or number of hours worked, pay increases would now be received following each period of twenty-six weeks of work.¹⁶⁰

This change represented a shift away from the principle that part-time employees should take twice as long as full-time employees to advance through the pay scale. It was clear that the timing of incremental salary increases for part-time agents no longer accurately reflected their hours of work. Indeed, in 1985, a number of changes effected to the collective agreement dealing with overtime and recall, shift trades between agents in both statuses and the filling of full-time temporary vacancies with part-time workers resulted in part-time employees having access to more hours of work than was previously the case. The difference in the number of hours of work available to employees in the two statuses was notably narrowed.

The company also agreed to discuss a plan to allow part-time agents who joined the pension plan on January 1, 1986 to buy back previous part-time service for pension credits.¹⁶¹ Over the course of the next few years, very little progress was made on this issue, partly because accurate records on hours of work prior to 1986 were unavailable. Such documents were required under federal government regulations.¹⁶² The company finally agreed to search company payrolls for the needed information.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the union not only sought to improve the working conditions of part-time workers, but also managed to oppose several of the company's demands for the removal of restrictions on the use of part-time labour. It failed, however, in its attempts to eliminate some practices related to the use of part-time labour which had detrimental effects on full-time workers. The union tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to amend the agreement to ensure that no full-time agent would be affected by a staff reduction while part-time agents were employed in the location or base. It maintained that the statement included in the contract signed in 1964, which

committed the parties to cooperate in order to avoid imposing any threat to the continuous employment of full-time workers, had become inconsistent with the agreement signed in 1985 that made it possible for the company to lay off full-time agents hired after May 19, 1985 before laying off part-time agents with a prior hiring date.¹⁶³

Company practices relating to the use of part-time workers for overtime purposes were amongst the most contentious part-time issues. While many part-time agents were pleased with the 1985 contract changes which provided them with the possibility of working additional hours - especially given that several wanted full-time employment - the union argued that the generally lower cost of using part-time employees for overtime purposes had led to an abuse of this ability by the company in certain locations. Despite its insistence that all overtime be credited at time-and-a-half in recognition of the advantages to the employer and the inconvenience to employees who were called upon to perform work outside their scheduled hours, the union failed in its efforts to have part-time agents compensated at this rate for additional hours worked beyond their scheduled shift.¹⁶⁴ The company maintained that employees should not be paid overtime rates until they had worked eight consecutive hours, and since part-time agents were restricted to two hours of overtime, their total time worked was limited to six hours a day.¹⁶⁵

The union also strongly resisted the company's practice of allocating overtime to part-time workers in conjunction with the end of their shifts without first offering the extra hours to available full-time workers. An arbitral decision in late 1986 confirmed the union's position that priority for overtime assignments was to be given to full-time employees regardless of inconvenience or greater cost to the company.¹⁶⁶ The arbitration award did not bring about changes to these long-standing company practices.

During collective bargaining in 1990, the union agreed that when a need for overtime was identified, the company could retain part-time workers before using full-time workers on recall.¹⁶⁷ This change merely formalized existing procedures.

The use of part-time workers to meet overtime requirements often led to violations of the collective agreement as it resulted in more than five hours of continuous coverage and less than a four hour spread between periods of coverage by part-time workers.¹⁶⁸ In February 1987, a grievance initiated on the issue was withdrawn when a memorandum of settlement was reached which called for the monitoring of the utilization of part-time workers for overtime purposes during those periods the union maintained were restricted by the collective agreement. The union hoped this would help reduce the excessive use of part-time workers for overtime and recall without unduly limiting their opportunity to work extra hours.¹⁶⁹ A union representative noted:

We do not see the grievance as being a divisive issue between part-time and full-time. We were quite successful during negotiations in explaining to those part-time who could have been affected by our proposals that it would have increased the requirement for full-time which most part-time who do work the overtime want anyway.¹⁷⁰

Under the new arrangement, district chairpersons were responsible for forwarding to the union's bargaining committee chairperson monthly reports compiled by management in each location detailing the utilization of part-time workers for overtime purposes during the restricted periods. One year after the signing of the memorandum, it became obvious that the procedure was not working.¹⁷¹

During contract talks in 1988, the CAW local 2213 sought to reduce to one hour the company's ability to utilize part-time workers for overtime purposes because the negotiation of a standard four hour day for most part-time agents meant that their use for

up to two hours of overtime would result in continuous coverage greater than the five hours stipulated in the agreement.¹⁷² Nonetheless, the previously mentioned memorandum of understanding signed in November 1991, which served to ensure more acceptable work schedules for full-time agents, provided the company with more leverage in the scheduling and utilization of part-time workers at airport locations. Part-time employees could be scheduled for up to a maximum of eight consecutive hours a day and up to a maximum of twenty-four hours a week, up from four hours and twenty hours respectively. When more than one part-time worker was being used, continuous coverage could be extended to a maximum of eight hours (instead of five), and when more than one period of coverage was required, the minimum spread between periods could not be less than two hours (instead of four).¹⁷³ A job security provision was included to ensure that the application of the agreement would not result in staff reductions at the location level.¹⁷⁴ When the collective agreement ending in September 1992 was extended for a one year period, the memorandum which allowed for flexibility in the scheduling of part-time employees at airport locations was expanded to include all locations.¹⁷⁵ A union representative talked about her fears that the company would seek further concessions on the part-time work issue:

It was difficult, not only for the leadership to come to grips with it, but for us to convince the membership that they should come to grips with it because we'd fought our 1985 strike, our only strike, on that issue. So it was very, very difficult. And the only reason we were able to convince ourselves and our membership was the mutual agreement. The clause still contains 'mutual agreement of both parties'. So what we do in the workplaces, if you can't get a decent schedule by moving some of those fences on part-time, then you just don't move them. But you have a right as a union to make that final determination. I'm worried about the next step, that the thing that the company will want is the mutual agreement out. And I don't think it's something that we could ever give up, or we'll

see an unbelievable increase in part-time work and a decrease in full-time. In some places, they've introduced 5/2s, but where they have, they don't have the increased utilization of part-time. What we've been able to do is say, well that's fine, but you can't have your cake and eat it too. You're not going to get part-time six hours a day - two hours over what the contract says - and introduce crappy shifts. If you want to put in good shifts for the full-time, then we'll give you that increase in utilization for part-time. But if you don't then we won't. But it's a problem, and it's going to be a problem for our union for a long, long time. Right now, it's when does the district officer make the decision not to give them the increased utilization. I heard someone say the other day, "well, the minute one person goes to the street, the minute there's a reduction of even one person in my workplace, and I think it's as a result of this, then it's gone." It's a very, very fine line that the officers walk, because the company has introduced some wonderful shifts that people really like. And now they don't want to give them up... The company keeps putting it on the bargaining table and in every other arena, you know where it says, let's move one step farther and one step farther, until you keep chipping away at the wall until you've got no protection left whatsoever.

The more extensive use of part-time workers to meet overtime requirements in combination with the above-noted concession allowed the company to cover a greater portion of the day through part-time employment, thereby reducing the need to create full-time jobs. As a result, the number of full-time positions available to the many part-time employees who wished to change status was insufficient despite the fact that the amount of overtime used suggested that full-time staff requirements existed. Even though the new memorandum of understanding did provide a number of part-time agents with the ability to work increased hours, they were nonetheless still not guaranteed full-time hours with full-time status. While some agents preferred part-time status and others wanted part-time work at some point in their lives, a significant number of part-time passenger agents sought full-time employment as evidenced by the numerous requests submitted for change to full-time status. Indeed, in May 1987, the union counted over 380 applications from part-time agents seeking a change of status.¹⁷⁶ In early 1987,

there were close to 700 part-time agents,¹⁷⁷ which means that over 50 percent of these workers wanted full-time employment. Many part-time agents had to take on two jobs in order to make ends meet.

During the years following the strike, the union attempted to negotiate a reduction in the percentage of part-time employees in order to bring about an increase in full-time employment, but failed in its efforts.¹⁷⁸ Throughout the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the proportion of part-time agents had fluctuated, but had generally accounted for less than 15 percent of the total passenger agent workforce.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, during the second half of the 1980s, most of the passenger agent job openings at Air Canada were part-time positions. Thus, by the end of the 1980s the proportion of part-time workers hovered around 24 percent.¹⁸⁰ During the early 1990s, however, this proportion was reduced to approximately 22 percent as a result of the large number of layoffs.¹⁸¹ While this proportion was less than that allowed by the collective agreement, it was nonetheless higher than the proportion of part-time workers in the Canadian labour force, which stood at over 15 percent in 1988.¹⁸²

In the early 1990s, women represented over 70 percent of passenger agents at Air Canada, but accounted for approximately 90 percent of agents working part-time. Since 1985, the new hiring terms surrounding the job of passenger agent have negatively impinged on women's employment opportunities. As shown above, many part-time workers want and need full-time jobs. It is doubtful that these jobs will become available as the impending introduction of new forms of labour-saving technology poses a threat to the job security of all agents. This predicament is worsened by the current state of the airline industry and the economic recession which hinder carriers' ability to fill

airplane seats. The poor employment conditions of part-time workers have engendered frustration, a situation that could create problems for a major airline company which, in the context of increased competition and an economic crisis, requires a dedicated workforce to be sales effective and offer quality customer service.

As clearly demonstrated by the above discussion, the union continually struggled to improve the working conditions of part-time passenger agents. Important problems remained, however. Indeed, by the early 1990s, part-time workers were still barred from certain coveted positions in many locations, a situation resulting from the lack of training or from local agreements between the company and the union. At airports, for example, part-time workers were often not allowed or were unable to perform ticketing and terminal control duties and, at times, even in-charge gate duties. In reservations offices, they usually did not have access to most of the more interesting and specialized functions. This could be particularly frustrating for senior part-time agents. Part-time workers could nevertheless be called upon to carry out specialized functions, usually due to understaffing, even if they had not received the necessary training.

Such conditions did not help eradicate antagonisms between full-time and part-time workers and conflicts did erupt. During interviews it became clear that while many full-time agents realized the problem should not be personalized, they perceived the company's policy on the employment of part-time workers as a threat to their job security and thus believed that restrictions imposed on part-time workers were justified on the basis that any opportunities extended to part-time agents represented a potential threat to full-time jobs.

Part-time agents sometimes felt that they were regarded by some full-time agents

with resentment and jealousy and a degree of condescension. A number of part-time workers argued that their interests were being ignored and that they were being treated like second-class citizens and viewed as "part-time humans with part-time brains" by their employer, their union and their full-time co-workers. During an interview, a full-time passenger agent expressed her feelings about the situation in the following manner:

To this day, on the agents' level, you'll hear somebody say very disparagingly "oh, well it must be a part-timer who did that." I say "not necessarily, you know." You have part-timers that have been full-time in the past. Does that mean they deteriorate when they change status. That's highly unlikely. You have part-timers who have been here for twenty years, you try to tell me they don't know as much as somebody who's been here for a short period of time, full-time.

Clearly, conflicts between full-time and part-time workers made it more difficult for the union to build solidarity within its ranks. As a union representative remarked:

We've got full-time workers who say that everything the union does is on behalf of the part-timers and we have part-time workers who say the union doesn't represent them. You walk a very fine line with the two groups.

During the late 1980s, Air Canada began to encounter problems with its part-time hiring strategy. The relatively low starting pay rates and the part-time status for new passenger agents coupled with reduced job security made this type of employment less attractive, especially given that most of the job openings occurred in Toronto where the cost of living was prohibitive. These new conditions meant that the carrier sometimes had difficulty attracting candidates that it considered suitable for the passenger agent job. In discussing this problem, one agent talked about the fundamental change occurring in the status of the passenger agent job:

The calibre is not there any more. We're not hiring the same calibre of people that we hired five, six years ago. It's just, well, our salary scale is lowered quite a bit, a lot are being hired part-time. At one time, I

think it was a more respected job than it's now, which is unfortunate. And the sad thing is, they still want university graduates. That's what they request, but you're just not getting it any more. I mean, really who with a university degree is going to go for a job where they're getting paid \$7.03 for twenty hours a week and not really knowing when they're going to get full-time. I don't know. I just don't think that the calibre is there any more and even, sometimes even the respect that was there for the job that you did isn't there any more. I don't think that it is looked upon like it used to be. The thing is too, you have so many people applying for jobs here. And there are so many more jobs here in Toronto than anywhere else. But I think in other bases Air Canada still is a respected company, and the salary scale does improve quite a bit but over time. So people are willing to wait it out in other stations. But here where the cost of living is so bad, you can't. Many people cannot survive on \$7.03 an hour for twenty hours a week. So anyone who can get something better, higher paying, who has more of an education will go, I guess, and do something else if they can. And I think the people we hire, at one time, people would be hired and be so excited and ecstatic at getting hired with Air Canada, that's just not there any more. The interest and the loyalty is not there as much any more. You see people quitting a lot earlier. At one time people would get hired with Air Canada and they'd be lifers, you know, they'd be there and staying. But now you see a number of people who get hired and they're not long in training and they'll be quitting and getting another job. And I think they have such great ideals, such great plans, and you see them, once they get out there and see that it's not that easy, the job's not that easy and the pay is not great, and they realize that it's not as great as they thought it was. A lot have to have another job to survive, they have to, there's no way that they can with just part-time. It's difficult I think for the company to expect people to give that much of a commitment, really. They can't expect people to commit themselves 100 percent to Air Canada, you know. And I think maybe at one point they could have expected that, but not any more.

The labour market situation changed somewhat in the early 1990s following massive layoffs and staff relocation as well as major job loss and high unemployment rates in the economy in general.

Shift Trades

The many exigencies of work schedules discussed above, including the vagaries

of shift work, overtime and company imposed shift and work schedule changes, significantly restricted the ability of passenger agents to organize and meet the responsibilities of their family and social lives, thereby potentially resulting in disruptions and serious hardship. Agents nevertheless succeeded in somewhat alleviating the difficulties associated with paid work schedules and in creating greater flexibility for themselves by trading shifts with their co-workers.

Prior to 1969, passenger agents who wished to make shift trades were required to submit requests to supervisors or managers who had discretionary power to allow or disallow such exchanges. Workers were thus at the mercy of management and were without recourse should their request be rejected or their shift trade, once granted, be revoked. During an interview, an agent recalled problems in obtaining shift trades during this period:

It was at the discretion of the supervisor and I remember, I liked taking courses and I remember going to the supervisor. I was taking night school, and he says, "what comes first, your job or that." I said, "well, I'd like to improve my education too." "Oh, you work for Air Canada or you don't." That was management's attitude at the time. They wouldn't give you the time. You had to get their permission to let someone work for you, 'cause we didn't have it in the contract. So we had to negotiate it. Because, you see you're working shifts like that. This is why shift trades are so essential. As far as I know, you would never give that up, definitely.

Displeasure with the arbitrariness of these arrangements prompted the union to negotiate shift trade language in 1969 which stipulated that employees were to be granted personally requested shift changes, albeit subject to supervisory approval. From then on, passenger agents enjoyed more control over their work schedule. If agents wished to alter their shifts, they could make trades with co-workers with greater ease and certainty.

A number of conditions, however, did apply to shift trades. Initially, for each exchange, all applicable time credits and premiums were payable to the agent scheduled to work the shift as though that agent had actually worked the shift. Responsibility for shift coverage was that of the employee originally scheduled to work the shift, and any undertime and sick leave debits were deducted from the latter's paycheck.¹⁸³ In 1978, the method of applying time credits and debits was amended so that agents who worked the traded shifts assumed all responsibilities and obtained certain benefits associated with such exchanges. More specifically, overtime worked in conjunction with a traded shift as well as a recall were credited to the employee who actually worked the overtime or recall. All time debits and sick leave provisions were applied to the agent who had agreed to complete the shift.¹⁸⁴ The problem of passenger agents originally scheduled to work a shift being debited for circumstances beyond their control was consequently resolved.

Initially, trades were allowed only between passenger agents working in the same location. Because this greatly limited the ability of workers in smaller locations to exchange shifts, the company agreed, in 1976, to permit agents in locations with six or less full-time employees (changed to ten in 1978) to arrange trades with agents at other locations within the same base, subject to the employee concerned being capable of performing the work function of the other party.¹⁸⁵

In most locations, shift trade requests had to be submitted in writing for supervisory approval. The easier availability of shift trades led to an increase in their popularity, a situation that translated into a heavier workload for supervisors. To remedy this problem, an honour system was instituted in some of the larger locations whereby blanket approval was given to the majority of employees to trade shifts without

supervisory authorization. The simplified procedure required that agents record their trades in a special shift trade book without the direct involvement of supervisors. This administrative change, however, did not eliminate management's right to allow or disallow shift trades.

Grievance files as well as minutes of contract negotiations and of union-management meetings reveal that following the inclusion of language on shift trades in the collective agreement, complaints were constantly being voiced by passenger agents about management's unilateral imposition of restrictions on employee requested shift trades. Local managers and supervisors were making secondary rules which exceeded constraints set by the contract. In some cases, limits were placed on the number of monthly trades per agent and on the number of agents involved in each trade (usually this meant permitting only two-way trades). In other cases, management arbitrarily restricted trades or withdrew those already approved for reasons such as agents' failure to meet productivity standards, absenteeism, lack of punctuality, low enthusiasm towards the job and alleged misdemeanour. Some supervisors set rules as to when trades had to be paid back or denied exchanges if they had not been properly entered into the shift trade book. At times, agents were asked to provide justification for requesting trades. These actions reflected a lack of consistency and uniformity in the application of the shift trade provisions. Moreover, the union claimed that these practices were in violation of the collective agreement. Numerous grievances related to supervisors' refusal to approve trades were successfully processed, but grievance awards continued to be disregarded.

By the late 1970s, the shift trade situation had deteriorated considerably. In light of this predicament, an agreement was reached in early 1979 between Air Canada and

the CALEA to establish a joint committee to address the various concerns raised and attempt to set guidelines for the application of the clause on shift trades. It was decided that all grievances in progress on the matter would be frozen, but new grievances could be initiated.¹⁸⁶ When the parties were unable to reach a consensus, the union forwarded, on two occasions, a proposal to the employer aimed at resolving the deadlock. The company failed to reply and the union gave notice in early June 1980 that unless an answer was communicated by the end of the month, it would no longer consider the committee to be functioning.¹⁸⁷ The company did not respond and, as a result, all agreements relative to the committee and its mandate were cancelled and outstanding grievances that had been held in abeyance were revived.¹⁸⁸ Complaints about management's practices related to shift trades continued unabated.

The union consistently insisted that trades were a negotiated right and not a privilege and hence could not be tampered with by local management. For its part, the company stated that it realized how important shift trades were to workers and did not wish to unduly limit the practice. It nevertheless maintained that restrictions were needed under certain circumstances and that managerial control was required to stem growing employee abuse of an arrangement it considered a privilege and not a right.

The many grievances filed since the inclusion of shift trade language in the contract reveal that three major shift trade situations were of particular concern to the company. Firstly, many agents collected shift trades so that they could extend their vacations, and although the union argued that this was a standard reason for trades, management felt that the situation was sometimes completely out of control. A small number of agents used the shift trade system to arrange extended periods of absence or

to reduce their hours of work in order to pursue other activities. The union agreed with the employer that shift trades were not intended for such purposes, but maintained that these cases should be dealt with individually and should not be used to legitimize blanket restrictions.

Furthermore, the company complained that absenteeism on shift trades interfered with operations. The union acknowledged that a minority of agents abused the system, but contended that these workers' actions should not be used as a pretext to limit shift trading. During negotiations in 1984-1985 and also in the early 1990s, Air Canada attempted to modify contract language so that an employee scheduled to work a shift would be responsible for shift coverage and would suffer pay loss should the replacement worker be ill or otherwise not report for work.¹⁸⁹ The union successfully resisted a return to this pre-1979 system of time debits which would ultimately serve to restrict trades because agents would be penalized financially for the absence of co-workers replacing them.

Finally, the company insisted that the establishment and monitoring of reasonable shift trade rules by local management was an essential prerequisite to its ability to exercise some degree of control over the composition of the workforce. It complained that some agents were entering into trades with co-workers who were not qualified to perform the tasks and that this resulted in the need to recall other agents at premium pay. This problem occurred especially in certain airport functions in larger locations. In such cases, the company felt that shift trading interfered with the work process and caused staffing disruptions and frustrations for staff planners. The employer further maintained that it had a right to deny trades if too many resulted in a loss of job proficiency.

While shift trades were a thorn in the company's side, they were sacred to passenger agents. Not only did trades make it easier for agents to structure their personal schedule on a day-to-day basis, but they were also extremely popular because of the flexibility they provided in managing various aspects of life outside work. This flexibility was essential to workers with children because it allowed them to make more adequate childcare arrangements and offered a greater ability to cope with family emergencies. This was particularly important for women workers who were usually responsible for childcare. Finding quality and affordable childcare was difficult for those working regular shifts, but could be next to impossible for agents on a rotating shift work system. Most of the interviewees who had children indicated that they made use of trades, sometimes extensively, to meet childcare needs:

Personally, I always try to arrange my personal life around my shifts. If you check the books, I guess you'll find that I had a fair number of shift changes. But mine are for babysitting, strictly because of the babysitting. A lot of people do shift changes because of babysitting. They either can't or don't want to get a babysitter.

They were also used to fulfill personal needs and household responsibilities:

I do lots of shift trades. I do twelve weeks a year. Eh! You're talking the shift trade queen here. I love them, I don't think they should ever be taken away. Because if they took them away, a lot of the senior people wouldn't stay. Women who have children require them if they have a nine-to-five job, because of dentist's appointments, doctor's appointments, responsibilities of the house, you know, the family has relied on the wife. I use them for appointments, mine and my child's doctor's appointments. When a chesterfield is coming, who knows when that counts, they can come anywhere from nine o'clock in the morning till seven o'clock at night, and when one of the requirements is that somebody be home. And we travel a lot. I do a lot of shift trades.

Shift trades were essential to single mothers who could not rely on a partner to help meet childcare responsibilities, as pointed out by an agent:

You have to have two people who are supportive or else it's deadly with shift work. And that's where a lot of the single mothers are having trouble because they don't have someone at home that they can rely on. I know they have an awful, awful time doing shift work and having children. And they have to have shift trades just for that. But they've got to have it, because if they didn't have it, they couldn't function in their job at all.

As most agents interviewed gleefully noted, shift trades offered the possibility of extending holidays:

That's one of the main draws of the job. There aren't too many jobs where you can get a week or two off and just go away. So we're very lucky in that sense, about just how flexible it is. I'm sure you ask anybody in the office, one of the main reasons they're there is because of these passes. Obviously you work for an airline, you get all these wonderful passes, so you can shift trade two or three weeks off and you can go to Venice or wherever if you want. So that's mostly what people do to get summer vacations, especially people with kids. You have to have your shift trades.

This lady was in here just this morning, she's got two weeks of shift changes, she's going away on a trip. Some use it to create a vacation or time away, or to extend three or four shift changes at either end of a vacation to extend it or what not.

While agents could extend their holiday time through shift trades and were able to make use of free and reduced transportation offered by the company - a benefit viewed as a major perk of the job - many noted that they could not always afford to travel because of the high cost of meals and accommodation incurred while on vacation and also because of the huge costs associated with raising families.

Many agents talked about how shift trades helped cope with the monotony of the job by giving them a limited amount of control over the organization of their paid work time and of their time off:

Because the office is so young and so many people are into travelling. I mean, there's no other reason why they would be here, doing this job for

such low pay for the type of job they do because a lot of people really don't enjoy it. I think that if you did a survey on how many people really enjoy the type of work that they do, I don't think you'd get too many, really, they're here for the benefits. So, once they get enough time in and enough money, then they start doing a lot of shift changes and just go travel. So, I think that if they ever take that away, I think they'll lose a lot of people. Really, I would say for 90 percent of people, that's the only reason why they're there.

It's incredible, there are pages and pages of shift trades for every day in Toronto. I think they're really, really important. A lot of people are saying, I don't know if it's just hearsay or what, but that if they didn't have their shift trades, they don't think that they could work there. It makes working a not so great job a lot easier because you're able to accommodate your own life in with your work. It's really good for people who have families, because you can really be flexible. I know it's really important to me to have shift trades. I haven't done a lot of them in Toronto, except for getting days covered, I haven't changed my times a lot. But, it's really important to people too 'cause you get so much more time off. If you work a concentrated period at a time, maybe you're only supposed to get two weeks holiday a year. And I can remember my first year, I was supposed to get only six days holiday and I ended up with something like six weeks, by the time I had done all my shift trading. It just sort of makes the job bearable for a lot of people because having time off really rejuvenates your mind. Some people are taking classes, some are accommodating their babysitting schedules, looking after their children. For a lot of people, it's to create vacation. If you have a doctor's appointment or something like that, say you work Monday to Friday nine-to-five, it allows you to slot in those kind of things really easily. You can get a trade, if you're lucky, the night before even, because there's enough people working.

Obviously, shift trading allowed extended periods of time away from the job, thus helping workers recuperate from stressful working conditions:

I think they're essential also because of the stress that the job is. You know, I work a 5/2, Monday to Friday, now. I used to work a 6/3, so I had three days off. Three days off is fabulous, you could do six on. On a 5/2, by Thursday night I'm almost burnt out. Two days off is not enough. And if I feel stressed out I'll get a couple of days off. You know, when you have four or five days off, it could bring you back for a good month.

The ability to shift trade also compensated for the low-level entrance pay offered by Air

Canada in the mid-1980s, following the 1985 strike when the union accepted pay concessions:

For a lot of people here, it's more important than the wages because if you make dirt, you don't make any money at all. You start at \$7 and you work your way up over five years. The first three to four years are pretty low wages. So the ability to have that flexibility is all important.

Because new agents were generally hired on a part-time basis, shift trades made it possible to organize their work schedule around other jobs. Trades were also crucial to part-time workers as they provided extra hours of work, thereby allowing them to secure a decent standard of living.

Many agents insisted on the critical importance of trades, and felt that the job would not be as attractive without the availability of the shift trade system:

If trades were removed or restricted to, say two a week, I would bet you there would be a very high number, I wouldn't hazard to guess at a percentage, but a large number of people would quit. An awful lot of the newer employees who are holding down two jobs, or students, they couldn't work here if they didn't have the shift trades to absolutely tailor-make or customize their work schedule to their requirement. But I think there are a lot of people that would quit and a lot more that would give very serious consideration to quitting if they couldn't have their shift trades here. They're used just to allow the flexibility to be available anytime and anywhere to do anything.

An agent revealed how ephemeral this freedom was, given the nature of the job:

The more flexibility you have, the better it is because that's the only thing that job has going for it. In my opinion, you want to work at Air Canada, there's only one real benefit and that is flexibility, your shift trades and being able to change from part-time to full-time status. That, to me, is the whole benefit of working there. I would say that's one of the biggest issues at the airport, is your shift trades. Now, mind you, a lot of people don't use them that much. I don't use them nearly as much as I did when I was single. I don't have the money to travel any more, I'm more tied down, but knowing they're there sure makes a big difference to my life. It's always that sort of feeling of freedom, whether you use it or not, that kind of keeps you sane, I think. My husband would love me to work

Monday to Friday, nine-to-five but, ugh, I'd hate it, I don't want to do that. I find more and more I'd like to have weekends off, but I still don't really want to give up shift work just to have my weekends off. It's kind of funny, because in a way it's horrible, it's exhausting, you know, getting up for work at four thirty in the morning is exhausting, it makes me miserable. But overall, I don't feel so trapped. I just have this fear of Monday to Friday, because of the type of work. I mean it's not as if I'm some executive somewhere making \$100,000 a year. Basically I'm doing a Joe job making not great money, so I feel as if I don't want to have that shackled feeling to go with it. At least I can kind of fool myself that I have something, you know [laughs], I have some freedom. Like if I really don't want to work, I don't have to.

Given the advantages of the shift trade system, it is not surprising that workers complained loudly when management imposed restrictions or threatened to do so. Such actions on the part of the company sometimes spoiled vacations and disrupted other family plans as well as personal and social projects, causing both inconvenience and hardship for workers. Many were willing to fight back to resist limitations on shift trades. Indeed, agents sometimes refused to work overtime to protest management's actions involving the withdrawal of shift trade rights. A number of workers interviewed were of the opinion that company imposed restrictions on shift trades represented one of the only issues around which agents could be mobilized for strike action.

Maternity and Childcare Leaves of Absence

The past thirty years have witnessed a massive growth in the number of women entering the labour force, especially married women and women with young children. Given these workforce changes, the issue of maternity and childcare leaves has come to the fore and has forced unions and workers to search for alternatives to old practices.

During the first few decades of TCA's existence, employees who became pregnant

usually lost their jobs. In the early 1960s, company policy manuals were revised to allow for leaves of absence due to pregnancy. Maternity leave was considered a special type of involuntary leave of absence due to employee illness and the conditions governing such leave were dictated by company policy.¹⁹⁰ This form of leave was unpaid and not guaranteed. During interviews, passenger agents remembered the difficulties encountered by women who wished to return to paid work after childbirth:

They did all they could to discourage a woman from returning from maternity leave. They didn't necessarily discourage you at the time you were pregnant, because what happened if you miscarried. They waited till after the baby, and then these managers came along and said, "do you really think you should come back, a latchkey child, do you want other people looking after your children." They would get almost in the guilt trip idea, trying to lay it on the girl that, "if you really thought this through, maybe you'd be much better to stay at home." Now obviously, not every woman is going to buy that argument.

I went through quite a time with that because management asked me how I thought I was going to do that. They said, "what will you do, wheel the kid in here." And they were jealous that I handled it too, because I never had a day off because of sickness in any of the time, either being pregnant or after. I always handled it pretty well. So, they had nothing to come back on me. The way the men sort of figured it, you couldn't do anything else but stay home. And when I was coming back, I had to arrange for a babysitter, and they wouldn't tell me what date they wanted me to come back. And they wouldn't tell me where I could come back to or whether it would be shifts. They thought that if they could put you on the shifts, you'd be too happy to leave. It was rough. It started changing probably within three or four years, they sort of got used to the idea and started accepting it. It was a really nasty sort of period.

An informal survey conducted by district chairpersons in early 1965 indicated that while single women expressed little interest in the issue, many married women desired better maternity leave provisions than those offered by the employer. Some women passenger agents felt they should be entitled to resume their employment with the company after pregnancy if they so wished and that management should not have the unilateral right to

dispense with their services because of pregnancy.¹⁹¹

The union's efforts to negotiate maternity leave provisions resulted in the inclusion of a limited clause in the contract signed in 1966.¹⁹² During an interview, a passenger agent recalled why the union had decided to negotiate a maternity leave clause:

I think it was because we felt they were fooling around with it. We wanted a guarantee on the length of time and on getting your job back, things we were having problems with. In a couple of cases, they tried to move them [agents returning from maternity leave] back to locations they had previously transferred from, rather than giving them a job in the location they'd taken leave from. We were just trying to get some control over some of the abuses that had occurred. We were concerned about our ability to return. I think it was coming up through the grievance process and you were seeing it there and it was causing some discussion. We couldn't grieve it because it was not a contract violation at that time. However, we could discuss it as being a problem. It was subject to numerous discussions and attempted resolutions. And we couldn't get any redress of the situation. So, we said fine, let's change the bloody contract and make sure it doesn't happen again. So we took it to the bargaining table to try and fix it.

Under the new provisions, pregnant women were guaranteed a leave of absence if so requested, albeit unpaid. They retained and continued to accrue seniority rights during the leave and were guaranteed employment in their former classification upon return from the leave. All other conditions were in accordance with company policy.¹⁹³ In 1968, the clause was amended to include a specific time frame whereby agents were guaranteed a total of 120 days of maternity leave. However, a leave could only be terminated when a vacancy occurred at the base, which meant that the company retained much control over the timing of an employee's return to work.¹⁹⁴ A passenger agent remembered difficulties arising out of this practice:

When I had my child in 1970, you were laid off until they had an opening

for you. I couldn't come back when I wanted to. I wanted to come back after two months, but had to wait four months. Not that I wanted to come back, but I had to financially.

Contract negotiations in 1971 began shortly after the adoption of amendments to the Canada Labour Code which guaranteed workers up to seventeen weeks of leave and which also required that an employer reinstate a worker in her former position or in a comparable position with the same wages and benefits upon return from maternity leave.¹⁹⁵ During bargaining, the union argued that the company was not abiding by the Code because it was only prepared to guarantee a returning employee a position in her former classification at the same base, but not necessarily in the same location. The union feared that a worker might be forced to quit her job if assignment to a new location would result in transportation problems.¹⁹⁶ The contract language finally agreed to, stipulated that the employee would be reinstated in her former function or in a comparable function at her base.¹⁹⁷ In addition, according to the Code, the company was obliged to allow an employee to return to work immediately at the end of the leave and could no longer force her to wait for a vacancy to become available. Moreover, time limitations were enhanced, thereby affording agents a total of 132 days of leave. This was close to two weeks more than that provided for by the Canada Labour Code. Finally, the term of the leave could be extended or reduced upon agreement between the worker and management if the former's request was supported by a medical certificate.

In 1974, the union succeeded in improving the clause to ensure that any employee on maternity leave would be guaranteed a return to her original location. A worker who desired additional time off following the termination of the leave could request a voluntary leave of absence.¹⁹⁸ In 1976, the time frame for maternity leave, though not

extended, was rendered more flexible, a provision guaranteed by a 1975 amendment to the Canada Labour Code.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, an employee's vacation entitlement could no longer be reduced on account of such a leave.²⁰⁰ This latter gain merely formalized a 1975 arbitral decision upholding the union's position that vacation entitlement was not based on the amount of time worked during the previous year but on continuous service and that a maternity leave of absence did not constitute a break in service.²⁰¹

In 1978, the contract was once again improved so that an employee could extend a maternity leave without the company's prior consent as long as a medical certificate was submitted to justify the extension. Furthermore, a worker on a maternity leave of absence whose application for transfer had not been actioned due to the leave would now be offered the next vacancy at the requested location or base.²⁰² In 1980, an employee on leave was to be offered the first vacancy if she agreed to return to work within thirty days following the staffing requirement.²⁰³

In 1978, the union also successfully negotiated leaves of absence without pay for adoption purposes. In addition, the possibility of obtaining a short-term unpaid paternity leave of absence, subject to company requirements, was negotiated.²⁰⁴ In 1980, paternity leaves were guaranteed and adoption leaves were improved to comply with provincial legal requirements concerning adoption.²⁰⁵ In late 1982, following an arbitral decision in favour of the union, women taking maternity leaves were guaranteed that salary advancements would not be interrupted during such absences and that wage levels paid upon return would reflect accrued service.²⁰⁶

In 1985, a childcare leave clause was included in the agreement which incorporated and greatly extended adoption and paternity leaves of absence and allowed

for an extension to maternity leaves. These provisions were in accordance with amendments to the Canada Labour Code which provided for a twenty-four week childcare leave.²⁰⁷ In addition, workers returning from childcare leaves of absence would now be reinstated in their former functions at their former locations, subject to contract language on staff reductions and transfers. Finally, if a staff reduction occurred in the location or base and employees on leave were affected, they could exercise their layoff, bumping and change of status rights.²⁰⁸ In 1986, a contract amendment ensured that workers who took a childcare leave would receive their full vacation entitlement in the following year.²⁰⁹

Over the years, the union had been able to negotiate maternity and childcare leave provisions for passenger agents that were slightly more advantageous than that included in legislation. While contract language was generally not significantly superior to legislation, it was important for the union to have these stipulations incorporated in the collective agreement in order to clarify arrangements and reduce potential employer opposition. Despite gains, the union did not succeed in negotiating paid maternity leave or family care leave. While such demands were placed on the union's agenda beginning in the mid-1980s, they remained a low priority and were one of the first items to be dropped during bargaining. This resulted in hardship for women who had to sacrifice some of their income while on a maternity leave of absence. There is evidence that passenger agents lagged behind many other unionized workers on the issue of paid maternity leave. Indeed, in her survey of major contracts, Julie White²¹⁰ found that by 1992, this type of leave had been negotiated for almost one-half of the workers covered. Moreover, 40 percent of workers had succeeded in obtaining leave for family

illness and almost 30 percent of workers had this type of leave with pay.

Another issue relating to pregnancy revolved around the possible effects of radiation emissions on pregnant women working with VDTs. In the early 1980s, fears surfaced following seven miscarriages out of thirteen pregnancies within a period of two years which occurred amongst passenger agents at the airport in Dorval. In 1981, eight pregnant passenger agents in the Montreal base left their jobs because they wanted to avoid working with VDTs. They were compensated for lost wages by the Quebec government under the provisions of the Quebec Occupational Health and Safety Act.²¹¹ The 1979 Act allowed pregnant workers to seek removal from their jobs through reassignment if the work posed a potential health hazard to themselves or their fetuses, and, if no alternative work was available, they could exercise their right to preventive withdrawal from the job and receive weekly benefits identical to those available under the province's Workers' Compensation Act.²¹² No provision for similar protection existed at the federal level for pregnant workers. Air Canada claimed that its employees did not fall under the Quebec Act because they were covered by federal labour legislation. The issue of provincial interference in the management of federally regulated enterprises was eventually brought to the Supreme Court of Canada, with Bell Canada Enterprises as petitioner in the preventive withdrawal matter. The Court ruled in 1988 that workers under federal jurisdiction could not benefit from this provincial law.²¹³ In 1982, however, during this jurisdictional dispute, the union succeeded in negotiating a letter of understanding that allowed pregnant agents who were concerned about potentially hazardous working conditions to be reassigned, upon request, within the location or base to other duties, or be granted an extended maternity leave of

absence.²¹⁴ In arguing for such a clause, the union maintained that, despite statements that VDTs were safe, the long-term effects of low-level radiation had not been sufficiently researched and pregnant women should not be exposed to unnecessary risks. The 1982 report of the federal government's own task force on microelectronics recommended that pregnant women using VDTs should have the right to be assigned to alternative work without loss of pay, seniority or benefits.²¹⁵

Despite the introduction of the new clause, alternative work which did not require the use of VDTs was seldom made available to pregnant women who requested a change of duties.²¹⁶ Pregnant women working with VDTs were sometimes faced with the dilemma of wanting to take precautions against possible health effects from low-level radiation and needing the employment income to support themselves and their families. Clearly, the CALEA's attempts to provide alternatives to pregnant women passenger agents who worked with VDTs were thwarted. Like other unions, it was hampered in its efforts to negotiate protection partly because of the continued controversy concerning the potentially hazardous health effects of the technology. Amendments to the Canada Labour Code in June 1993, however, may provide women with some protection. The changes require an employer to take reasonable steps to find alternative work for a pregnant or nursing woman who requests reassignment and presents a medical certificate indicating that continuing any of her current job functions may pose a risk to her health or to that of the foetus or child. If the employer concludes that the request is not reasonably practicable, the worker is entitled to a leave of absence for the duration of the risk.²¹⁷

The Division of Childcare and Household Work

Even though passenger agents, like workers elsewhere, had acquired improved maternity leave rights as well as paternity and adoption leave rights, the union placed little importance on childcare issues until the mid-1980s. At this time, it began focusing on the need for enhancements to family-related provisions which would remove impediments to the ability of members to have and raise children and enable parents to more easily combine paid work and childcare obligations. A policy adopted at the union's 1983 general meeting recognized that raising children was a social as well as individual responsibility and that funding and services for childcare were totally inadequate, especially given the need for most parents to undertake paid labour. The union resolved to support the implementation of legislation to provide, as a social right, universal, publicly-funded and non-profit childcare for every child regardless of age, on a twenty-four hour basis.²¹⁸ This change of direction paralleled the labour movement's orientation on the issue of childcare. The CALEA's policies were furthered when it merged with the CAW-Canada which strongly advocated publicly-funded childcare services. Moreover, the CAW-Canada had made a breakthrough by negotiating a daycare fund into a collective agreement.

In 1988, in light of the growing attention being paid to problems with childcare policies and programmes in Canada and because of the high percentage of women of childbearing age in its membership, the union-sponsored a survey to determine the childcare needs of passenger agents. The results of the survey reflected the contention of childcare advocacy groups that there was a definite need for quality, affordable and accessible childcare facilities. Passenger agents who were parents expressed considerable

dissatisfaction with available childcare services and many reported major problems with childcare arrangements. Close to half of the parents reported having problems with temporary or emergency care, and 56 percent identified care for sick children as a major problem. Slightly over 40 percent stated their dissatisfaction with the quality of childcare services and almost half revealed that they had to rely on at least two forms of childcare arrangements to meet their needs. This was a strong indication that many expended much time and energy organizing care for their children. While close to half of the parents relied on informal care arrangements involving relatives, friends and neighbours, only 14 percent stated that this was their preferred choice.²¹⁹

During interviews conducted with passenger agents, many talked about the difficulties in finding appropriate childcare services that met their requirements. Making childcare arrangements could be particularly challenging because of shift work even though shift trades somewhat alleviated problems associated with these obligations. Clearly, the type of work schedules and shifts available to agents significantly affected their ability to organize childcare. The following quotes from interviews with passenger agents are testimony to some of the childcare problems faced by all workers. One male agent reflected on the difficulties of combining paid work with childrearing, especially when both partners worked shifts:

We shift traded so we worked opposite shifts. One of us would work mornings and the other afternoons, and whoever was on the mornings would pick the children up from school, drive them into work and the other one would put them to bed. And there was even the odd day when we couldn't get exact right shifts. I was working on the ticket counter, so she would bring them and sit them in the ticket counter reception area, and they'd sit there and play and they were as good as gold, until I finished work. And when I was going to punch out, I would asked someone, "would you mind watching those two little gaffers just for five

minutes while I go around to go and pick them up." I could only imagine how hard it was on the kids. I would've liked to see something like that [a daycare facility at the airport] back then. But, I would say the average male out here doesn't think childcare is all that important. I think you almost have to have experienced it one way or the other or had a close friend to realize how much it can change your life because I've heard comments like, "well it was their idea to have the kids, what's the problem, I can't figure it out." Yes, you have kids, you want to raise a family, but why should it be harder than necessary. Now, had there been some kind of daycare facility at the airport, we could've had a normal life, we could've had evenings together instead of just on our days off. It was not a happy time.

Obviously, time spent together could drastically be reduced and the demands that forced workers to live in such a way were a source of emotional stress. Moreover, having to shuffle children around could add to the burden. The following excerpt from a conversation with a passenger agent points to the importance of adequate childcare arrangements in alleviating worries about children's welfare:

When I was working in a smaller base, I didn't have a problem with babysitters. First of all, I had been with the company long enough that I was making top wages, and I had a wonderful babysitter who kept the children overnight. So when I was on early morning shifts, I'd bring them in the evening before, I'd read them their story, put them to bed, and I'd pick them up after my shift. So they'd wake up at the babysitter's at a normal time, I didn't have to get them up at four o'clock at night. I did it a couple of times, when the sitter was sick or whatever. And my afternoon shifts, it was the same thing, I'd drop them off at the babysitter's before I went to work and they'd stay overnight. I'd pick them up in the morning, so I wasn't taking them out in the middle of their sleep and disturbing their sleep. They just spent their night there. Since I moved here it's been really hectic, very wild. Babysitting is an impossibility and that's why 5/2 now is fine, and of course with both of them in school it's better.

Many of the interviewees spoke of the necessity of relying on relatives for both regular and emergency childcare needs. Their accounts mirror the findings of the union-sponsored survey mentioned above. An agent talked about how the presence of a close

relative living in the same dwelling made childcare easier, especially in the context of early morning starting times:

I made sure I'd fix certain things. I have a duplex and I have a bachelor downstairs and had the mother-in-law in the bachelor. There was a door that interconnected so the kids would just go downstairs, so I wouldn't have that problem. I didn't have that problem babysitting, you know bringing the kids out. I know some people who do have these problems. They work shifts, especially early in the morning, they've got to take that kid out, like at five o'clock in the morning or whatever time and bring them to somebody who is up at five o'clock in the morning and who will take the kid.

While meeting childcare responsibilities was obviously quite difficult for two-parent families, it could be daunting for single parents. A part-time agent who was a single parent working as many shifts as possible to support herself and her children also spoke of the importance of being able to rely on relatives to help out with childcare:

I was part-time but I wanted full-time, I needed as much full-time as I could get. I was staying with a family member in the suburbs, and so I would get up at five o'clock in the morning, head off and take the train in. And I would get to work maybe forty-five minutes before my shift because, if I took a later train, I would have been late. And I'd work my shift, a nine-to-one, and then I'd work a three-to-eleven, somebody else's shift, and get off at eleven and I'd get back at twelve forty-five and by the time I'd get to bed, it was one thirty in the morning and I'd be up at five o'clock in the morning and I'd be gone again. So I didn't see my children for, like, a week, two weeks and that was hard. My family took care of them. And going through that, besides the financial strain and the emotional strain that I was undergoing at the time in my personal life, I was also very physically ill, but still driving myself into work and putting up with pressures from all sides.

Another agent recalled the hardship and the feelings of isolation of being a single mother and how the world of work outside the home was not oriented towards her type of family. She also talked about the difficulties in gearing childcare to shift work and about the need to rely on relatives for the provision of childcare:

I was a single parent in the early '70s. It was very difficult because I had a house and of course there was a mortgage, and I still have a mortgage. It was really tough, not even so much financially as, what do you do when your child is sick, there's no one else to look after the child. Later his grandmother was in the city and I was able to rely on that resource. But it was still very, very stressful being a single parent and having to work where there's no understanding of how tired you are, or how impossible sometimes it could all be. Nobody was interested in your home life or what was going on. They just wanted you at work on time, plugged in, doing your work. What you had to end up doing was being dishonest. If your child was sick and you had to stay home, you called in sick, you couldn't come in. Because at least you were paid for those days. If you called in and said your child was sick and you had to stay home, your day was lost. It didn't occur that often, but of course your absenteeism looks bad. There weren't many single parents then. Most other women were married and still living in marriage. I have no idea how single parents cope today, salary wise. A lot are not even hired full-time but part-time. I know there are people who have more than one job, or they're young people who are living at home or sharing with three or four other people... I only used trades to change my start times. I could not make it in for a seven thirty shift ever, because I had to get my child to daycare and it didn't open till seven thirty. So I always traded that away for either an eight thirty or nine o'clock shift. That was usually no problem. Later on, when I worked in the ticket office, I had a lot of difficulty because my shift ended too late. There were a lot of nine forty-five to five forty-five shifts and the daycare was very strict, you had to pick up the child by six o'clock, not a minute later. That was really difficult, because you could count on getting out by five thirty if there were no customers, but if there were customers, you were stuck to stay. I can't remember how I coped. I think what I did, I guess I had my mother-in-law pick my son up when I knew I was really going to be stuck, because it was difficult to trade away that late shift, nobody wanted it. Sometimes I had to send my son home by taxi by himself. I mean, it was really a nightmare, being the sole provider. It was a difficult period.

Sex differences must be taken into account when addressing the issue of childcare.

Indeed, the previously mentioned union-sponsored survey concluded that there was a strong relationship between desired forms of childcare and the sex of the respondent. Men preferred that their partner care for their children while women were more likely to choose caregivers other than their partner. Under ideal conditions, only 11 percent

of men wanted to be the caregiver compared to 44 percent of women. The survey further revealed that women reduced their hours of employment according to childcare responsibilities. For example, 52 percent of female respondents with young children held part-time positions, whereas none of the male respondents with young children held such positions.²²⁰ These statistics clearly indicate that part-time work was a means for women passenger agents to balance home and labour market work. That women often work on a part-time basis to juggle childcare and paid work obligations has been documented by several studies.²²¹ Many of the women interviewed reported that they had, at one point in their lives, taken on part-time work while their children were young.

One agent commented:

One reason I went back part-time was because my children were young. I did time changes with people and I worked all mornings when I had to because we used to work, maybe say, three mornings and two nights, something like that. When I started, I had the girl next door, she used to come in. I would never have taken the job on if I didn't have proper babysitting. I looked into that before I took the job on. But it is a problem with the girls, you know, for some of them. Everybody could use money. Also, after awhile you worry too much about your kids.

Women's decision to return to the paid labour force after having been at home with their children on a full-time basis was usually dependent upon suitable childcare, as illustrated by the above quote. Most of the women interviewed were largely responsible for making childcare arrangements while their male counterparts could usually rely on a partner. Though most women felt their partner should participate more, all nonetheless accepted that as mothers they should be involved in this aspect of childcare. Not only were women responsible for finding proper care and making most of the arrangements, but it also became clear throughout the interviews that they had to modify their paid work time

to coordinate childcare. Though men indicated that they sometimes had to adjust their work schedules to fulfill childcare obligations, the majority of women disclosed that they regularly had to alter their hours of work in order to meet childcare and other family needs. As discussed earlier in this chapter, shift trades were often used for this purpose. Many women interviewed found themselves having to resort to using their own sick leave benefits when children were ill and could not attend school or daycare, while men generally did not face this problem as most could rely on a partner to handle the situation. Women agents regularly talked about the need for family care leave provisions that would allow them to remain at home with their ill children instead of having to use up their sick leave credits.

Interviews also point to a traditional division of labour in the household where women passenger agents, like other women in the paid labour force as well as those remaining at home full-time, were saddled with most of the childcare and household work. The following passages from interviews with both women and men passenger agents are testimony to the household sexual division of labour as it pertains to both housework and childcare. An agent who described how she and her partner split domestic chores and childcare was aware of the double standard. She strongly felt that she was ultimately responsible for presenting a clean and well-maintained home:

I do it [housework] all [laughs]. No, my husband is very good. I'm messy and so is he, so we get along fine. Since we've lived together, we've always kind of divided things up, but it's not a big thing. There's a lot of things that always have to be done and we're in the process of doing renovations. Obviously, well not obviously, but I don't know how to do those things. And [child's name] had to be looked after and kept out of the way when those things were being done, so I did it. And I made meals, because again, he's trying to get something done. So, we both try to help out in whatever way we can. He does sometimes do

some cooking and stuff if the situation arises and the time is there. But, when I work nights, I don't leave them a meal, he comes home and he cooks dinner. A lot of times, it's a bit makeshift. A lot of times he does the shopping, and he'll come home and say, "hey, look I've got this new frozen dinner, I'm going to try it" [laughs]. And you know, that's fine, I don't think you're going to die because of that sort of thing, I don't really worry about that. He doesn't have a problem with the idea of him doing the vacuuming. Him doing the laundry, he's a little uncertain about laundry, he's afraid he's going to ruin something. Generally if there's something there to be done, one of us does it, it doesn't really matter who does it. I don't have that kind of problem. But still, sometimes you can't help it, you sort of feel there's an awful lot resting on your shoulders. For example, my mother asked why I had not gone back to work, why the doctors hadn't figured out what's wrong. I'm taking [child's name] to the babysitter every day, I was having such bad pains in the back, I just couldn't do anything. And I just couldn't run after him because I was spending most of my day lying down. But I feel a little bit guilty, because I feel, like, I'm home, so he should be home. And my mother said, "what you really need is someone to come in and do your housework." I think what she meant was, "you're not feeling well, could I maybe hire a Molly Maid for you to come in." But I can't help but take that as an insult because I feel like she's looking over and thinking, "your place is dirty and it's messy, why aren't you cleaning up." My husband said, "your mother doesn't mean it that way, she's trying to be helpful that's all, she knows you don't feel well and it's hard for you." Yes, but I still feel that the ultimate responsibility is a woman's, that people expect the woman to keep the home neat and clean and nice looking and look after the child and make sure the child's nicely dressed and clean and tidy and properly fed. Somehow, it always seems to be the woman's responsibility. Now, I don't know how much of that I'm imposing on myself, but I think that does still exist. You know, I don't think anybody would ever say, "that [husband's name] didn't vacuum this week." I mean it's going to be "that [interviewee's name] didn't vacuum this week." They're more likely to say, "poor [husband's name], he really married himself a dud," they're not going to say, "poor [interviewee's name] married herself a dud, the guy doesn't vacuum." You know what I mean, it is there.

Another agent also struggled with the reality of the division of labour in her home:

No [laughs], no, he doesn't help. No, I used to leave things over here and he'd help with, you know, fold clothes, whatever. But, I've always maintained the house. He's very good at helping me when I need help. But it hasn't changed since I've gone full-time either [laughs]. That's why I said to him, I said, "gee, you know, surely you could help me

sometimes, you know." But no, some people are lucky [laughs]. But I don't know, he would help me if I wanted him to, but I usually do it all myself. I only have two children. If you have four, it's a different story.

Most of the men passenger agents interviewed admitted that they did not perform much work in the household. Often when they described their involvement, they spoke of helping out as opposed to being primarily responsible for domestic labour, as illustrated in the following quote:

My wife works outside the home. But since we had our baby, she's been working only two days a week. She takes care of her own house, which is good. And now she won't be working for a couple of years while we have our second child. But prior to that, she worked full-time. Now it seems like throughout the week, I'm relieved pretty much from doing household chores. But I'm helping a little bit, or basically, watching our child and keeping her out of her way so she can do things.

Another male passenger agent talked about how life had become less complicated when his partner decided to leave the labour force, but realized that she was now assuming the lion's share of housework and childcare. As the following passage reveals, despite relying on traditional explanations for the sexual division of labour, he questioned his feelings about this division in his household and this, with no prompting whatsoever:

When she got pregnant, then having been home for awhile, we saw how simpler life was. Although there was less money coming in, we realized fully that you spend what you make, at least we do, we decided that we were going to do it on one salary. And it's only recently that she's actually started taking kids in. I would rather go without things than to have to go through the trauma of all the shift changes and all that. Now that we're married and [wife's name] is staying at home all the time, I have fallen into that rut. When I get home, even if it's been a fairly easy day, I'll come home - I guess maybe this is the overshadowing inbreeding or whatever it is - I don't do too much after I get home, maybe putter in the garage, or sit and watch TV, depending on how bad the day has been. If it's been a really bad day, I just sit there and watch TV and nobody talks to me. But as far as doing housework, my wife does that. And I will freely admit that's not right. But when it comes down to it, if it's going to get done, she always ends up doing it. Part of it is that she's

into such a routine now, that what would take me three to four hours to do, she does in about forty-five minutes. I'm kind of embarrassed to admit to that, but I'm being truthful, that's the way it works. I don't really discuss that with anybody. In my first marriage, we had it worked out that I was responsible, I cleaned this part of the house, my ex-wife cleaned this part of the house, so we had that all worked out. And I don't know what's happened, I honestly don't understand it. Obviously, I could change it. I don't know, I guess I should discuss it with my wife and see if it bothers her before it becomes a problem. It could be something that's nibbling away that could cause a problem later. But, so far anyways, that's just the habit we've gotten into. Mind you, when she's home all day, I'm not saying she's doing nothing, but when she's home all day, she has the opportunity to do that. I know it's not right, I come home from work [punches the table], the king's home. Well it's not quite like that. She tries to have our housework and everything done before I get home, so, with the odd exception, there's not much to do by the time I get home. It's just something that happened. She does all the washing [pauses]. Now that I think, it's my wife's upbringing because her mother is a doer, she's always doing for somebody else, she never stops. She cannot sit down and stop. So, I think a lot is, I'm not saying it's her fault, but I think it's her upbringing, it's the way her mother is, they've always got to be doing something, I think that's what it is. I don't think her father has ever picked up a vacuum cleaner. Mind you, I never saw my father do that either. I think it's sort of a joint thing. She started doing it and if someone is going to do it all for you, it's pretty easy getting into that rut and that's what's happened. But, I freely admit that it's not fair, but if she's happy [pauses]. I don't know if she's happy, I'm afraid to ask her [laughs].

When one parent remains at home full-time to care for the children, the other does not have to overly worry about their well-being. As studies have systematically revealed, women are usually the ones who stay at home full-time. When women enter the paid labour force, they constantly worry about the welfare of their children. During interviews, most of the women passenger agents who were parents indicated that they regularly called their children's caregiver to make sure all was well, whereas their male counterparts generally did not. This meant that women were using a portion of their rest and meal breaks to perform childcare work at a distance, thereby reducing their much

needed relaxation time. Sometimes they would make calls during work time, even at the risk of being reprimanded, especially when children were ill or if there were problems with childcare arrangements. Clearly, women's responsibilities for childcare hung over them at work. An agent talked about some of the problems she encountered with daycare and her constant worries about the well-being of her child and how this affected her performance on the job:

My daughter is in what they call home daycare, she's at a woman's home with other children, but it's all run by an agency that oversees it. I find she thrives on it. If she's at home with us on the weekend, by Monday she can't wait, she's ready for it. I'm pretty picky for daycare and when I went through this agency where you register and give all your requirements, I included a letter explaining my needs because of shift work. I wanted to go and meet the person who would babysit, spend two to three hours there a few times, get a feel for the atmosphere in the home, see how the woman treated the kids and how she related to them. She told me I was the only person who had ever requested that. It occurred to me that maybe others don't have the freedom that I do. There was no way I was going to meet somebody for ten minutes and leave her there. Now, I got lucky because this woman is excellent, but if she needs to take her own kids, say to the doctor, or goes on vacation, then I need a backup. And the first time I needed a backup for a day, I took my child to a place suggested by the agency. I was not happy, I didn't like it. I felt the house was kind of dirty. And I brought her home and her bum was dirty, when the woman had changed her, she had not washed her. So I called the agency and went through six possible backups before I found a satisfactory place she could go on a regular basis. I took her somewhere on Monday, only from twelve to four to give the backup person a short day because I didn't know her. I didn't like the house, there were not enough kids her age, not many toys. So, I called the agency and told them I didn't think that was my idea of where she should be. I don't trust anybody more than 90 percent. But I like the regular sitter and I don't worry. But when I have to use these backups, I suddenly realize what people mean when they're so worried. How can you concentrate on your work. It makes you feel like you're going to be sick. One day I brought her to this place, and I didn't like the house. I was stupid that day, I left her there. But the whole day I thought I was going to be sick at work, I couldn't concentrate. I called the agency to ask them to find somebody else for the next day. How could I justify to myself if anything happened to my child because I had to come to work

on time. At that point it's, like, what do I do? I sort of hung around for a bit with her, then I had to leave and go to work. I thought, well if I take her home, phone the agency, they'll try to find me somebody else, I'm not going to be at work. So, I left her there. And then I thought, no, this is wrong. It just made me sick. I called my husband and said, "for god's sake, leave work early and go get her, like I just have that horrible feeling something's going to happen." Maybe it's overreacting, but when it's your own child, that's how you feel. People who have problems, I think, it's no wonder that they can't work, they can't concentrate, they're distracted. But anyway, it's unfortunate Air Canada wouldn't consider daycare, I mean they've got 750 of us, then they've got all the flight attendants, they've got all the ramp people. I mean, they could possibly consider a daycare location at the airport or close to the airport. It would, I think, help a lot of people, it would reduce the stress for a lot of people and probably increase attendance because people wouldn't be home because of daycare problems.

The following quote is a good illustration of how most of the women with young children described how they spent their days. It points to the conflict between household chores, childcare work and personal regeneration, given the limited number of hours available after long hours in the paid labour force:

At first what I did is I'd rush home and pick him up, I'd be exhausted, I'd be a mess and the house would be a mess. Then gradually, what I started doing, I'd go home first, change clothes, tidy up the kitchen a bit, get the beds made, throw in a load of laundry, sit and read for twenty minutes, kind of, you know relax, get all the tension away, and then I'd go get him. And then I felt, even though I was tired, because I'd been up maybe since four thirty in the morning, sometimes I'd try to get a nap, if I had time to get a nap, and then I'd go get him. And somehow, I feel a bit more together, I don't feel so harried, you know, I feel like, okay, at least I sort of know now what I'm going to make for dinner, I've got some laundry done, I feel a bit more in control of my life. And so, at least I've spent, like three hours where I try to devote that time to him. I don't try to do the dishes when he's there, I don't try to do the laundry or whatever. I just try to do things with him, take him to the park or play games or whatever. And I feel that that's better. I wouldn't want to be picking him up in a total panic, I mean it's too much, I'd go nuts. So I found I felt a lot better, I felt a bit guilty, but then I thought, what's the point in spending time with him going nuts, that isn't doing anybody any good. It's better that the time I do spend with him is happy time.

An agent who was a single parent talked about the amount of energy needed when combining paid work with the organizing of a household and caring for children:

When I first decided to go back to work, I advertised lengthily for the right person for the kids. And I had a nanny when I first left my husband and moved in here for six months. And then, after awhile, I thought I don't like having her come in, because their father was spending a lot of time with the boys and so I was able to say, "listen, why don't you take the kids out for dinner such and such a night." So it worked out after awhile, after six months, that I could do it on my own, I really didn't need a nanny. I didn't need to do that 'cause the kids were quite capable, and they're very responsible boys now because of it, they haven't suffered. It still is a lot of organizing, but I'm so used to that now, it's a way of life. When they [children] got to, like, age twelve, I stopped hiring babysitters. Then I would have supper ready for them. This is when I was part-time, and I would make up a casserole or I'd have fish and chips, you know, frozen ones. Or I would have supper organized for them, and that was even before I had the microwave, so that when they came home, I'd say, "okay, the hot dogs are here," or "this casserole will be ready at such a time." I'd set the timer. And you had to be organized, and that just carries over. And that's from being on shift work. I don't get exhausted, not at all, now that I'm full-time. I just wish that I could relax enough to enjoy the salary and not be so concerned that I have to work, work, work because I worked, worked, worked for so long, and I've got to calm down, you know, I don't have to work. Well I do, but I mean, I can get by without work, work, work like I have been doing.

Despite the fact that most women were ultimately responsible for the organization of the household and childcare, there are signs that these unequal conditions were being challenged. One agent described how her partner was forced to partake more fully in childcare duties when she returned to work on a full-time basis, especially because of her irregular shifts. She also realized that this situation resulted in a positive experience for both her daughter and her partner:

I found that when I went back to work, everything was better because he's having to spend those three evenings with her when I was at work. And I think it really improved his relationship with her, you know, being the one who's making her dinner, giving her a bath and putting her to bed and

being alone with her and doing those things, I think made him feel much more like a real father, close to her, you know. I used to do most of the childcare before because I was home, he wasn't. My husband was working from eight in the morning to eight at night, which I found very hard, because I found being home alone with her all day really made me feel claustrophobic. It was sweltering hot, she never slept, she was up from seven in the morning till midnight and she never slept and she wanted to be held all the time and everything, which I felt that if that's what she wanted, that's fine. Except that, you know, how am I supposed to eat, how am I supposed to rest. And so, it was a very hard, tense time. I'm with this baby trying to live in this mess, and he's not home till eight at night and then he comes in the door, "hi, how are you," goes downstairs to do some work and resurfaces at midnight. So, I mean, it was hard. Then, when I went back to work, that was it, things had to change, I mean he had to start picking her up at five thirty, not working till eight at night and everything and get involved with her. Like I say, he just really wasn't that involved with her because of the circumstances.

As some of the above quotes reveal, the traditional division of labour was being somewhat modified because of demands made by women, but also because of the pressures of shift work. Indeed, someone had to make the meals as well as feed and care for the children and even in fairly traditional households, if women were not available to carry out these tasks, men had no choice but to take up some of the slack. Despite these real changes, the conflict between women's domestic and childcare responsibilities and their paid work obligations has clearly not been satisfactorily resolved.

Provisions or the lack of provisions covering childcare can greatly influence the extent to which workers are able to successfully accommodate both family and paid workplace lives. The union-sponsored survey discussed above found that a large proportion of agents believed that the union should bargain for some form of childcare-related contract clause, and many expected the government or employers to contribute to the financing of childcare. Despite the fact that most assumed that parents should pay the bulk of childcare costs, few felt that parents should bear the full cost.²²² During

interviews, most agents expressed the view that childcare should be part of the union's agenda. When asked which issue the union should be dealing with, an agent responded:

Daycare, daycare, daycare, daycare. Women need to work in Toronto because of the cost of living. Women have their families here. The cost of daycare is so outrageous that they're actually working for nothing, and they're exhausted, so their husbands are saying to them, "why do you bother even working, you don't have any money left over anyways, so why don't you quit." The problem is, women don't want to quit because they do need the stimulation of going out to work, they don't want to give up years of service and they know that once the kids are in school full-time, they could continue, it's just five, six years. It's very hard on a lot of them. When my child was born, I quit the company. Actually, I would say I was quite lonely. I came back part-time because I needed the stimuli. It's lonely when no one else was ever at home, everybody else was at work, it was terrible. So I feel that women should have some daycare, especially at the airport, maybe downtown it's not that bad, but at the airport, that's so silly, all the staff that works there, and they don't have a daycare, it's so disgusting. It isn't a concern to men, it's only a concern to women. It's been talked about for years by all of us. I don't think it will happen soon.

Nonetheless, a few agents strongly felt that childbearing and childrearing was a private matter for parents rather than a social issue for unions and governments, as is clearly reflected by the following quote:

Daycare is something that should be personally dealt with. I don't think the union should have anything to do with it. This doesn't stem from me being passed the daycare stage. I feel that if I can do it, anybody can do it, you know, and I did it and I don't see why it's necessary. At least, if they can't handle a job because they've got so many young ones, well then maybe they should stay home, because there's a lot of people that would like their jobs, that's my feeling. I don't think the union should get in that, at all.

While some agents disapproved of the union's involvement in childcare matters, the findings of the survey provided the CAW local 2213 with a strong mandate to pursue the issue both at the bargaining table and in the legislative arena. However, because of the recession of the early 1990s and the major layoffs in the industry, childcare never

became a priority. Like other issues of concern to women, childcare was amongst the first to be dropped at the bargaining table. Childcare is a fairly recent issue for unions and involves deeply rooted beliefs about sex roles. This means that much education and mobilization is needed at the level of both the leadership and the membership in order to ensure that the issue becomes a priority that can be forcefully put forward to management.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with various issues pertaining to paid work time which must be seen as a fundamental dimension of passenger agents' work life. Wage work time is doubly important in that it frames the immediate paid work experience and serves to connect labour force work to the world outside of the workplace. It is also an integral part of the effort/reward bargain. For the employer, the allocation of work time determines, to a certain extent, the extraction of surplus labour.

From the beginning, matters related to paid work time have been a source of friction between the union representing passenger agents and TCA/Air Canada. They have always been a high priority on the union's bargaining agenda. During the first thirty-five years of its existence, the union succeeded in systematically making gains on different aspects of wage work time, thus improving overall working conditions for passenger agents. Through the incorporation of scheduling provisions in the collective agreement, the union achieved a greater ability to define work time issues and control the allocation of hours of work, thereby modifying the employment relationship. With the bureaucratization of these employment practices, workers were no longer completely

at the mercy of supervisors and managers as they were provided with a set of contract rules and regulations which resulted in increased stability and certainty. The greater control over wage working hours by the union and passenger agents also made it possible for workers to better integrate paid work, home life and other activities. This achievement was important because of the company's uneven scheduling requirements and because a large proportion of passenger agents were women, many of whom had childcare responsibilities.

Despite the fact that they represented real gains for passenger agents, work scheduling changes negotiated by the union also served to effectively integrate the workforce. The creation of a system of rewards around work time generated loyalty to the company. In addition, some issues, especially the use of part-time labour and overtime, gave rise to competition and rivalry between groups of workers. Moreover, the union became part of the bureaucratic structure of control as it had to abide by the rules of the contract. Formalizing work time-related matters did not remove them from the realm of conflict, however. This conflict tended to be channelled through negotiations and grievances and revolved around the application of particular rules and procedures and their modification.

While passenger agents made numerous gains in the area of work time until the late 1970s, they suffered significant losses beginning in the mid-1980s in the context of the crisis in the airline industry and an employer seeking major concessions. In its drive to increase flexibility, reduce costs and maximize labour time, the company succeeded in largely dismantling the overall scheduling system built over the years and in regaining more control over the allocation of work time, a strategy that significantly altered

employment practices. These changes were an integral part of the process of proletarianization. While passenger agents, like other subordinate primary workers employed by large corporations, have, until recently, enjoyed some degree of control over scheduling issues, the company's flexibility offensive directed against the rigidities of rules concerning the allocation of work time has created a situation more akin to that of workers in secondary labour markets where women are concentrated.

As I have shown, management's attempts to redefine rules on the use of work time were resisted by passenger agents. Work time was one of the few areas where the union could more easily mobilize workers to take action to bring about change. Indeed, employer initiated modifications to the overall organization of the labour process did not incite the same level of activism, except when they seriously threatened job security. In her study of fast food workers, Reiter²²³ also identified the scheduling system as the working condition generating the most resistance. Passenger agents' stronger commitment to fight for improvements and resist losses associated with work scheduling can partly be explained by the immediate and tangible benefits potentially obtained in terms of both paid work and life outside of the workplace. This state of affairs underlines the interconnectedness of the formal economy and the household.

The issue of hours of work has traditionally been an important one for workers and unions. The organized fight for the reduction of paid working time has led to important gains for all workers. However, despite having achieved a shorter paid workday and workweek, most workers have little control over work scheduling. The struggle over work time is also central to the feminist agenda, given women's double day of work. Feminists have pointed out that the labour movement's battle over the

allocation of work time has not taken into account the sexual division of labour in society. As Meg Luxton²²⁴ noted, the struggle between labour and capital over the required duration of wage working hours has left unquestioned the division of labour between formally recognized paid work and socially necessary but unrecognized domestic labour. The labour movement's fight to reduce paid working hours to secure more leisure time reflects the assumption that the workday begins and ends when people enter and leave the paid workplace. Obviously, the dominance of wage labour in capitalist society has had profound implications for women's lives.

As revealed in this chapter, changes brought to matters pertaining to paid work time have not benefitted women and men passenger agents equally. Indeed, women workers' needs were sometimes viewed as secondary, a situation which was clearly reflected in the union's handling of questions related to part-time work, maternity leaves of absence and childcare. The union's positions on these issues generally failed to recognize the interconnectedness of paid work and family life.

The union representing passenger agents has historically attempted to significantly limit and impose stringent controls on the use of part-time labour, a strategy similar to that of most other unions. These restrictions, however, have played against women who are usually the ones to take on part-time employment because of family responsibilities. Given that women have always occupied the large majority of part-time positions, they have suffered more because of the less favourable working conditions of this category of labour, at least until the mid- to late-1980s when the union fought to eliminate most of the inequities. The findings of studies on part-time work carried out by Julie White²²⁵ and Ann Duffy and Norene Pupo²²⁶ suggest that the Canadian labour

movement has historically ignored part-time workers' needs and concerns, but that an increasing number of unions have been modifying their stance. The lack of a clear policy direction on the part of the union movement has benefited employers, not only because they continue to have access to part-time workers as cheap labour, but also because the issue has been highly divisive within unions.

The relatively recent and still somewhat weak commitment of the union representing passenger agents to improve the conditions of maternity and childcare leaves of absence has also been detrimental to women workers. Moreover, the discussion about the implications of the double day for women has barely begun. Not questioning the overall sexual division of labour in society reinforces the notion that women's commitment to paid work is secondary and that childcare and housework are predominantly women's work. That women bear the brunt of childcare and domestic responsibilities regardless of their labour market status has been demonstrated by studies such as those conducted by Luxton,²²⁷ Charlene Gannagé,²²⁸ Ruth Cavendish²²⁹ and Anna Pollert.²³⁰ The labour movement's failure to fully recognize that work is not reducible to paid work and its insensitivity to the material conditions of women's double day have hindered efforts to fight for a redistribution of work. The permanent move towards a two-wage earner household and the predominance of nonstandard work patterns as well as women's actions have somewhat undermined deeply entrenched practices within the family/household with regards to housework and parenting responsibilities.

The five preceding chapters have addressed various dimensions of the immediate labour process and the employment relationship. The two chapters that follow will focus

more specifically on the process of class formation. The first will deal with union organization while the second will discuss labour-management relations. This examination of institutional actors complements chapter three which provided an account of the historical development of the Canadian airline industry and of TCA/Air Canada in particular.

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9. UNION ESTABLISHMENT, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

This chapter examines the creation and development of the union representing passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. I trace the formation of the union in the immediate post-war years and its subsequent strengthening through the building of stronger district and national representation. I demonstrate that the union was gradually transformed from an independent company-oriented association representing a few hundred workers at TCA into a stronger union regrouping several thousand workers from different airline companies. The many problems encountered by the union in its drive to organize new groups of workers are highlighted. I discuss the circumstances under which the union eventually merged with the larger, more powerful and progressive UAW-Canada which later became the CAW-Canada.

I also analyze the changing policies, programmes and strategies of the union, showing that it became more progressive and militant, especially beginning in the late 1970s when it began facing increased pressures in the context of an economic crisis and growing attacks from employers and the state. I point to the union's attempts to address internal problems by dealing with communications and training issues. Finally, the last part of the chapter focuses on the participation of women passenger agents in the union and the concomitant placing of issues of concern to women workers on the agenda.

The Formation of the Union

In early 1946, a small group of TCA passenger agents who were concerned that their wages were lower than those of workers in other Canadian industries formed the Canadian Air Line Passenger Agents Association. In March 1946, the union applied to the Wartime Labour Relations Board to represent passenger agents working at TCA

airports and obtained certification in July 1946.¹ This action was part of a surge in unionization activities by Canadian workers which occurred during the war and immediate post-war years. When passenger agents were placed under the jurisdiction of the traffic department in late 1946, the company recognized the union as the bargaining representative for most employees of that department within Canada, including passenger agents, space control agents, reservations agents, telephone operators and teletype operators (switchboard operators became part of the bargaining unit in 1951). Managers, supervisors and clerical employees were specifically excluded. The name of the organization was changed to Trans-Canada Air Lines - Traffic Employees' Association (TEA).² At the 1955 general meeting, delegates voted to rename the union Trans-Canada Air Lines - Sales Employees' Association (SEA), a change which was precipitated by the company's traffic department becoming known as the sales department.³

At the TEA's founding convention held on November 1, 1946, delegates adopted a constitution, elected a national executive consisting of a president, a vice-president and a secretary-treasurer, and developed proposals for collective bargaining with the employer. Membership dues were set at \$1 a month per member, an amount that was reduced to 75 cents after January 1, 1947.⁴

During the first few years of the TEA's existence, a handful of dedicated officers expended considerable efforts to sign up eligible workers. Given that membership and dues were completely voluntary, organizing agents represented an impressive task and difficulties were encountered in attempts to recruit members, as is revealed by the following statement by the president of the union:

The Association this year has stressed Organization, and the effectiveness of the work done is seen by the present strength of the Association following our membership drive. Some difficulty arose through lack of organized procedure. Observation made - Once we sign up a member, he never resigns: our problem is to sell the new employee.⁵

Members of the union were organized locally in units (called districts beginning in 1958)⁶ which included employees working in downtown and airport offices of the traffic department in each community served by TCA. Local executives, which were elected for a one year term by each unit, consisted of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary-treasurer and additional representatives where necessary.⁷

By 1949, membership had reached about 350 out of a total of approximately 475 eligible workers. Fifteen delegates from ten units attended the TEA's general meeting in October of that year. In some units, membership was 100 percent while in others, workers were less enthusiastic about joining the TEA.⁸ In an effort to strengthen unity and build interest in the union, the national executive attempted to visit units more frequently.⁹ Dues were raised in 1951 to \$1.25 a month per member in order to allow the union to expand its activities. The organizing of units continued and by 1953 the TEA reported that despite the high turnover in staff, a large percentage of those eligible for membership had joined the union.¹⁰ By 1962, the union comprised slightly over 1,500 members. At this time, there were almost 1,600 workers covered by the agreement.¹¹

The Rand Formula was included in the collective agreement in 1955 after delegates to the 1954 general meeting voted in favour of automatic dues checkoff.¹² Though there had been calls to incorporate the Rand Formula since 1951, delegates had decided against pursuing this line of action because they believed the voluntary nature

of the union gave it prestige in the eyes of members and the company.¹³ In the early years, the TEA was very much a company union. Indeed, in referring to management, the union president stated that "we should fulfill their faith in us, proving ourselves more an Association, less a Union."¹⁴ In 1949, attempts were made to launch an official union publication called Airscoop, but the latter was ineffective because, as the union reported, "as it is read by every level of management, each edition necessitated careful screening and required the deletion of practically everything worthwhile."¹⁵ This position reflected the TEA's concern with maintaining amicable relations with the employer.

During the union's formative years, its activities consisted primarily in organizing new units, holding conventions for the main purpose of determining contract proposals and negotiating collective agreements. Very little effort was expended on officer and membership education and on communications programmes. Participation in union business such as local meetings and elections was minimal. The president of the TEA, who along with other national officers was elected for a one year term by delegates to the annual general meeting, was responsible for most of the union's affairs. In 1951, a second vice-president position was established to assist in the running of the union and to ensure continuity at the executive level.¹⁶ In 1953, a third vice-president position was created, thereby providing each of the three regions - central, western and eastern - with a representative on the national executive.¹⁷ From its inception in 1946, the union displayed much instability because of frequent changes in the presidency and other executive positions. Indeed, in 1949-1950, there were four changes in the presidency and in 1956-1957 there were six different presidents. These changes, as well

as the part-time, unpaid status of executive members, weak membership support and low dues all limited the union's activities and effectiveness.

Beginning in the late 1950s, the union underwent important changes that resulted in a stronger organization. Robert Dye, who became president in 1958, resolved to increase membership interest and involvement by improving communications.¹⁸ He was well aware that membership apathy was partly due to the lack of information and poor communications. The number of bulletins and newsletters sent to members increased dramatically following Dye's election as president. He received congratulatory messages from district chairpersons who noted that the growing amount of information made available to members had prompted an upswing in interest in the union.¹⁹ The president expressed disappointment, however, that the majority of chairpersons had not responded to the important questions concerning working conditions included in his bulletins. He stated:

I can readily appreciate that in these past few months the situation may have been reversed but now that I am in the president's position I wish to reiterate that I shall give you efficient leadership and in consequence shall expect the same type of leadership at the local level. If we are to make this association worthwhile, then let us commence to put our respective 'houses' in order and endeavour to make the name of this association one that gains respect and confidence amongst our own members and kindred sections of the Air Transport Industry.²⁰

The Toronto district chairperson urged the membership to give its support and not allow the union to stagnate and "sink into oblivion in the arms of some large and powerful union."²¹ Passenger agents considered themselves to be professionals and any affiliation with an outside group might tarnish such an image. It was emphatically stated that "we are an Association and NOT a Union."²² They also feared the encroachment by a full

trade union which was "communist or teamsters dominated."²³ It is clear that passenger agents felt that being associated with TCA carried a form of social status and that they tended to identify more with the company than with their union or the labour movement despite growing problems in the workplace. The following statement by the union president summarizes well the prevailing mood within the SEA at the time:

LET US FACE FACTS... we are holding back on our activities, due to the restrictive and negative thinking on the part of many of us. We TELL YOU that we cannot permit this withholding to continue. I can assure each one of you, and if you have listened to the tapes of the AGM you will have heard me state, that if we ever fail as an Association (an Association whose first thoughts are to its members and not to the personal betterment of one or 2 individuals) then we shall be inviting disaster. By this I mean we shall be in such a weak state of preparedness that we should be easily 'snowballed' into one of the larger Trade Unions with an American affiliation.²⁴

During the late 1950s, passenger agents began taking a close look at the role and structure of their union and deliberated the need for a salaried full-time president to provide a sense of direction and stability, especially in the face of a company that was expanding beyond its 'happy family' boundaries.²⁵ This arrangement would also help dissuade the president from accepting a promotion with the company, a problem that had plagued the union since its inception. At the SEA's 1961 general meeting, it was decided that a full-time president would be elected on a trial basis for one year.²⁶ Recognizing the value of this experience for their union, delegates to the 1962 general meeting voted to establish the position on a permanent basis, effective as of the next annual general meeting.²⁷ When the new constitution was drafted, it stipulated that the office would be full-time and carry an annual salary, and that the president would be elected every two years by delegates attending the general meeting.²⁸ Paid representation was of course

costlier and was one of the main reasons the union doubled membership monthly dues to \$3.50 in 1963²⁹ (this followed closely on the heels of an increase in 1960, when dues were raised from \$1.25 to \$1.75).³⁰

Even though the president had more time at his disposal to fulfill the duties of the office since taking on the responsibility on a full-time basis, much work needed to be done in order to build the union. The president pursued his information and communications campaign and undertook to visit all districts in order to build interest in the SEA. Noting that he had received numerous complaints from individual members, the president urged district officers to initiate more frequent personal contacts with the rank and file and pressure management into agreeing to implement joint monthly meetings to resolve issues.³¹ The high turnover of district executives, however, greatly limited the effectiveness of the union. The president also encouraged the regional vice-presidents to attend as many district meetings as possible. The dispersion of the membership across the country created difficulties in servicing. In order to reduce the work of chairpersons and render them more effective in assisting members, especially in view of the growth in membership, the union decided, in the early 1960s, to authorize the formation of separate districts for downtown and airport locations in larger bases.³² The bases in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal were eventually subdivided during the 1960s and 1970s.

Because of failed attempts to create a research committee which would help strengthen the SEA during negotiations, the onus of carrying out the little research that time and money allowed was on the president and on a few other dedicated individuals. With the increase in activities and the limited assistance available to the president, the

latter found himself saddled with much of the union's business. In the mid-1960s, he described his situation in the following way:

I trust that you are all fully aware of the gigantic task you have given me as President of this Association, in attempting to present the findings of the recent Annual Meeting to the Company in the form of the Association's proposals for negotiations. To say the very least, the task is somewhat awesome and I trust you are all agreed on this and will do your utmost to be both patient and co-operative... All this is being accomplished with part time clerical assistance (mostly my wife), no office (my dining room), constant phone calls (many collect), plus the usual amount of correspondence from all sources... My average working day last week was in excess of 14 hours, with many nights but 3 or 4 hours rest. The matter is serious, any ideas?³³

The centralization of power within the office of the president not only resulted in one individual being overworked, but limited the development of strong officers knowledgeable in the affairs of the union. Training for officers to allow them to fully understand the collective agreement and effectively perform their duties was urgently required. This was especially crucial because an increasing number of changes were being made to the collective agreement and also because of worsening labour-management relations.

The Reorganization of the Union

By the mid-1960s, questions concerning the strength of a small independent union and its ability to survive were being raised within the ranks of the SEA, and some members talked of joining other labour groups.³⁴ A letter to the president from the Toronto district chairperson summed up the reasons for contemplating such a move:

My personal feeling is that we would be much stronger and better organized if we were affiliated with other trade unions and with a central labour body. I think it would make our efforts toward Research and

Education much more productive and beneficial.³⁵

Despite the fact that a motion was passed at the 1964 general meeting to look into the possibility of affiliation with the CLC, some delegates believed that there was "a deep-rooted objection on the part of the majority of the membership to the Association becoming an integral part of any outside organization."³⁶ A district chairperson objected to this proposed move arguing that the CLC produced subversive and communist material.³⁷ The SEA nevertheless applied for affiliation in the spring of 1965.³⁸ The CLC, however, was reluctant to grant certification and responded:

As you may be aware, it is the policy of the Congress to encourage groups or organizations to join with appropriate Congress affiliates having jurisdiction in their respective fields rather than extend direct affiliation. With this in mind, I would suggest that your Association make every effort to finalize arrangements for incorporation within an existing Congress affiliate.³⁹

The union expressed disappointment with the decision and reminded the CLC that this action was not conducive to its objective of making inroads in the world of white-collar workers.⁴⁰ Passenger agents were nonetheless forced to reexamine their position and discussions began, once again, on the possibility of affiliation or merger with another union. Amalgamation with the CALFAA, which had been raised in the past, was reconsidered. There was fear that absorption by a larger group such as the IAMAW, the UAW or the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Stations Employees (BRAC) could "reduce the association to the status of a small cog in a big machine."⁴¹ Delegates to the 1966 general meeting voted overwhelmingly to support the union's continued existence as an independent organization. The name Canadian Air Line Employees' Association (CALEA), which

had been proposed at the 1965 general meeting, was formally adopted (the name, however, was being used as early as late 1965).⁴² It is clear that there was a recognition that fundamental changes needed to be brought to the structure of the organization. Minutes of the meeting indicate that:

He [the president] reminded delegates that the transportation industry was evolving with a rapidity unlike anything previously known. Thus, the Association must itself evolve to meet the challenge, and this would mean making necessary changes. Finally, he said, if a boat did not rock from time to time, how could you be sure it was moving at all?⁴³

A redraft of the constitution undertaken in 1965 was approved in principle at the general meeting in September 1966.⁴⁴ While some changes were implemented immediately, the new constitution was formally adopted at a special general meeting in April 1967.⁴⁵ Through a restructuring, the membership was divided into five geographic regions - pacific, western, central, eastern and atlantic - with directors elected biennially from each region. The directors then voted for a first and second vice-president from within their ranks. The president was to be elected by the entire membership every two years (changed to every three years in 1968) rather than by delegates attending the annual general meeting. Executive authority in most areas now resided with the board of directors instead of with the president as in the past. This change aimed to prevent the concentration of power in the office of the president. Dye, who had provided continuity as president for nine years, chose not to seek a renewal of his mandate when the first membership-wide election took place, and John Hayes was elected as president.⁴⁶ CALEA headquarters, which had previously been located in the president's hometown, was permanently established in Toronto⁴⁷ (this was changed to the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto or the county of Peel in 1979).⁴⁸ The union

began hiring office staff for the first time. Finally, the dues structure was changed to provide the union with greater financial stability to carry out needed projects. The set dollar amount was abandoned and dues were assessed at 1 percent of the equivalent basic gross monthly salary, thereby pegging dues to salaries.

Delegates to the 1966 general meeting had approved in principle the hiring of a business manager to relieve the president of some responsibilities, but the union encountered much difficulty in finding a suitable candidate. An interim arrangement was made with the Air Line Employees' Association (ALEA) in December 1967 whereby Dr. M.B. Wigderson, director of the ALEA's negotiations department, was made available to the CALEA as acting business manager to handle negotiations with Air Canada in 1968.⁴⁹ The CALEA had previously established liaison with the ALEA, which represented a number of airline employees in the United States, to explore the possibility of mutual assistance.⁵⁰ When the CALEA's national executive met with ALEA representatives in March 1969 to discuss future cooperation, a formal agreement was drawn up whereby the ALEA would provide negotiations, grievance and public relations assistance to the CALEA.⁵¹ Wigderson's services were retained for another year, during which time he participated as a member of the CALEA's research and negotiations committee.⁵² (Because the parties could not agree on service fee arrangements, the partnership was dissolved in late 1972.)⁵³ In the context of the growth in membership and the proliferation of issues requiring attention, the CALEA's 1969 general meeting passed a motion establishing new full-time salaried positions to help administer the collective agreement and to work with other labour organizations. Two passenger agents were appointed as business representatives in late 1969 and took

office in January 1970.⁵⁴ Two more such positions were added in 1973⁵⁵ and an extra two in 1974.⁵⁶

The decision to remain independent led the CALEA to reapply for affiliation with the CLC in early 1967. This affiliation, which was granted effective March 1, 1967,⁵⁷ was considered quite significant because it provided protection from raids by other unions. It also meant that the CALEA was "now accepted as a fully-fledged member of the trade union movement in North America."⁵⁸ More importantly, the CALEA now had access to the CLC's research and information resources and gained a voice at conventions dealing with Canadian labour policies and programmes. Following changes to the constitution in 1967, affiliation at the district level with provincial labour federations became possible. The Vancouver district was the first to take advantage of this new opportunity, and joined the British Columbia Federation of Labour in late 1968.⁵⁹ Another indication of the CALEA's changing direction was the decision in 1968 to refer to the organization as a union rather than as an association.⁶⁰

The Growing Strength of the Union

The whole period of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s proved to be crucial building years for the union as it underwent an important political reorientation as well as structural modifications. Indeed, over the course of this period, the union matured politically, becoming more progressive in its policies and militant in its actions. In addition, the CALEA evolved from a small independent organization representing Air Canada passenger agents in the early 1970s into a larger union comprising several bargaining units from different airlines in the mid-1980s. In the summer of 1985, the

CALEA merged with the UAW-Canada (which became the CAW-Canada shortly thereafter), and the local union continued to expand thereafter. The union's membership grew from slightly over 2,000 workers in the early 1970s to approximately 4,000 in the early 1990s. The number of members working for Air Canada increased from slightly over 2,000 in the early 1970s to approximately 3,300 in the early 1990s (see Tables 3 and 4). Throughout this period, over 90 percent, but usually between 95 and 100 percent of workers at Air Canada on dues check-off were members of the union.

Since the early years of its existence, the union expressed a desire to increase its size by including in its ranks workers from other airlines. However, its financial situation and its constitutional structure, which only provided for the representation of TCA/Air Canada sales department employees, prevented the union from undertaking any such venture. Although the union had attempted, in the early- to mid-1960s, to organize TCA sales workers in the United States and in the United Kingdom where the company maintained offices, the project was abandoned when sufficient support failed to materialize.⁶¹

The name change to CALEA from TCA-SEA in 1966 (after TCA had become known as Air Canada) marked the first move away from the union's identification with a single air carrier. The union began pursuing a fundamentally new direction when it amended its constitution in 1967 to allow for the organizing of groups of workers from other airlines.⁶² The CALEA made these changes in order to grow and remain a viable organization. It stepped up efforts to attract new groups of airline workers at a time when other unions began seeking representation of such workers. This was especially important in the wake of a decision by Transair Ltd. sales employees to join the IAMAW

in the spring of 1967.⁶³ By adopting measures to facilitate the expansion of the union into new units, the CALEA moved closer to the labour movement's ideology and practice of attempting to provide more workers with the benefits derived from collective organization.

Following unsuccessful attempts in the late 1960s to organize reservations, traffic and ramp service employees at PWA Ltd., the union finally obtained certification to represent this group of workers in August 1971.⁶⁴ The establishment of this first new unit was rapidly followed by the formation of a third unit in August 1972, when the CALEA was certified as bargaining agent for most employees in Air Canada's finance branch located in Winnipeg. A first agreement was reached only after a twelve week strike during the summer of 1973.⁶⁵ In addition, even though the union had been recognized by TCA/Air Canada as the bargaining representative for passenger agents since 1946, the CALEA finally applied for formal certification which it received in February 1972. The absence of certification had come to light in 1964 when the SEA corresponded with the Canadian Labour Relations Board (CLRB) about its desire to change its name to CALEA, and the government agency pointed out that its records did not indicate that the union had been certified as bargaining agent for any group of employees of the crown carrier.⁶⁶ No action had ever been taken to amend the initial certificate issued in 1946 to the Canadian Air Line Passenger Agents Association by the Wartime Labour Relations Board.

Demands for more servicing from the many districts of the Air Canada unit, coupled with the high cost of adding two new units and extra headquarters staff, strained CALEA's financial resources. As a result, dues were raised by 50 percent in 1972, from

1 percent to 1.5 percent of basic gross salary.⁶⁷ This change in dues, supported by two-thirds of the delegates to the annual general meeting, angered many passenger agents and brought to the fore some important problems within the union. Unhappy with the dues increase and critical of the methods and policies of the national executive, a small group of airport passenger agents in Toronto formed a watchdog committee and circulated a petition asking the president and directors to resign.⁶⁸ While some passenger agents signed the document, most district chairpersons and agents who responded refused to lend their support regardless of how they felt about the dues adjustment.⁶⁹ Shortly thereafter, the committee disbanded, claiming it lacked the resources in time and money to wage a major campaign to garner membership support to oust the union's national leadership.⁷⁰ Though he received full support from the executive, Keith Kerr nonetheless stepped down from the presidency in August 1973 to return to his job as business representative, a position he had reluctantly vacated to become president in the fall of 1971. Two regional directors also resigned.⁷¹ Tom Saunders, as first vice-president, assumed the presidency until elections later in 1973 when he was returned to office.⁷²

The watchdog committee incident provided passenger agents with an opportunity to voice complaints about the union. A few district chairpersons remarked that the CALEA lacked credibility with its members and one wrote, "at the present all of Timmins CALEA members and I do mean all feel little for CALEA. Timmins has asked for little and when we have asked the answers have been very unsatisfactory."⁷³ Some district officers believed that the national executive was responsible for creating the opportunity for this type of committee to approach the membership because of the

relative absence of communications from union headquarters which meant that the rank and file was not being properly consulted and informed about the activities of the CALEA.⁷⁴

The union leadership refused to accept total blame for this situation, arguing that the majority of passenger agents could not be persuaded to attend district membership meetings nor take much interest in the activities of the CALEA. The high turnover rate of district officers exacerbated the problem as it led to instability and a lack of continuity. It was nonetheless clear that the CALEA was without a communications and education policy and strategy that would help address these internal issues. The national executive decided to take action to improve communications with members by producing more information bulletins and, in 1974 the union began publishing a bimonthly newsletter called Skyways which was distributed to all members.⁷⁵

In late 1972, the union also undertook a review of its structure and organizing policies. A special committee report tabled in March 1973 recommended that expansion be very carefully planned to avoid providing less service to the existing membership. It was felt that while growth was important, the CALEA's policy on organizing should not be solely driven by the desire to become a large union.⁷⁶ The president, however, later expressed fear that if the CALEA did not unionize other groups of workers within the air transportation industry, it risked being absorbed by a larger labour organization and losing its autonomy as an airline workers' union.⁷⁷

This ambivalent stance resulted in the CALEA cautiously continuing with its unionization efforts. The union turned down several organizing requests and some of those it pursued ended in failure due to its inability to secure the required number of

signed applications or because of denied certification. Other organizing drives met with success. In May 1975, the CALEA obtained certification on behalf of reservations and traffic employees at EPA Ltd.⁷⁸ and, in January 1976, it became the bargaining agent for flight attendants at EPA Ltd. Attempts at negotiating a first agreement for this latter group succeeded only following a four week strike in the summer of 1976.⁷⁹

New problems and challenges accompanied the CALEA's expansion efforts. In December 1976, subsequent to months of bargaining, work-to-rule campaigns, rotating strikes, a lockout by Air Canada and a raid by the IAMAW, the CALEA lost its certification for the finance branch employees.⁸⁰ Complaints of unfair labour practices brought against Air Canada were dismissed by the CLRB,⁸¹ but charges filed with the CLC against the IAMAW led to the imposition of sanctions against the latter union.⁸² The loss of over 600 members to the IAMAW, which raided the CALEA during a major labour conflict, had a detrimental effect on the union. This situation turned out to be a costly learning experience. The union became extremely cautious and temporarily abandoned opportunities to organize new groups of workers.

The period beginning in the mid-1970s proved to be a difficult time for the CALEA. The onset of the economic crisis coupled with the state's anti-inflation legislation and employers' hardened labour relations stance weakened the union's bargaining power. The union was also faced with a growing complexity of internal issues as well as with greater demands for servicing from the membership. This situation prompted the CALEA to reorganize its headquarters operations in January 1977 in order to establish a clearer delineation of staff duties and responsibilities and improve its ability to respond more effectively to the varied and difficult challenges brought about

by ongoing internal and external changes. Three distinct departments were created for this purpose, namely administration, communications and labour relations.⁸³

The CALEA began dealing more actively with the problem of continued membership apathy. Poor attendance at district meetings, lack of support during negotiations and organizing campaigns, compounded by an uncritical approach to management programmes and ideas, and at times even outright opposition to the union were common problems in many districts. Training for officers was also insufficient as confirmed by a report of the education committee established in the summer of 1978.⁸⁴ The union responded to this state of affairs with more widespread communications and educational activities. To improve the dissemination of information, a communications coordinator was appointed in 1977⁸⁵ (called director of communications and education beginning in 1981). Initiatives were undertaken which aimed to build a membership knowledgeable about major questions relevant, not only to passenger agents' working conditions, but also to the labour movement in general, and one that was committed to goals for change. Skyways, which had evolved from a newsletter to a magazine, took on a more educational orientation and included articles on key labour issues. Due to insufficient resources, the union decided, in 1976, to hold biennial instead of annual general meetings each odd-numbered year, thereby allowing additional funds to be channelled into communications and education programmes.⁸⁶ In addition, in 1975 it was decided that district representatives would hold office for a period of two years instead of one, a move that would provide more continuity at the local level⁸⁷ (this was changed to a three year term in 1989).⁸⁸ Moreover, beginning in 1979, as a means of encouraging agents to participate more actively in the union, district chairpersons were

required to hold membership meetings at least once every three months.⁸⁹ In order to expand its communications and training material on various matters of growing concern such as technological change, part-time work, pensions and health and safety, and to ensure better preparation of background material for collective bargaining, the union hired a research analyst in 1980.⁹⁰ During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the CALEA implemented various training programmes aimed at developing skilled officers capable of performing their duties effectively and of encouraging agents to play a greater role in union affairs. In addition, the CALEA promoted the participation of members, officers and staff in various courses, seminars, conferences and committees set up by the CLC and other umbrella labour organizations.⁹¹

While the CALEA recognized that highly trained representatives as well as a knowledgeable membership were essential for the viability and vitality of the union, problems such as limited resources and heavier workloads brought on by greater demands for servicing compounded by a high turnover of district officers continued to hinder its efforts to place greater emphasis on much needed communications, training and research.

Organizing Projects

Another major area of focus for the union during the late 1970s and early 1980s was its organizing policies and projects. Until the mid-1970s, the CALEA's organizing approach had been conservative. Consequently, after thirty years, it comprised only four bargaining units whereas other unions had been much more active in increasing their membership. Following a serious examination of its expansion activities and policies, the CALEA concluded that its small size was often its greatest liability and therefore

decided in late 1977 to adopt a more aggressive approach to organizing. A full-time organizer attached to the labour relations department was appointed in 1978.⁹² In 1979, the union amended its constitution to allow for the organizing of workers employed in industries related to, or associated with, air transportation.⁹³

Shortly thereafter, a successful organizing drive resulted in the CALEA obtaining certification for employees in PWA Ltd.'s catering department in May 1978, thereby creating a second PWA Ltd. bargaining unit.⁹⁴ Following the merger of Transair Ltd. with PWA Ltd. in the fall of 1979, the CLRB conducted a representation vote amongst traffic employees who were affiliated with two different unions to determine the bargaining agent for this group of workers. In September 1980, following a strong organizing campaign, the CALEA was certified to represent the former employees of Transair Ltd., thus replacing the IAMAW.⁹⁵ The CALEA also attempted to displace the IAMAW as the bargaining agent for other groups of airline workers. Of significance was a membership drive conducted in the summer of 1978 amongst employees in Air Canada's finance branch in an effort to regain certification for this group.⁹⁶ The application to replace the IAMAW as bargaining agent was dismissed by the CLRB on the grounds that the CALEA was not supported by a majority of the workers in the unit.⁹⁷ This failed endeavour was only one of several unsuccessful unionization projects undertaken during the late 1970s.

In its organizing efforts, the CALEA encountered new types of obstacles and challenges. In March 1979, it was certified as the bargaining agent for traffic, maintenance and ramp workers employed by Great Lakes Airlines Ltd.⁹⁸ which became known as Air Ontario Ltd. in April 1981. Attempts to secure a first agreement lasted

over a year and a settlement was reached only after a three week strike in the spring of 1980.⁹⁹ In November 1979, the CALEA obtained certification to represent traffic, maintenance and ramp workers as well as flight attendants at Norcanair Ltd. This followed a bitter battle which resulted in twenty employees being fired during the organizing drive. The CLRB ordered the workers reinstated, but the company obstinately refused to bargain with the union. Strike action, which commenced in early September 1980, was not widely supported by workers.¹⁰⁰ By mid-1981, in spite of its certification, the union had lost contact with members at Norcanair Ltd.¹⁰¹ In March 1979, the CALEA was certified as bargaining agent for workers at Caramac Travel Consultants Ltd., a subsidiary of EPA Ltd. However, the company refused to commence negotiations and shortly thereafter ceased operations.¹⁰²

The unionization of maintenance workers at Austin Airways Ltd. turned out to be another major battle which heavily taxed the union. Even though the CALEA was certified to represent these workers in March 1980, the company appealed the decision and, because of a technicality, the union was required to reapply for certification which it obtained in November 1980. A first agreement was finally reached in February 1981, but only after the CLRB upheld charges of unfair labour practices filed against the company on account of its refusal to commence collective bargaining.¹⁰³ Negotiations for a second contract undertaken in the summer of 1983 broke down and workers went on strike when the company demanded that the clause on mandatory payment of union dues by all employees be removed from the agreement, a change which would transfer the responsibility for the collection of dues to the CALEA.¹⁰⁴ The settlement, which was reached following a two month strike and shortly after the CLRB upheld the union's

complaint of unfair labour practice, included the retention of the Rand Formula.¹⁰⁵ This major struggle could have been averted had the 1984 amendments to the Canada Labour Code guaranteeing the Rand Formula for all workers in federally-related industries¹⁰⁶ been introduced earlier. In the summer of 1985, in response to actions by some workers to have the certification revoked, the CLRB ordered a representation vote which resulted in the majority of members electing to sever its ties with the CALEA.¹⁰⁷

Not only did the CALEA encounter financial and other major difficulties in its efforts to organize workers of smaller companies and negotiate first collective agreements, it also faced criticism from its membership which felt that too many resources were being expended in organizing small groups of workers. In light of these problems, the union decided in late 1979 to impose a moratorium on new organizing initiatives.¹⁰⁸ In reviewing the CALEA's organizing projects and negotiations of first contracts during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the union's legal advisor concluded that the many failures were partly due to the inexperience of bargaining representatives attempting to impose upon intransigent employers collective agreements reflective of the contract with Air Canada.¹⁰⁹ The moratorium was lifted at the end of 1981 and the CALEA restated its desire to expand its membership in order to continue as a viable independent trade union and reaffirmed its obligation towards unorganized workers.¹¹⁰ This was in line with the CALEA's position that small groups of workers not be denied representation simply because of their size, as this was tantamount to abrogating union responsibilities.

Despite its objectives, the CALEA was not very successful in creating new

bargaining units over the course of the next few years. In July 1984, it was certified to represent casual ramp attendants at PWA Ltd.¹¹¹ In addition, in March 1985, certification was obtained for sales, clerical and warehouse workers at Emery Air Freight Corp. in Toronto despite company tactics to defeat unionization efforts.¹¹² The union, however, failed to negotiate a first contract, thus leaving workers unorganized.¹¹³ In 1981, two units were created when Eagle Flight Catering purchased PWA Ltd.'s catering department and, because the new company fell under provincial jurisdiction, the union was obliged to enter into two separate collective agreements to cover members in British Columbia as well as in Alberta.¹¹⁴ In 1988, all Eagle Flight Catering workers in Alberta and most of those in British Columbia found themselves without jobs when the company lost its contract with CAIL.¹¹⁵ Steels Aviation Services Ltd. later took over the catering company and, in early 1993, was itself purchased by Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd.¹¹⁶

Integrating into the Labour Movement

In conjunction with its decision in the late 1970s to more actively pursue the unionization of other groups of airline workers, the CALEA sought to move into the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement as a means of gaining strength in the context of the new economic and political reality. As a first step towards this goal, the CALEA affiliated with all provincial labour federations in 1978.¹¹⁷ Until then, the membership remained outside such labour organizations except for the Air Canada unit in Vancouver which had affiliated with the British Columbia Federation of Labour as early as 1969. In 1980, the CALEA became a member of the International Transport

Workers' Federation,¹¹⁸ an international trade union organization with a mandate to defend and further the economic and social interests of transport workers and their unions.

During the first three decades of its existence, the CALEA had been isolationist and had not paid much attention to broader social and political issues espoused by the labour movement. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, the union became increasingly concerned with such matters. An important milestone was reached in 1983, when delegates to the general meeting charted a new direction for the CALEA through the adoption of a number of progressive broad-based policies aimed at: making collective bargaining a more open process; supporting and assisting the CLC and the New Democratic Party and other groups in fighting against attacks on social gains and the democratic rights of workers; improving technological change provisions to protect jobs and employment rights; placing a higher priority on questions of health and safety, including the establishment of minimum standards for the use of VDTs; enhancing the overall working conditions of part-time passenger agents; promoting equality between women and men; and, supporting access to universal, publicly-funded and non-profit childcare. Other general policies focused on pensions, overtime work, the promotion of unionized travel services, and the fight against concessions at the bargaining table.¹¹⁹

Moreover, during the first half of the 1980s, the CALEA made significant contributions to the struggles of Canadian workers. Two successful arbitration awards which involved employees' rights to disseminate political or union material and messages in the workplace were considered by the labour movement to be major victories for workers. The first case related to Air Canada's refusal to allow union officers to

distribute CLC produced pamphlets expressing support for the New Democratic Party during the 1980 federal election.¹²⁰ The second case, which occurred during the 1984-1985 round of contract talks, focused on Air Canada's decision to forbid agents in uniform from wearing union buttons while at work.¹²¹ The CALEA also became more involved in lobbying governments to protect workers' rights and economic well-being. In the fall of 1982, the union actively participated in the labour movement's campaign to oppose the federal government's wage restraint legislation which directly affected passenger agents. Through the development of educational pamphlets and posters it succeeded in getting over 2,000 of its members to sign protest cards addressed to their local Members of Parliament and the government.¹²²

Beginning in the spring of 1984, the CALEA cooperated with other airline unions, including the CALFAA, the IAMAW and the BRAC in the fight against the deregulation of the air transportation industry. The theme of this first major anti-deregulation campaign, 'Deregulation won't fly in Canada', which reflected the position adopted by the CLC, focused on three key issues: airline deregulation would cost jobs, pose serious safety hazards to the flying public and to workers, and negatively affect overall service to consumers. The CALEA's activities involved both membership education and intensive political lobbying at the district and national levels. Thousands of airline workers, their families and friends demonstrated support by signing anti-deregulation cards which were then collected and presented to local Members of Parliament. In addition, CALEA representatives testified before the Canadian Transport Commission about the probable dangers of deregulation.¹²³ The union also received much media coverage and thus actively participated in the public debate surrounding deregulation.

Merger with the CAW-Canada

By the mid-1980s, the CALEA was facing serious external and internal difficulties. Airline deregulation, with the consequent reorganization of the industry through mergers and acquisitions, as well as general attacks on labour by the state and employers in the form of regressive legislation, concessionary bargaining and impending technological change presented the union with major challenges. Despite attempts by the CALEA to solidify its base through the organizing of new bargaining units, numerous problems, including employer resistance and the high cost of organizing and servicing small units, had hindered its expansion efforts over the years. The union had also been restricted in its ability to develop adequate education and communications programmes, conduct research on issues of mounting concern to workers and provide in-depth service to a membership scattered across the country. Given the growing complexity of labour relations and collective agreements, the union was often forced to divert resources from these important projects to collective bargaining and contract administration. Financial difficulties arising from the growth in activities and an increase in full-time paid staff also plagued the union. It thus lacked the bargaining power, collective strength and resources required to protect members' job security, wages, benefits and workplace rights in the context of the fundamental reorganization of the industry and the worsening political and economic climate. Furthermore, the CALEA did not have sufficient resources to remain viable in the event of a prolonged strike because it had only established a member emergency assistance fund in 1983.

In light of these very unfavourable circumstances, the CALEA's board of directors began deliberating options for the union's future in May 1984. It decided in

August of that year to explore the possibility and viability of merging with another union to secure access to greater resources which would provide the membership with additional overall strength to face an uncertain future.¹²⁴ A special committee was formed to identify a number of unions which could be considered for association. Unions with philosophies and policies not fundamentally different from those of the CALEA, and with experience and knowledge of the transport industry were specifically targeted.¹²⁵ Once the CALEA had narrowed down its list of candidate unions, it met to discuss the feasibility of a merger with the CALFAA, the UAW, the IAMAW, the CUPE and the CWC.¹²⁶

Following these initial discussions, a decision was taken to pursue talks with the UAW, which represented over 125,000 Canadian workers in the automobile sector and other industries. The UAW was the most desirable candidate organization for a merger because of its strength in collective bargaining and its servicing, educational, communications, public relations, research, organizing and strike support resources, combined with a progressive and strong Canadian leadership. Moreover, the UAW was willing to accommodate the CALEA's desire to maintain its structure and identity.¹²⁷ A tentative agreement was reached and a proposed set of by-laws adopted in early February 1985 following in-depth negotiations between the two unions. The package was subsequently ratified and endorsed by the CALEA's board of directors and the international executive board of the UAW.¹²⁸ The proposed merger agreement received overwhelming approval during a special general meeting of CALEA delegates held in April 1985.¹²⁹ Shortly thereafter, the membership voted by an 82 percent margin to endorse the merger. The merger went into effect on July 1, 1985, with a transition

period lasting until the end of that year. The CALEA became known as the National Amalgamated Local Union of Airline Workers, UAW.¹³⁰ The merger was completed in time for delegates of the local union to attend the founding convention of the CAW-Canada in September 1985 when the UAW-Canada undertook to sever its ties with the international body. When the UAW-Canada officially completed its separation at the international convention of the UAW in the spring of 1986, the National Amalgamated Local Union of Airline Workers (local 2213) remained with the CAW-Canada.¹³¹

In order to preserve the particular identity of airline workers, a Canadian Airline Workers Council was created to act as a key consultative forum within the CAW-Canada for the local union and for all other workers in air transportation or related industries and services who would join the CAW-Canada in the future. The latter's constitution took precedence over the local union's by-laws. In addition, the biennial general meeting, which was to be held in even-numbered years, was maintained as the local union's governing body¹³² (it was decided at the 1988 general meeting to hold the convention every three years).¹³³ Finally, dues were reduced from 1.5 percent to 1.35 percent of basic gross monthly salary, with an additional two dollar monthly fee for the membership emergency assistance fund¹³⁴ (in 1991, delegates to the general meeting voted to revert to the 1.5 percent formula).¹³⁵

Although elections were held in the fall of 1985, at which time Cheryl Kryzaniwsky became president (the first woman to hold that office since the late 1950s when Phyllis Friend had been president for a brief period), the CALEA's executive structure was maintained and the incumbent officers stayed in their positions until the end of the transition period. The new national executive board of the local union, which

consisted of the president, vice-presidents and the secretary-treasurer, assumed office on January 1, 1986 for a three year period. This body replaced the CALEA's board of directors.¹³⁵

The by-laws of the local union included provisions to ensure that its district, regional and national structures remain as similar as possible to those of the CALEA. The units, however, were reorganized in order to reduce their numbers.¹³⁷ Moreover, the CALEA's labour relations department was integrated into the CAW-Canada's national headquarters.¹³⁸ Staff representatives (called business representatives under the CALEA) were reassigned areas of responsibility, but airline workers generally continued to be serviced by the same people.¹³⁹ This was made possible by the merger agreement which included provisions for the employment of four of the CALEA's five business representatives and three other CALEA employees.¹⁴⁰ The merger also brought about changes in the area of contract administration. Under the CALEA's structure, the bargaining committee was dissolved once a new collective agreement was signed, and the business representatives assumed responsibility for contract maintenance. With the CAW-Canada, however, the bargaining committee continued to administer the negotiated contract.¹⁴¹ The bargaining committee was elected by a meeting of district chairpersons and vice-presidents of each bargaining unit instead of being appointed by the board of directors as had been the case under the CALEA.¹⁴² The local's president also participated in bargaining sessions and national representatives were designated to assist during contract talks. Collective agreement ratification procedures were similar to the CALEA's, with the exception that a strike vote required a two-thirds majority instead of the former union's 50 percent.¹⁴³

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

Post-Merger Development

The CALEA membership experienced the benefits of the merger in the form of improved financial resources, increased educational opportunities, additional resource material and expertise in a number of areas of major concern to labour and greater bargaining clout. Though not everyone was satisfied with the merger, interviews with union officials and rank and file workers reveal that important benefits did indeed flow from the association. Two union representatives provided their thoughts on the merger:

We didn't have the resources that we have now with the CAW, we couldn't afford much. As far as that goes, I think it's much, much, much better now. And the same thing with our bargaining committee. Our bargaining committee wasn't permanent, it was just the business reps. Everything that had to do with the maintenance was the business reps. The other bargaining person went back as a vice-president or a director or a district chair. Those areas knew the collective agreement better and we'd have to contact the few business reps to get an interpretation of the collective agreement, and they were all in the headquarters office in Toronto. With the merger, we still have our autonomy in running the individual local the way we want it run. We're a small local in a big, big organization. But we're a very high profile local because we're the airline division, which the CAW had been trying to get into and we're the first ones. Financially we're still doing good. Bob [White] comes in to negotiate what you want. Bob, I don't think, ever negotiated giving concessions or going in with that attitude, but he wouldn't have gotten involved until the eleventh hour. I'm sure he could've done a lot better in the eleventh hour than we did.

With what we've faced in the airline industry over the last eight or nine years, I shudder to think of what we would have been able to do under CALEA. We would not even have been able to hold our own, let alone make some of the progress that we've been still able to make on behalf of the people we represent... The CALEA merger in 1985 was before the devastation, just before. It's interesting the foresight of the people who made the decision to merge. I mean, a lot of the decision was made, in my opinion, on the fact that the Progressive Conservative government had just gotten elected in Ottawa and that our members were under federal jurisdiction. And I think that some people, although they could not have ever envisioned that it would be this bad, knew that four years of Tory rule in Ottawa was going to make a difference to our members, let alone

nine. And now that we've had that - and God forbid maybe some more, but anyway - it was really incredible foresight. From a leadership point of view, anybody who's been involved, I mean I don't think there's a day that goes by that we don't thank our lucky stars that the decision was made when it was made.

The merger facilitated the local union's increased involvement in political action related to transportation and other areas. True to its commitment, the CAW-Canada, in conjunction with the CLC, continued the fight against deregulation.¹⁴⁴ It also undertook a major campaign to oppose the privatization of Air Canada. Beginning in mid-1987, three unions representing workers at Air Canada, namely the CAW-Canada, the CUPE and the IAMAW joined together to fight the privatization of the crown carrier by engaging in activities such as the lobbying of politicians, membership education and media relations. The major campaign, labelled 'Our Air Canada, Preserve the Trust', aimed to demonstrate that the move to privatize Air Canada was part of a process which would result in job loss, wage cuts, the deterioration in working conditions, the potential vulnerability of pensions funds, a worsening of labour-management relations, a weakening of vital national links and the destruction of a symbol of national unity and pride. In addition, the campaign attempted to dispel the myth surrounding employee share ownership plans that workers would have a greater say in the company's affairs and thus in their own future. The CAW-Canada's initiative was partly in response to the establishment of the Air Canada employee share ownership committee which had previously been formed to promote the benefits of owning shares in the company.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, beginning in the late 1980s, the union fought against the federal Conservative government's plans to privatize Canadian airports.¹⁴⁶ It also opposed new security measures introduced by this same government in the autumn of 1987 requiring the

fingerprinting and background checks of airport workers who had access to restricted areas.¹⁴⁷

During the early 1990s, the CAW-Canada, in conjunction with the CUPE and the IAMAW, undertook a massive campaign dubbed 'Stop Open Skies' aimed at resisting the implementation of free trade in the air transportation sector. Like past campaigns on other major issues, this initiative focused on membership education, the lobbying of federal, provincial and municipal politicians and media relations. The union argued that the proposed changes to the air bilateral agreement with the United States would seriously threaten the viability of the Canadian airline industry and would lead to poorer service to Canadian communities, higher air fares, the loss of a large number of air transportation jobs in Canada, limited opportunities for Canadian regional economic development and ultimately the loss of Canadian control over its airline industry. The union's efforts resulted in thousands of protest cards being signed by members and supporters. Its 'Stop Open Skies' pamphlet was reprinted in order to meet requests for additional copies from various groups. In addition, several labour federations and labour councils endorsed the union's resolution opposing open skies.¹⁴⁸

In the wake of alliance discussions between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp. as well as between Air Canada and PWA Corp., which took place in the early 1990s, the CAW-Canada's airline division embarked on a campaign to pressure the federal government to intervene and re-regulate air transportation in order to ensure the viability of a national airline industry with two Canadian-controlled carriers.¹⁴⁹ In its fight against the merger between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp., the leadership of the local union representing workers at CAIL had to contend with strong opposition from some of its own

members.¹⁵⁰

The CAW local 2213 became increasingly involved in the labour movement's activities outside of the airline arena. Most significantly, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it actively participated in the struggle against free trade¹⁵¹ as well as in the fight to oppose the federal Conservative government's goods and services tax.¹⁵² While the union was generally able to mobilize its membership into becoming involved in collective action on issues directly related to their immediate workplace and to some extent to the airline industry, it was less successful in garnering support on broader political and social issues. Because of continuing problems in the airline industry and given persistent attacks on passenger agents' working conditions, the union was in a position to channel the growing discontent into activism. The CAW-Canada was undoubtedly a good organization under which to pursue membership mobilization efforts.

Organizing Projects

With the merger, the CAW-Canada took over the responsibility for organizing new bargaining units. As promised during merger talks, the CAW-Canada mounted campaigns to organize groups of workers in the air transportation and related industries. These efforts resulted in hundreds of new members joining the union. In January 1987, passenger agents employed by Wardair Inc. merged their small independent union, the Canadian Association of Passenger Agents, with the CAW-Canada¹⁵³ (the CALEA had unsuccessfully attempted to gain certification of this group as early as 1978).¹⁵⁴ The certification was amended in October 1987 when the CLRB received a declaration that the CAW-Canada was the successor union to the Canadian Association of Passenger

Agents.¹⁵⁵ In May 1987, ground workers performing a variety of functions for TAP-Air Portugal (Canada) also merged their in-house association with the CAW-Canada.¹⁵⁶ The certification was amended in March 1988.¹⁵⁷ In September 1989, following a difficult organizing drive during which the CAW-Canada filed unfair labour practice charges against the company because of alleged threats, suspensions, demotions and firings, the union obtained certification for a group of ground workers employed at the airport in Toronto by AMR Ground Handling Services, a branch of AMR Corp., the parent company of American Airlines Inc.¹⁵⁸ In May 1990, the CAW-Canada was certified as the bargaining representative for direct marketing sales and service agents who administered Aeroplan, Air Canada's frequent flyer programme, despite threats by the company during the organizing campaign that the programme would not continue beyond 1991. These employees were included in the Air Canada-CAW local 2213 collective agreement as a separate classification and Aeroplan was extended to 1993.¹⁵⁹ In September 1991, the CAW-Canada was granted automatic certification for passenger agents working for United Airlines Inc. at the airport in Toronto.¹⁶⁰ In 1991 and 1992, other CAW-Canada organizing drives in the airline industry resulted in union representation for other groups of workers. In early 1991, passenger agents at Air Nova Inc.¹⁶¹ and at Air Atlantic Ltd.¹⁶² as well as those working for LOT Polish Airlines¹⁶³ joined the CAW-Canada. Later that year, the union was certified to represent agents and ramp workers at Ontario Express Ltd.¹⁶⁴ as well as in-flight crew schedulers at Air Canada.¹⁶⁵ In early 1992, the CAW-Canada also gained certification for a group of ground workers at Frontier Air Ltd.¹⁶⁶ and, in early 1993 it became the bargaining agent for ramp workers and mechanics employed at the airport in Dorval by

AMR Ground Handling Services.¹⁶⁷

While the CAW-Canada committed much time and effort to the unionization of small groups of workers, a significant portion of the organizing resources were absorbed by campaigns to retain members, given massive restructuring within the Canadian airline industry. In early 1987, the operations of Air Ontario Ltd. and Austin Airways Ltd. were merged and the new company was renamed Air Ontario Inc. The CAW-Canada represented ground workers at Air Ontario Ltd., but employees at Austin Airways Ltd. were not unionized (the CALEA had previously held a certification for this group in the early 1980s). In May 1988, following a vigorous campaign to organize the latter group, a representation vote held amongst employees of Air Ontario Inc. resulted in an 85 percent margin in favour of joining the CAW-Canada.¹⁶⁸ An agreement to integrate the employees of Austin Airways Ltd. into the Air Ontario Inc.-CAW local 2213 contract was reached in November 1988.¹⁶⁹ However, as a result of Air Ontario Inc.'s sale of the bulk of its Northern Ontario operations to Air Creebec Inc. in December 1988, many workers were thenceforth employed by the latter company.¹⁷⁰

In the summer of 1986, following CP Air's purchase of EPA Ltd. and Nordair Inc. and the subsequent merging of their workforces, the CAW-Canada attempted to gain certification for all flight attendants and passenger agents working for these carriers. It did not, however, carry the representation vote ordered by the CLRB, a loss which came as no surprise given that the CAW-Canada found itself at a distinct disadvantage because it was the bargaining agent for only a small proportion of the workers involved. In early 1987, the CUPE gained certification for flight attendants while the BRAC became the bargaining agent for passenger agents. These two unions had originally represented most

of the affected workers at CP Air, the largest of the three companies involved in the merger.¹⁷¹ In early 1987, PWA Corp. bought out CPAL Ltd. and the companies which merged in April of that year became known as Canadian Airlines International Ltd. (CAIL). The integration of these companies' workforces prompted the CLRB to conduct a vote in the summer of 1987 to determine union representation. Once again, despite a strong organizing campaign, the results were quite disappointing as the Transportation Communications Union (TCU - formerly the BRAC) became the bargaining agent for all passenger agents at CAIL in November 1987.¹⁷² Following the purchase of Wardair Inc. by PWA Corp. in early 1989 and the subsequent merging of the carriers in the fall of that year, the CLRB ordered a representation vote between the CAW-Canada and the TCU which took place in early April 1990.¹⁷³ A strong campaign, which received the support of the latter union's leadership,¹⁷⁴ resulted in 76 percent of voters opting to join the CAW-Canada.¹⁷⁵ With this victory, the CAW-Canada won back workers it had lost over the past few years in representation votes in the wake of airline mergers. The CAW-Canada thus succeeded in becoming the umbrella union for virtually all passenger agents in Canada and comprised approximately 8,000 airline workers. Despite the addition of several small bargaining units during the early 1990s, this number decreased somewhat because of layoffs at Air Canada and CAIL (see Table 4).

A new local (1990) was established within the CAW-Canada airline division to encompass members from CAIL as well as a few other bargaining units.¹⁷⁶ With the creation of this local, which was based in Vancouver, local 2213 lost former Wardair members. The creation of a separate local was a merger condition set by the leadership of the TCU. It was felt that this decision was preferable because of the animosity and

competition that had developed between the membership from each major airline company. This conflict was exacerbated in the wake of the merger dealings between Air Canada and PWA Corp. and between PWA Corp. and AMR Corp., thereby causing internal strains within the national union and resulting in a weakened airline division.

Women's Participation in the Union Leadership and Women's Issues

Since the creation of the union in 1946, the proportion of women gradually increased to a point where they represented a large majority of the membership by the early 1990s. It is therefore important to examine the changes that occurred in women's role in the union as well as in the priority given to issues of concern to them on the union agenda.

During the first few years of the union's existence, women were almost completely absent from leadership positions. Available evidence indicates that only a small proportion of the district chairpersons were women during the entire period from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Lists of delegates to the union's annual general meetings reveal that very few women attended until the early 1950s. Representatives to these meetings were usually district chairpersons, a sign that few women held these positions. Women accounted for 4 to 24 percent of delegates to the general meetings throughout the 1950s and 1960s. During most years, this proportion hovered around 10 to 15 percent. This translated into approximately three women delegates out of a total of approximately twenty-five annually. Union reports filed under the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act indicate that during the 1960s, between 10 and 24 percent of district chairpersons were women. With the notable exception of Phyllis Friend who

had been one of the three vice-presidents for approximately a year during 1955 and 1956 and then held the presidency during part of 1957, women did not fill any of these national and regional executive positions throughout the 1950s and early- to mid-1960s. Towards the end of the 1960s, women began participating as regional directors, but they still held a very small minority of such positions. During the 1950s, however, women usually held the secretary-treasurer position. For the first two decades of the union's history, virtually all bargaining committee members were men.

Women's level of involvement in the union remained low throughout the entire period from the late 1940s to the late 1960s despite the fact that they represented approximately 50 percent of the membership during the mid- to late-1950s and early- to mid-1960s, and reached 60 percent by the late 1960s (see Table 3). Moreover, women's concerns were seldom heard and they did not systematically seek recognition of their needs as wage workers or union members. Their inferior status in the union was similar to that found elsewhere in the labour movement and also reflected their position in society in general.

As mentioned earlier, the proportion of women in the Air Canada unit grew from slightly over 60 percent in the early 1970s to approximately 70 percent in the early 1980s. During the early 1990s, it sometimes reached 75 percent (see Table 3). Not only did the proportion of women passenger agents continue to increase after the 1960s, but women's interest and involvement in the union also heightened. In the mid-1970s, women began assuming more leadership roles in the union. Nonetheless, their participation, especially at the national and regional levels, remained well below their overall proportion of the membership.

According to statistics filed under the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act, women represented between 11 and 47 percent of district chairpersons in the Air Canada unit from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. For most of these years, the proportion was between 26 and 38 percent. They also held a growing number of vice-chairperson positions. According to lists of participants to the union's general meetings, the proportion of women attending as district delegates from the Air Canada unit was generally higher during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s than during the 1950s and 1960s. The numbers ranged from a low of 8 percent to a high of 52 percent. For most years, the proportion of women delegates hovered between 26 and 35 percent.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, women occasionally filled one of the four to six business representative positions. They also held a greater number of the regional director positions. Throughout the entire period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, women generally accounted for 20 to 30 percent of regional directors (called regional vice-presidents following the merger with the CAW-Canada) although they sometimes had no representation at this level. Following the merger, women sometimes held up to 50 percent of the regional vice-president positions.

It was not until 1985, however, that a woman was elected president, a position not occupied by a woman since the late 1950s. Cheryl Kryzaniwsky, who is the current president, won the election in 1985 and was twice thereafter returned to office. When local 1990 was created within the CAW-Canada's airline division, a man was elected as the first president.¹⁷⁷ The position of director of communications and education and, except for a short period of time, that of research analyst, have always been held by women. Beginning in the early 1970s, women were appointed to bargaining committees,

though they still remained in the minority. Their numbers did not greatly increase even when bargaining representatives were elected beginning in 1986 following the CALEA's merger with the CAW-Canada.

During interviews, passenger agents offered mixed responses on the growing role of women in leadership positions and the union's encouragement of such participation. An agent expressed the view shared by many of the interviewees that women's low degree of involvement was due to a lack of interest. She demonstrated ambivalence towards the notion of structural barriers to women's participation in leadership roles. She felt, however, that women seemed to be more comfortable interacting with the president because she was a woman:

I think that before, the women weren't that involved with the union because I don't think they were really interested. Again, I think it's only been in the last eight or nine years that you see that there are women becoming involved in the union. Before that, they just weren't and the men seemed to go for it more than the women did. Now, I think you can't make females be concerned about your rights in your job unless they want to be involved. I don't think women wanted to be involved before. Now they do, for themselves and for other females. [Name of a union activist] just became involved in the last five to six years too, and yet she's been with the company for years. I just think it's an avenue that we never went down before and we didn't want to, but now we do. I think that's why there are a lot of females in it right now. I think it just takes time. I do know this for a fact, that a lot more people, when they're having problems with the company or the union, will phone Cheryl [Kryzaniwsky] directly and that would have never happened before, with women, you know. They'll say, "phone Cheryl, she'll talk to you, tell you what your rights are." The females are feeling more comfortable calling and go into things a little further. So that is working. I think that's good. To become involved, you have to be self-motivated. I don't think you need any encouragement. I think if it's what you want to be, you do it by yourself, you don't need to be encouraged to apply for something that you want. Do you? If you apply for a position and you sense there's a male barrier confronting you, not that it wouldn't be awfully frustrating, but where could you go from there though, what could you do about it?

When asked to explain why the number of women in union leadership roles was not higher given the large proportion of women in the membership, many interviewees remarked that there were many women involved in the union. However, when provided with the statistics, they all expressed surprise and sometimes struggled for an interpretation:

I don't really think it makes any difference whether it's men or women in leadership positions in the union. I'm not a feminist, but I believe in equality and if somebody can do the job, I don't think it matters if it's a male or female. I think there are a number of women who are involved. [When presented with the high proportion of women members as opposed to the low proportion holding union positions, the interviewee responded] is that all it is? Oh! Wow! I don't know why they wouldn't. Maybe just like, in our office we do have a number of women, I mean a man is the chairperson, but we have a number of women who are involved with it. And why they are not in other places, I don't know if they just have other outside interests, or a lot of them have other commitments, they just don't have the time, or just, you know, maybe not the willingness to commit to it, or a lack of interest.

Others, however, raised concerns about the barriers to women's greater participation.

One agent who was interested in becoming involved in the union recalled a very negative experience:

When I was running for a rep position, there was a guy in that job who I was running against and apparently someone somewhere made a remark about goddamn women, we don't need any more of them in the union.

When asked if she had encountered any major problems when first taking office, the president of the union responded:

They were very subtle. And I'm not sure at the time, because I was so nervous about this job and taking over. So I came into the job being terrified, you know absolutely sure that these people who had promoted me and pushed me and urged me to run were going to be so disappointed, that I was going to fall flat on my face. I had an awful lot of support from a lot of good people, including a lot of good men in this union. But, you always had to do a little bit better, you always had to kind of prove

yourself a little bit more, and I always had the feeling that there were a handful out there who really would like me to have fallen flat on my face. I got the jab. Shirley Carr at the time was the president of the Canadian Labour Congress and not seen as a terribly effective president, and I got those kinds of jabs all the time, you know, that women, they're just cut out for so much and maybe they'll understand once they see Shirley fall or not succeed. That kind of stuff was there, no question about it. But, now I'm very lucky, now I can just do my job. And it's really unbelievable the difference it makes. Now I have support, I've proven myself, people understand what I'm capable of. They've heard me do the public speaking, the confrontation with management, all of those pieces that they weren't sure about. And now I just have support and I don't have to think about it. It really does take a load off. You just don't realize it until you can just kind of sit back and say, I don't have to prove myself, I don't have to worry now about falling flat on my face and having all women worse off as a result of that. I think that's what I was so terrified about, that if I failed, then people would think that no women could do it, that there were no women capable of doing it. And I always had that, I always worried about that. And it was not only Cheryl Kryzaniwsky who was going to look bad and be a failure, but it was women in the future. But now I look at it, and I've been elected to the national executive board, I hold a position on the human rights committee, I'm board liaison on a lot of other things, I've been given some roles in the union that aren't 'women's' roles. And I feel good about it.

She also talked about the resistance encountered when she ran for an executive position with the CAW-Canada:

I was elected and I had run against a man for the position and some weren't too happy about the fact that I had won. I think there were a lot of people, although they probably wouldn't admit it, who felt that one woman was enough, that that was all that was mandated, that there was an affirmative action spot and who the hell did I think I was coming in and taking a spot that was not even designated for me. So I found that I had to really prove myself there.

Some women who were involved in the union noted that they were often excluded from activities following meetings where the majority of participants were men. One recounted her experience when she asked her colleagues why she had not been invited to gatherings following union meetings:

I would get remarks like, "well, I just kind of thought that after the meeting you would have wanted to go shopping or something." I would get that all the time. "So why would you think I'd want to shop, I don't like to shop." "No? Well do you like to golf?" "No not particularly, but I like to sit around and talk, so if you're going to do that, call me."

Another recounted a similar experience:

At one point, I'll never forget, they were going on a fishing derby, and they'd rented a boat. And they came into the meeting in the morning and they were all dressed very casually. I said to them, "gee, what's going on today?" They said, "oh well, there's a fishing trip today at three o'clock, we rented a big boat." So I said, "you're kidding. I love to fish. I'll go change at lunch and I'll be ready. What time are we leaving?" You know you just kind of move in. Hey, they kind of looked at one another like, "God, I don't even know that we've got a spot for her on the boat." But, it's just they just don't think of it. Sometimes, on some people's part, it was pre-planned, it was pre-meditated, no question. They didn't want me there. They thought I would cramp their style, and I do, sometimes. There's no question.

Some of the people interviewed noted that while women were being elected to local and national executive positions in growing numbers, they had not made any breakthroughs when it came to the selection of bargaining committee members. The confrontational nature of contract negotiations was usually referred to when interviewees explained women's exclusion:

We have more women on our executive board than we have men. But our membership generally don't see that as a kind of confrontational role, they see it more as an administrative role. So they'll elect women to that, they don't have any problem with that. But when it comes to hard bargaining, you know, smoke filled, late night, taking on the company kind of thing - because that's the image a bargaining committee has - they won't elect women to fill those positions. So we've got a lot of work to do. The biggest piece to that is that they see it as confrontational. They see a bargaining committee as having to be confrontational, having to take the company on. And they just somehow don't see women as being capable of doing that.

The only nut that we have not been able to crack is the bargaining committee, and for a couple of reasons. One is because of the image, the

whole idea that it's confrontational, that you've got to take on management, and that women aren't really too good at that, to people not wanting to get involved because they're afraid of that, to the fact that it's got this image of long weeks on the road, with lots of time away from home, extended periods of time when you can't work a normal Monday to Friday, nine-to-five. This has kept women from running.

Some agents felt there were major impediments to women's equal participation, but expressed confidence that with a woman as president the situation was changing somewhat:

What I found when I was more active and really wanting to work my way up the scale was that there is sort of an old boys club in the union and a lot of them think that you're really worthless till you've worked a minimum of ten, fifteen years, and it's kind of hard to break through that sometimes. And I really resented some comments that were made about that. I certainly, though, see the benefit of the experience. When we had the last general meeting, I did definitely notice that I was one of the few women there. Some of the women tend to stick together and there is a lot of discussion about it. To a certain degree, I feel like there is not a want there to spread around the information that people have. They really find that there is a worth in the knowledge that they have and they keep it. I've been told right out by a small minority of male officers, "how many years have you been with the company, like a year only, you can't expect to do this and that." I feel that there's some camaraderie between the women. They might pat each other on the back, which is kind of nice to have a little bit of a support network. With Cheryl there, she certainly doesn't like to promote the old boys club, and that type of thing. There are some programmes to promote women in the union, some exists within CAW, but within our own local I haven't heard about anything. I think that, to some degree, there are more men involved because they see the opportunity there and they may not like the job they're doing. I think they tend to make more career decisions, or have tended in the past to make more career decisions than the women. For me, I don't expect to make any moves. If I stay with Air Canada, I would like to be really involved with the union, and get myself a position. It's almost like a full-time position in the union because that way, I'm staying with the airline, but I'm doing something that I really enjoy doing.

Like the following interviewee who was active in the union, some women passenger agents felt that they were treated in a more equitable manner by their union than by other

institutions:

I find them very supportive. Right now our local president is female. They're very good like that, I don't think they discourage it, but it just seems like it's always been a man's area. I think most women tend to shy away from getting involved in the union. But I find it very encouraging. I feel more equal in the union than anywhere else. I feel there's no sexual connotations or anything, you don't even think of that. I find they're very, very good. I've never had any problem with the union or made to feel less than perfect there.

An agent felt that women's greater involvement in the union would ensure that a higher priority would be placed on issues of concern to women. Like many others, she was astonished to discover the low level of women's participation in the union:

There are quite a few women involved aren't there? [When presented with the high proportion of women members as opposed to the low proportion holding union positions, the interviewee responded] is it, eh? Oh, okay, I didn't realize that myself 'cause I always think of Cheryl Kryzaniwsky [president], and I've known different females who've gotten in and are working now in the union. But I guess the main ones who are heads of the different bases are men. I don't know whether they choose men over women or if it's that more men who are interested than women. I think that always, if the women are involved it'll be more catered to things like the childcare leave and how you're to retain your seniority when you come back, different things like this that allow for a decent standard of living.

A male agent believed that women were actively being discouraged from becoming involved in leadership positions, but that such participation was essential if women's issues were to be addressed:

S'il n'y a pas de candidates, puis elles ne sont pas encouragées, c'est des hommes qui sont là et qui leur disent, "c'est tough, faut donner des coups de poings sur la table, puis il faut dire calice de tabernacle, puis il faut parler de même." Les femmes ne sont pas encouragées. Par contre, si quelqu'un leur dit, "ben non, t'es capable d'la faire l'ouvrage, puis il faudrait une femme qui vienne parler de vos conditions." C'est 70 pourcent de femmes ici et puis il y a des femmes qui doivent aller à la garderie, c'est ça la réalité, mais il faut en prendre conscience. C'est juste des hommes [in union positions], ils ne vivent pas les conditions des

femmes.

Another male passenger agent felt somewhat uncomfortable with the realization that women did not play a greater role in the union, but rationalized the situation in terms of stereotypes and the democratic election process:

There are people here who don't like women in positions of authority. We had mostly men as district chairpersons here. I don't know if that's stereotyping of my generation or before, that we grew up with, that women's place is doing this and this and this, and it's not. If you grew up in that, it's pretty hard to unprogramme yourself of that type of thing, it's an honest feeling. Our executive, out of nine, four are female. Last year, I think there were only two female members. I don't see any major change. The union here seems to be basically male dominated. I find it kind of odd, really because numerically, men are drastically outnumbered by women. Cheryl [Kryzaniwsky] has raised it with me, that it looks terrible and so on. But there's also the other side of it, we hold free elections and that's who gets elected. We have women and men sometimes running against each other. A lot of times it's by acclamation. It's nobody's fault. It must be the will of the membership or the lack of will, whatever it is. I will say this, that any appointments that I've made, I have tried to appoint females to get that number up, because there are issues. But, I don't see any kind of turn with women being more interested in the union. Here anyways. The only reason I could think of why it's so, is the stereotype role. Just recently, we had people like Shirley Carr on the news. The stereotype has to be reworked or gotten rid of. I don't know if they just don't see it as their role or what it is. I don't know what the answer is.

A woman agent agreed that the election process was not sex-biased and felt that sex inequalities had to be eliminated at the societal level before any changes could be expected in unions:

I know that certainly there were not many women involved in the union before. And that has changed now. Certainly the CAW seems to have a mandate that women are to be encouraged and brought along, they have their own women's section and that's excellent. A lot of our representation is voted in, so we have no say in that. It just depends on who's running. It just depends on who's interested. It's a tough job being a chairman, not so much an officer, but a chairman. And our president is a woman. So, I don't think those are issues any more.

People are choosing the best people for the job, I don't think they're that concerned about whether it's a male or a female any more. I don't think if more women were involved the issues would change, only because our society is structured in such a way that that isn't an accepted thing. Well, actually if women were in leadership roles at the federal national and other levels, yes, I think that those issues [women's] would be more addressed, not specifically in unions, but in the larger picture.

While some unions have implemented affirmative action programmes to ensure more equal representation on executive bodies and bargaining committees, the CAW local 2213 had not followed this path, although debate surrounding the issue has begun. That such programmes are not universally supported even among women, and that their establishment requires considerable organizing and lobbying is clearly illustrated by the following excerpt from an interview with a woman union representative:

I watched what happened at our affirmative action plenary and then workshop. And you had a lot of people nodding, sitting quietly. We got into the workshops, they never said anything. Some of them did. They said, "I don't agree with it, I'll never vote for it, I won't ever support it." And then that at least got the discussion moving in the group. But the other workshops, I know there was a lot of silence and a lot of nodding of heads, but when it comes down to supporting it, they don't. And they won't do it. I mean, you've got to do one on ones with all the people you know are going to be there. First of all, all the women, because we don't even have women supporting women. So we have a lot of work to do on our local union, still.

During interviews, some women passenger agents commented that they would have liked to become involved in the union, but had not been able to do so because of family obligations. Others who were active in the union noted that they had opted to forego opportunities for greater participation because of such responsibilities. Most of the men interviewed who were or had been activists indicated, for their part, that family obligations had usually not prevented them from taking on any added responsibilities even when this resulted in tensions in their personal lives. They remarked that their

partners support and willingness to take on the bulk of childcare and domestic duties facilitated their involvement. One woman activist recounted a conversation she had with some of her male colleagues concerning the household division of labour:

And then a lot will roll their eyes and say, "oh god, her again on that subject again." They're all very progressive, and they all have families, and some with young children. So I said to them, "talk to me about what your role is in the household, tell me what you do in your household. I know that you feel that you, for instance, you and [wife's name] or you and [wife's name] have equal responsibilities. Now tell me, on an individual basis, talk to me about what she does and what you do." And the one of them, I'll never forget, said, "well I sometimes vacuum and dust. And [wife's name] never paints." And I'll never forget it, my reply was, "Painting! Well I'm sure that must take up a lot of your weekly time. How many hours a week do you allot for painting, 'cause my guess is [wife's name] probably allots three to four for laundry, or three to four for lunch making, grocery shopping, meal-type preparation, three to four for childcare arrangements, doctor's appointments, dental appointments. I mean, she does those things?" He says, "Yeah." "So that's like ten hours. So you're saying painting is ten hours a week?" But it makes them think about it then at least. We laughed. The others, at the end of my going after this one and going over and over and over the points, said, "Jesus Christ, don't ask me, I don't even want to think about it!" But I think then what they do is they think maybe they don't do half the work at home. Even if it just plants that seed of doubt, it brings them along a little bit further.

She talked about some of the difficulties in combining union activities and childcare:

I tell them [male colleagues], "I know you have children. But I also know that in your household, your wife takes care of looking after childcare. So you can't know the gut-wrenching feeling in the morning when that childcare worker is sick. Or your child wakes up with fever, so you can't go to a meeting because you can't take him or her to childcare because they're sick. Because you say, bye hon, and although you feel bad that they're sick, I mean I'm not underestimating that, you don't have the responsibility of finding an alternative. You go off to your meeting, you're not expected to stay back. You don't have pabulum at the corner of your three-piece suit." A lot of times, I go to meetings and I'm the only one that has pabulum on my suit jacket.

The president of the union reflected on the importance of having a strong female support

network in order to be able to participate fully in the union, especially given childcare responsibilities:

I spend no time socially, I just don't do social things. I don't go out with any of my friends for lunch or for dinner. I don't go to the theatre, I don't go to movies. I don't do any of those kinds of things, because I find that all of my spare time, every minute of my spare time, I spend with my children. Because I'm away so much, I'm so active in the union. And I feel guilty about the time I'm not spending with them on a regular daily, weekly basis, that when I do have a weekend off, or when I do put three days together off, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, we cram everything... But you just make the decision that that's what you're going to do. I don't have any regrets about that, I don't have any problems with any of that. I've just made a decision. And my friends understand that. I often get from them, you know, "you can't make time for me, why can't we get together for lunch." But on the other hand, I think, deep down they're women and they understand. And they pick up the slack for me. I'm very lucky. A support network is unbelievable, it is. I couldn't possibly do it without the kind of help I've had from other committed women who either don't have children, or who have children and they're grown and they've been through it so they understand. But you just have to pick up the phone and say, "my childcare worker is sick and I've got a meeting. Could you take [son's name] today or can you help me out." And if they can't, they'll find somebody who can. It's very, very important, a support network. Or you couldn't do what you do.

She also emphasized the need to maintain a balance between union activism and family life:

I have seen an awful lot of marriages and families break up as a result of union activity and I vowed, when I took this job, that I was not going to let that happen. So I say to people, "I don't work weekends." And unless there's a conference or a convention that I can't get out of, I don't work weekends, it's that simple. And I don't feel guilty about it. I used to, because I would see most of the men in my organization, just every rally, every demonstration, every weekend school, they were going seven days a week. But I sat back and I said, how many of their marriages are successful, how many still live in the same household with their children. And I have never ever heard anyone say, you know, when they're about to die, or when they're leaving, when they're being retired, or they're going through a divorce, I don't hear them say, "I should have spent more time in the office." They all say, "I have regrets because I didn't spend enough time with my family." And I vowed, when I took over in '85,

that even if it meant I couldn't do this job, then I wasn't going to do it to the detriment of my family. And I have been very successful in balancing that. I spend a lot of time at home. I don't work more than eight hours most days in here. When my kids are in bed at night, after I've made dinner, and I've played with them and I've taken one to cubs and one to piano, and I've done all of that juggling, around nine, nine thirty at night, instead of curling up with a good book or curling up to watch TV, I usually sit at my computer, or I finish off some paperwork, or I do some reading that I haven't been able to do because I've only put eight hours at the office. So I do about ten hours a day, but I try to juggle it so that I'm not away from home more than I have to... I'm a firm believer that you can be a really good active trade unionist at the top of an organization and not have to put in more than forty hours a week. I really believe that, and I think it should happen. And as long as there are people out there devoting seven days a week and losing families over it, those that watch it won't ever become involved. It's kind of a role model that you are. I want other women in my organization to become involved, and I don't want them to see the role model who's lost her family and is divorced, and puts in seventy hours a week and is haggard and tired. I don't want that because then, they'll never get involved. It scares them off... I take my children to a lot of demonstrations, I take them to Port Elgin [the CAW-Canada's education centre] when I go most of the time, and I take them to weekend schools if I have to be involved. Not only because I want to spend time with them, but because I want people to see that you can do it and have children. You have to be a little bit more organized. It's maybe not quite as much fun. When other people are going out for a nice dinner at the end of the day, I go to McDonald's with the kids, or we have a hamburger in our room because we're tired. But it's not like you can't do it. You can do it, and you shouldn't have to say, "well during all of these childbearing years, I can't be involved with my union," because it's not the case. You can be involved. But there's a real lack of role models. And I think that's unfortunate.

Structural constraints built into union work act as important impediments to the participation of women (especially those with families and young children) on union executives and staffs, and to their general involvement in union activities. Active participation in unions requires substantial time commitments and periods of time away from home for meetings, conventions and educationals. Women find it difficult to reconcile their childcare and domestic exigencies with the hours, travel and irregular

schedules demanded by union work. Moreover, women working for pay with family responsibilities have few non-working hours available and can not often afford to add a third set of responsibilities to their double day of paid and unpaid work.

In an effort to encourage more women to participate in union activities, local 2213 delegates to the 1986 general meeting adopted a resolution approving childcare expenses for members on union business.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, the CAW-Canada's education centre in Port Elgin operated a childcare facility for members attending meetings and courses, a service which somewhat facilitated women's participation in union training seminars. These initiatives, however, did not challenge the overall division of labour in the household, and were thus insufficient to ensure women's participation in the union.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, while the union attempted, throughout the 1970s, to improve maternity leave provisions as well as working conditions for part-time passenger agents, most of whom were women, it was only beginning in the mid-1980s that issues of particular concern to women took on a more central focus and were permanently placed on the union agenda. At the union's 1983 general meeting, following recommendations of a committee previously set up to study matters pertaining to women, a series of policies addressing women's issues were adopted. These were aimed at improving the working conditions of part-time passenger agents, supporting access to universal, publicly-funded and non-profit childcare, and seeking to protect pregnant passenger agents from the potential hazards of VDTs. A policy was also adopted which called for the union to endorse and promote the active participation of its women members in all levels of its activities as well as in the activities of various groups advocating equality between women and men. It further committed to discussing, at

district membership meetings, ways and means to eliminate conditions of inequality.¹⁷⁹ The possibility of setting up a standing committee on women's issues was considered, but it was felt that the best approach to improve the status of women was to encourage the participation of all members in confronting problems head-on.¹⁸⁰

A national women's conference was held in February 1985 to provide a forum for CALEA women members from across the country to meet and discuss the status of women in the labour force in general as well as their individual work-related experiences, identify pressing problems and develop an agenda for action at all levels. A number of key issues facing women were raised during this meeting such as part-time work, childcare, parental leave, discrimination, sexual harassment and pensions. Delegates strongly endorsed the union's previously adopted policies on matters of concern to women. They also recommended the formulation of a national union policy on sexual harassment, the lobbying for pension improvements to ensure that women not be forced to retire in poverty and increased political action in support of women's rights. Finally, they called for the formation of women's committees at the national and local levels.¹⁸¹

The CALEA's policies on women's issues were furthered when it merged with the CAW-Canada in the summer of 1985. While most of the CAW-Canada's members were based in the automobile manufacturing industry, the union represented a significant number of members working in office, clerical and professional occupations, and had gained expertise in matters of importance to white-collar workers. It had a department specifically assigned to deal with women's issues and had made breakthroughs in contract negotiations in areas such as employer-subsidized daycare. In addition, the CAW-Canada held an annual women's conference and established a national women's committee as

well as affirmative action and human rights committees. It strongly supported pay equity legislation. It also adopted a policy on sexual harassment in the workplace and waged a campaign on violence against women. These national policies and programmes benefitted women passenger agents and facilitated the local union's greater involvement in matters of particular concern to women. Following the merger, a number of women from the former CALEA became actively involved in the CAW-Canada leadership and were instrumental in pushing for changes beneficial to women.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have charted the growth and development of the union representing passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. I have shown that while the union underwent continual change, the 1960s marked the beginning of a more fundamental shift and, beginning in the mid-1980s, the union went through a second major wave of transformation. In discussing important modifications to its policies, programmes, strategies and actions, I have demonstrated that the union became more progressive and militant. These changes were reflected in the internal functioning and structure of the union as well as in its organizing efforts and its relationship to the wider labour movement. A significant milestone in the union's metamorphosis was the merger with the CAW-Canada, a militant and progressive union that wielded more power to influence the agenda at the level of the workplace and in the political arena. This process of class formation did not take place in a vacuum. Indeed, these changes were rooted in the transformation of the nature, conditions and relations of passenger agent work as well as in the restructuring of the Canadian airline industry and the crisis-ridden economy.

Clearly, material conditions of existence give rise to, and place limits on, choices and thus affect collective action and consciousness.

The rapid growth and radicalization of white-collar unions in the past few decades is testimony to deep dissatisfaction in the workplace. The question of whether or not trade unionism can be seen as an expression of class-consciousness is contentious. While union membership cannot automatically be assumed to reflect a particular ideological position, it would be misleading to presume that trade unionism has no bearing whatsoever on class-consciousness or class action. Even though unionization and the specific forms of actions taken by passenger agents and other white-collar workers have not been revolutionary, they reflect a recognition that the interests and objectives of workers and management are not the same and that organization and collective efforts by workers are fundamental to the defense of their basic rights and to the improvement of their working conditions. Moreover, the growing oppositional stance taken by a larger number of white-collar workers towards management is a clear indication of changing class politics.

Since the 1960s, the rapid increase in the level of white-collar unionism, especially in the public sector, has meant a rise in the unionization of women workers. While slightly less than 250,000 women belonged to unions in 1962, this figure had swollen to one and a half million by 1989. Given that women have been joining unions at a faster rate than men, their proportion of the total number of union members has risen over the years. In 1962, women represented slightly over 16 percent of all union members whereas by 1989, they accounted for 39 percent.^{18/} This growth has paralleled women's increasing labour force participation and the feminization of certain

areas of work, including the passenger agent occupation.

An increase in numbers, however, does not automatically translate into equal representation or an emphasis on issues of particular concern to women. In her recent study on women and unions, White¹⁸³ found that despite the considerable improvement in the position of women inside the labour movement over the last ten to fifteen years, they still face major hurdles. In most cases, women continue to be underrepresented on union executives and bargaining committees even where the membership is predominantly female, a situation that held true for passenger agents. This means that women do not hold power over decisions that affect their working conditions. It also has implications for how union work is carried out and for the issues that are made to matter. However, as White,¹⁸⁴ Maroney¹⁸⁵ and Miriam Edelson¹⁸⁶ have shown, women's more active participation in unions and their fight to have their needs recognized have had an impact on the internal structure of unions, as is evidenced by the setting up of women's caucuses, committees and conferences and by the adoption of policies and programmes to facilitate women's participation in union activities. Women's struggles have also influenced the issues placed on bargaining agendas, such as part-time work, maternity leave, childcare programmes, parental rights, sexual harassment, pay equity and employment equity. Since the early 1980s, many unions have been engaged in some form of activity concerning women's issues. While the changes have been real, women active within the union movement have sometimes faced strong opposition from both men and women to their involvement and to the acceptance of issues of concern to women.

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10. LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

This chapter examines the changing nature of labour-management relations at TCA/Air Canada. I demonstrate that relations between the company and the union and between management and workers were initially paternalistic, but that in the 1960s, as new and important issues of fundamental concern to workers arose, relations became more oppositional. I point to the increasingly conflictual labour-management relations that developed over the course of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. I show that during this period, the union encountered major difficulties in registering gains for its members in the context of worsening economic conditions, a fundamental restructuring of the airline industry and significant changes in the labour process and in management practices.

I review important rounds of contract negotiations both in terms of the main issues raised and the different forms of collective action taken by passenger agents in order to secure or resist changes to their working conditions. I show that beginning in the 1960s, as the union became more militant, new forms of action such as work-to-rule campaigns and strike activity were adopted. A major focus of this chapter is the 1984-1985 contract talks which culminated in the first full-scale strike by passenger agents against Air Canada. This action was in response to company demands for major contract concessions in the wake of the deregulation of the airline industry.

The Paternalistic Nature of Labour-Management Relations: The Early Years

During the first decade of the union's existence, labour-management relations were based on paternalism, a situation not dissimilar to that which had prevailed since the establishment of the airline in the late 1930s. Agents, like other TCA employees,

displayed a strong sense of loyalty towards the company and shared in the experience of being part of a small team trying to build an airline. The union spoke of the feeling of goodwill, friendly cooperation and mutual respect that predominated during collective bargaining and characterized overall relations with the employer.¹ The grievance procedure which was established with the first collective agreement in 1946 was rarely used. This did not mean, however, that contract violations did not occur or that workers did not experience discriminatory and unjust treatment. Local meetings between union officers and management to discuss concerns were held infrequently, even though problems did arise. While major issues were sometimes resolved during joint headquarters meetings generally requested by the union, the solutions were not always implemented at the local level and did not necessarily satisfy members.² Collective bargaining was non-confrontational, with the union often withdrawing its demands following company arguments as to why they could not be met. During the period from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, each new collective agreement was reached close to the expiry date of the previous contract.

The TEA entered into a first collective agreement with TCA in November 1946. The contract covered most employees of the traffic department, but excluded clerical and management staff as well as employees stationed at points outside Canada. Salaries and hours of work were the main issues in this first round of talks. A TCA report stated:

Original demands of the Association for substantially increased wages and decreased hours were considered by the Company to be excessive. However, it was recognized that some changes were justified because of the rising cost of living and a compromise was reached. Moderate wage increases were granted, but there is no change in working hours.³

Monthly salaries, based on a forty-four hour, five-and-a-half day week, ranged from

\$145 to \$185 for passenger agents, space control agents and reservations agents, and from \$125 to \$150 for teletype operators and telephone operators - this was up from \$125 to \$180 and \$105 to \$130 respectively. As mentioned earlier, women employed as passenger agents, space control agents and reservations agents were paid \$5 a month less at every level of the scale.⁴ The differential, which had also existed prior to the signing of the first collective agreement, was eliminated the following year. With the first contract, traffic employees secured other improvements to their working conditions, most notably a limited seniority clause and a grievance procedure. During subsequent rounds of contract talks, union demands focused almost exclusively on questions of salary and hours of work, but job promotion prospects were also of concern.⁵ Throughout the first decade following its establishment, the union was successful in negotiating a reduction in the hours of work, shift pay differentials and important pay increases.

Changing Labour-Management Relations: The Late 1950s and the 1960s

Throughout the entire period from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, labour-management relations were markedly different from the more personal, paternalistic-style relations that coloured the first two decades of TCA's existence. The airline experienced a tremendous growth and the large number of passenger agents hired in the 1950s and 1960s did not fully share the more senior employees' feelings of attachment to the company nor their sense of being pioneers in the air transport field. As the workplace hierarchy became more visible and as the company adopted more impersonal forms of management, a widening gulf developed between workers and management. Moreover, there emerged a new, albeit limited, rank and file militancy. As the union grew in size

and strength, it continued to fight for improvements to members' wages and hours of work. However, new and important issues which pitted the union against the company began to crop up, such as part-time labour, technological change and seniority rights. Throughout this period, management did not implement any major programmes to improve working conditions and the work environment, nor did it undertake any significant labour relations initiatives.

The union increasingly sought to defend agents against arbitrary and discriminatory managerial authority and decisions. In this context, one of the most fundamental tools of resistance for passenger agents was the grievance system. This process not only allowed for some form of worker protection, but was important for establishing precedents and identifying questions to be raised during contract negotiations. Since its inception in 1946, the grievance system had not been used effectively as members failed to bring their problems to the union's attention. This situation partly reflected workers' fear of reprisal from local management should they formally voice their concerns, but also pointed to the union's relative weakness and members' lack of identification with the union and the labour movement in general.

In the late 1950s, the president of the SEA began urging district officers to encourage members to approach them with workplace-related problems. A Toronto district vice-chairperson noted:

Today, as in the past, some grievances between employee and management have come to the attention of your S.E.A. representative by way of the proverbial grapevine. Information received in this manner is often incorrect and inconsistent. From here your representative must get in touch with the employee involved, often encountering indifference and finding that the employee is trying to solve the problem himself. This leaves the representative with the feeling that his help is not wanted.

However, this is very much the concern of the S.E.A. representative and depending on the seriousness of the problem, action should be taken, as this is one of the major functions of the S.E.A.⁶

The number of grievances rose during the 1960s as gains were made in contract language and passenger agents were more willing to fight for their rights. It was not until the mid-1960s, however, that the union began processing grievances through arbitration. The increase in the volume of grievances was clearly an indication of the growing strength of the union and spoke to the uneasy labour-management relations that were developing at the local level. Evidence indicates that in some districts, relations with local management were quite agreeable and complaints were kept to a minimum either because supervisors and managers strove to ensure that working hours and other working conditions were acceptable to agents or because union officers and members did not raise issues with management. Nonetheless, as the following letter from the Toronto district chairperson to the union's central region director demonstrates, other districts were regularly experiencing difficulties:

The Reservations Sales Location in the Toronto District has been a sore spot for the Association for a number of years... Air Canada Management is completely unco-operative on all levels. They have been so used to ignoring the Association that a new and inexperienced officer has a good deal of difficulty in establishing himself as a person of authority. Lastly, management had ruled for so long with a 'reign of terror' tactic that the majority of the employees are afraid to approach the Union with problems because of fear of reprisal.⁷

In some cases, passenger agents refused to hold union office because they were reluctant to deal with local management.⁸ Although the collective agreement provided for union-management meetings at the local level, most districts did not systematically avail themselves of this opportunity to discuss emerging problems until 1966 when monthly

meetings became mandatory. In 1961, the agreement also established regular union-management headquarters meetings at three month intervals to deal with major issues. While meetings at both levels facilitated discussion and represented a forum where the union could raise matters of concern to members, they generally did not bring about fully satisfactory solutions.

The union was becoming extremely frustrated with the attitude of managers and supervisors towards district officers and with the lengthy delays in addressing issues at all levels. Moreover, it complained that local management was interpreting the collective agreement to fit a particular set of circumstances, and rules pertaining to employees were not applied uniformly in all workplaces. This was troubling, especially given the fact that a number of these managers and supervisors were past members of the TEA/SEA, and in some cases had been very active in establishing and building the union during its formative years. In late 1967, during a meeting of unions representing workers at Air Canada, the general agreement was that the company was fundamentally anti-union.⁹

The state of contract negotiations between the SEA/CALEA and TCA/Air Canada was indicative of the fundamental changes that labour-management relations were undergoing during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. Most collective agreements were concluded following lengthy discussions and only after the expiry date of the previous contract. In addition, negotiations were usually conducted with the active involvement of conciliators or mediators appointed by the federal Department of Labour. These changes reflected a new direction in labour-management relations throughout the company as well as in other workplaces.

Contract talks undertaken in late 1957 represented the first time in its history that

the union retained the services of a lawyer to advise and assist the bargaining committee. It also marked the first time that the union proceeded to conciliation. The president of the SEA reported that the outcome of negotiations had been disappointing partly due to insufficient preparation and a lack of supporting material.¹⁰ The SEA's lawyer pointed out, however, that the conciliation process had enabled the committee to make greater gains than would otherwise have been possible.¹¹ He stated:

I do know that the committee felt that what was obtained was the best that could be obtained at that time. It was not to our satisfaction. We would have liked to have done better, but I do feel what we did get was the best that could be hoped for. We did probably incur some disfavour. We did not win any popularity poles with management. That is to be expected. Of course, management would only like us to accept what they offered. As a result, what we got through conciliation was substantially more than what we could have if we had accepted the company's offer. It proved that the step was a right one.¹²

The union believed that by proceeding to conciliation, it had gained greater respect from the membership and the company.

The rounds of negotiations undertaken in 1965-1966 and 1968 proved to be arduous and resulted in passenger agents making use of novel forms of resistance such as work-to-rule and strike action to ensure that their demands were met. This new wave of activism was part of the heightened labour unrest emerging throughout the company and elsewhere in the country. Given that these two sets of contract talks established a new trend in collective bargaining, they are worth exploring in greater detail.

The 1965-1966 Round of Contract Talks

Though a tentative agreement to renew the 1963-1965 contract was reached only two weeks after its expiry date, the membership rejected the settlement by an 85 percent

margin.¹³ For the first time in the history of collective bargaining between the union and the company, the entire membership had the opportunity to vote on a new contract. In the past, the union had not required membership ratification of a settlement, but a 1965 constitutional amendment established this democratic right.¹⁴ In light of the membership's refusal to accept the tentative agreement, another series of bargaining meetings took place. The lack of progress prompted the union to apply for conciliation.¹⁵ A conciliation board was set up following unsuccessful attempts by a conciliation officer to resolve the conflict. The board's recommendations for settlement were accepted by each party's bargaining committee, but were rejected by the members.¹⁶ Hence, the membership not only failed to ratify the initial tentative agreement but for the second time repudiated recommendations of its own negotiators.

Tensions mounted as the union requested permission from the Minister of Labour to prosecute Air Canada on the grounds that management had attempted to influence employees into accepting the board's recommendations.¹⁷ The union stated:

The Committee, as all members of the Association, abhor the recent tactics of the Company in arranging meetings with individual members and groups of members in a manner that can only be construed as an attempt to influence your voting and your judgement.¹⁸

Meetings were once again held and because the parties could not come to an agreement, the union took a strike vote. This occurred in early June 1966, nine months after negotiations for a new contract had begun.¹⁹ Despite the fact that the union had no strike fund, its members voted 84 percent in favour of strike action with some locations reporting a strike vote of over 90 percent.²⁰ In the wake of these incidents, a mediator from the Department of Labour was assigned to assist the parties in resolving the dispute.

Following the intervention of Air Canada president G.R. McGregor, management agreed to shorten the term of the contract and a settlement was finally reached minutes prior to the June 15 midnight strike deadline in the eastern time zone, which included the two major centres of Montreal and Toronto.²¹ Pickets were waiting at locations in central Canada. Because of different time zones, some workers in the Atlantic provinces had already walked off the job.²²

While the work stoppage was short-lived, it marked the first time any group of employees had struck the company in its twenty-nine year history. Some of the main issues in the dispute such as part-time work, hours of work, shift premium increases, compensation for overtime and employee requested transfers, had been resolved earlier, but the battle over the length of the collective agreement and salary increases was fought until the bitter end. The duration of the new contract was thirty-two months with only a lump sum payment for the first six months, and general pay increases of 8 percent for the next twelve months and 7 percent for the remaining fourteen months.²³ The length of the agreement and the pay increase were an improvement over the two previously rejected tentative settlements.

Some passenger agents felt that this new proposal did not sufficiently improve upon the conciliation board's recommendations and accused the negotiating team of giving out.²⁴ There was also talk of wildcatting and some angry agents called for the resignation of the union president. A small group of militant members favoured joining a stronger union.²⁵ In spite of these many protests, the agreement was finally ratified by the membership.

The 1968 Round of Contract Talks

When the time came for the next contract negotiations in the summer of 1968, the CALEA had undergone important changes that would affect the bargaining process. A more militant leadership had taken over in 1967. Moreover, the union's new negotiations committee was led by Dr. Wigderson, an American airline union representative with considerable experience in collective bargaining. As the CALEA's negotiations minutes indicate, Wigderson's involvement seems to have caused tension during contract talks:

Radford [company negotiator] advised Dr. Wigderson that he has come into these negotiations for the first time and that prior to this round of negotiations a unique situation had existed for years... He said that he recognized certain approaches and that these were hard and fast approaches which disturbed him. Mr. Radford accused Dr. Wigderson for being responsible for all the proposed modifications to the Collective Agreement because he detected a complete switch from the previous years of negotiations... Forrest [company negotiator] then accused the Doctor of trying to force the Company into an either/or position. Radford said that he found it difficult to equate the proposals as they are presented to what has been the practice in the past. He said that the wholesale changes that are requested by the Association are going to upset the whole Agreement and that he couldn't understand the reason for this.²⁶

Wigderson provided CALEA officials with much assistance and training in collective bargaining during both the 1968 and 1969 rounds of contract talks.

The establishment of a contract research committee as well as a new set of procedures for formulating proposals for bargaining also facilitated preparations for contract talks. Instead of debating the issues at the annual general meeting held prior to negotiations, proposals emanating from districts were now investigated and documented by the research committee. For many years, the union's proposals were insufficiently researched and, consequently, negotiators were not equipped with "backup material

required to prove certain trends were developing within the industry" and to "help secure those benefits we were seeking."²⁷ In the past, lack of time and resources often left the union ill-prepared to face the company's more experienced negotiating team and thus to bargain effectively with the employer.

Given that the membership had been dissatisfied with the previous wage settlement, it is not surprising that the subject of wages dominated the 1968 round of contract talks. The significant growth in the volume of business and in profits compounded by higher productivity led passenger agents to argue that they deserved a greater share of the benefits. Moreover, they felt that a larger salary increase was justified because the job had become more difficult and stressful due to the growth in passenger traffic, the more frequent changes in procedures, fares and policies, and a heavier workload. Most importantly, however, passenger agents resolved to make up the ground they had lost to a number of IAMAW classifications (to which they had traditionally compared themselves) in the wake of the previous IAMAW settlement when the latter won an average annual increase of 10.9 percent following a thirteen day strike; this was in comparison to the CALEA's average increase of 5.6 percent a year.²⁸

Direct talks took place between mid-June and mid-July 1968. Because of the lack of progress, meetings were held, first with a conciliation officer, then with two successive boards of conciliation.²⁹ In early December, the union embarked on a work-to-rule campaign called the work perfection programme.³⁰ Shortly thereafter, on December 11, the Minister of Labour became directly involved in the dispute as mediator. Clearly, his presence had an impact on the proceedings as an agreement was reached early the next day. Problems arose, however, when the union and the company

disagreed on some of the specific details of the settlement.³¹ The CALEA implemented the second phase of its work-to-rule campaign which it referred to as WOE (withdrawal of enthusiasm).³² Another marathon mediation session was held in an attempt to resolve the differences and an agreement was finally reached, and was ratified by a majority vote following six months of negotiations.³³ The settlement was for a one year term - which did not provide the company with a long period of labour stability - and included an 8 percent general wage increase plus adjustments averaging an additional 1 percent.³⁴

Because of the length and difficulty of the 1965-1966 and 1968 rounds of contract negotiations, the Minister of Labour appointed two mediators at the outset of the 1969 talks in order to accelerate the process. They became involved in bargaining in mid-June 1969 and were instructed to apply intense mediation until mid-July, at which time they were to withdraw if no agreement could be reached.³⁵ The union revised its work perfection programme manual and advised members to wait for a signal before working to rule.³⁶ A tentative agreement was reached, however, shortly before the expiry date of the old contract.³⁷

Conflictual Labour-Management Relations: The 1970s, 1980s and Early 1990s

The period beginning in the early 1970s marked a significant shift towards increasingly conflictual labour-management relations. The mid-1980s and early 1990s were especially trying. A number of factors combined to create a very difficult climate for collective bargaining, contract administration and general relations at all levels. Downswings in the economy throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s had a tremendous impact on the financial health of air carriers. Furthermore, deregulation of

the transportation sector, which began in the late 1970s and accelerated in the mid- to late-1980s, resulted in more intense competition and a major restructuring of all modes of transportation and caused dramatic changes in the airline industry. Under these conditions, employers became more determined to wrest concessions from workers. Moreover, the introduction of anti-inflation legislation by the federal government in the mid-1970s and early 1980s weakened unions' bargaining power. Finally, high unemployment rates created unfavourable market conditions for most workers. Labour increasingly found itself under attack in this drastically transformed economic and political environment. These overall conditions prompted unions to seek more actively to mobilize the membership.

During these turbulent and trying years, the CALEA became more militant and determined to resist pressures from the company and the state. The small independent union representing passenger agents also eventually merged with the larger, more powerful CAW-Canada in the mid-1980s in order to bolster its strength to face an increasingly recalcitrant and aggressive employer. The heightened degree of industrial conflict was thus a reflection of the greater militancy on the part of workers as well as the more determined resistance by the employer in the context of the deepening crisis in the airline industry and in the economy in general. The shift in labour-management relations will be illustrated through an overview of joint local and headquarters meetings, contract maintenance and collective bargaining.

Joint Meetings

The union regularly criticized both headquarters and local management for not

keeping officers and workers informed and for not listening to their concerns. While this state of affairs had always been a problem, by the 1970s, the union began demanding a more active role in decision-making that affected its members. In light of its growing strength, the union found itself in a better position to make such demands even though the company increasingly resisted infringements on its rights.

Although joint monthly meetings were usually held at the district level to discuss problems, they were not geared towards settling major issues. Important matters that could not be remedied locally were placed on the agenda for union-management headquarters meetings which took place on a quarterly basis. These high-level discussions were also relatively ineffective in resolving conflicts, a situation that left the union very frustrated. They nonetheless provided a forum for the union to voice its concerns and obtain more relevant information from the company than would otherwise be possible. Over the years, meetings at the headquarters level took on more importance and absorbed more union resources. Joint meetings nonetheless served to integrate the union within a structure of rules and regulations. As labour-management relations became more conflictual, they also were increasingly institutionalized.

Conversations with union representatives brought out the lack of satisfaction with joint meetings at both levels during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many pointed to the animosity and mistrust which emerged during these meetings as well as between the union and the company in general. They noted that the situation had deteriorated beginning in the mid-1980s. A district chairperson pointed to the limitations of local meetings in solving problems, but recognized their importance in raising issues:

If I had to give a one word answer, I'd say no, we don't resolve

problems. We have a bottom rung manager coming to the meetings. Very rarely are there discussions as far as instituting things. It's become, "well, you give me what you want to do and I'll come back to you next month with the answer." If you look at the past agendas, our agenda items are generally labour relations concerns, problems and that type of thing. The company items are things like, Terminal 2 update, performance review update as far as how the station did for the last six months, stuff like that. They don't have any problems with labour relations, it's all one sided. If we sit and say we want to try and work something out, develop a procedure, no way. Basically only the most innocuous or very innocuous, very simple things are agreed to. Overall, although the company loves to say that we work well together and we got a lot accomplished, my impression is that it doesn't accomplish a lot. The union does use it as a vehicle for getting its position in writing sometimes on certain subjects because once the company signs the minutes, of course that means they acknowledge their position and of course if they don't refute it, it can become a de facto standard or position as time goes by. But, I don't have the feeling that they're that productive.

A district vice-chairperson was astonished to discover the negative side of management:

I've gone to a lot of 18.03 meetings [union-management meetings]. It really showed me a different side of management because you think management's cool and they're nice and you go into a meeting and realize that they pick, pick, pick. I saw a different side that I could not believe. They can be so nasty as well. All they're worried about is getting their way. Oh, granted, the union can sometimes be the same way, they want their way. I mean, we're in there both trying. But still, I just found them so narrow-minded and so childish. Just sometimes you think gosh, it's like being back in kindergarten. I saw a different side of our manager. One of our managers was really outgoing and friendly. She's wonderful, everyone thought she's the greatest thing since sliced bread. You'd get in the meeting and her claws would just come out and you'd see this other side.

A regional vice-president expressed disappointment with headquarters meetings and the length of time it took to deal with issues:

I hope I never have to go again to a UMHQ [union-management headquarters meeting]. They totally bullshit, they say nothing and they do nothing and they're very unproductive. Maybe it's because of the key players that are there and have been for years and it was the little game that they played for years. But they don't come up with anything. When we bring up an issue, they say, "we'll respond in the next one." And then

the company responds in the next one which is three months down the road. And then the union responds in the next one which is three months later. And so it's six months to a year before anything is partially resolved. And you read the minutes and what was discussed, it's terrible. Since we've joined with CAW our bargaining committee is on a permanent basis. These are the people who go to a UMHQ. And I think that they would like to see it much more productive than it is, because all it is is a play of words and to listen to each other talk. It's no good. It brings the issues up but doesn't resolve them.

Some members of local management were also critical of the unproductive nature of joint meetings, as evidenced by the following:

My feeling on the 18.03 is that's it's a forum for them [union officers] to bring out local concerns that are directly related to their particular locations. Sometimes there's some valid stuff, other times it's a rather long-winded session, but at least that way, locally the union and management can get together and fix any concerns that there may be. It's generally just an open forum, there isn't too much that's really heavy. They get fairly candid information from us... I wouldn't say a great many major problems are resolved. Some of the stuff is pretty timid. Other things can be some supervisor bashing whereby the union can be upset over a certain supervisor. And then there's not a great deal that's settled because you've got to take a stand and support people that work for you. You can't just agree and say, "oh yeah, yeah, they're a total idiot and I'll take care of them." So some things are resolved because they're easy to resolve and other things are deferred or just taken under advisement. Or you just agree to disagree at the table and the minutes reflect that... There are things that if they feel are important enough, they'll go to the UMHQ level and they'll be dealt with there. But I've sat on the UMHQ and I'm not too impressed by what gets done there. I think it's just two camps, one on one side and one on the other, and they talk for two days. But I was quite disappointed with what I saw. I expected more resolution, and something done.

Clearly, while the union had succeeded in gaining greater access to the company and had been able to influence decision-making and thus participate in modifying the outcome, it remained relatively weak in the face of a powerful corporation.

Contract Maintenance

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, contract administration also became extremely important in ensuring the maintenance of the negotiated rights of passenger agents. With collective agreements increasing in length and complexity, their servicing became more difficult and absorbed a significant amount of resources. Even though changes were made to streamline procedures for handling grievances, the system remained complex and time-consuming. Given the bureaucratic nature of the union representing passenger agents at Air Canada, a situation similar to that of most North American unions, the formal grievance system remained the focal point of resistance and was a key aspect of the politics of the workplace. Because of improved contract language and changes to working conditions, combined with a more militant union and the company's more aggressive labour relations strategies, the union more frequently appealed matters on behalf of members, with grievances being filed more often to the final internal level and to arbitration. The union's effectiveness in protecting members' rights tended to be weakened by the company's practice of denying a large proportion of grievances. Moreover, the arbitration process proved to be a greater drain on the more limited resources of the union than on those of the company. Nonetheless, more issues were being processed through arbitration and a larger number of cases were being won by labour. The union brought some very difficult cases to arbitration and achieved precedent-setting awards.

The growing number of grievances and arbitrations reflected the uneasy relations between management and labour at the local level. In the context of fundamental changes in the labour process as well as in the economy in general, more pressing issues

were being raised and fought in the workplace. Consequently, in several locations relations became increasingly strained and steadily deteriorated. At times, district chairpersons reported that management attempted to negotiate directly with workers, thereby ignoring the union and the formal structure put in place to deal with problems. Cases of worker intimidation were being reported more frequently, with the intensification in the monitoring of agents greatly contributing to the problem. The following excerpt from an interview with a union representative illustrates the effects on workers of this management approach which exacerbated already strained relations in the workplace:

Avant on avait suffisamment de personnel, donc l'ouvrage était partagé et on pouvait respirer un peu. Il y avait des rapports humains, les gens communiquaient entre eux. Maintenant les gens sont isolés, y'ont pas le droit de parler quasiment. Si quelqu'un parle, on leur demande si c'est business ou quoi. Il faut tout le temps que les employés se justifient. Avec un système de surveillance comme ça, l'employé n'est pas traité comme un être humain, il est traité comme une personne criminelle, quelqu'un qui est coupable. Puis il faut qu'on prouve le contraire, il faut toujours se justifier. Ils nous mettent le complexe de culpabilité très élevé, très fort. L'employé se sent obligé d'expliquer pourquoi il fait ça, pourquoi il ne fait pas ça. Puis, you're damned if you do, puis, you're damned if you don't. Ça met les gens dans des situations pénibles.

An agent talked about workers' constant fear of reprisal, a feeling which was not without foundation given the increasing number of disciplinary cases:

Avec un des chefs, on allait à son patron, et on lui disait, "écoute, pitbull s'excite, tiens-y la laisse un p'tit peu." Un des directeurs ne démontre aucun respect, il dit, "si les gens ne sont pas contents, qu'ils aillent travailler ailleurs, c'est comme ça que ça va marcher, puis si vous n'êtes pas contents, trouvez-vous une job ailleurs, vous êtes chanceux que vous avez encore une job." C'est ce type d'attitude-là... On appelait le directeur, Ceausescu. Les juniors se retrouvent ici, parce que c'est les pires conditions de travail. Les demandes pour aller à l'aéroport, le livre est ça d'épais. Donc on se ramasse avec les juniors, les moins militants, les gens plus vulnérables, les plus maléables. Il y a des femmes qui sont

dans des situations plus vulnérables parce que plusieurs sont dans des familles monoparentales. Pour elles ce revenu, elles ne peuvent pas se permettre de le perdre. Elles se sentent menacées constamment. Ici, on a le record des mesures disciplinaires au Canada. C'est la menace toujours.

A survey of grievance records indicates that a large number of complaints filed by the union on behalf of members consisted in appeals against discipline and discharge measures. To a certain extent, this reflected workers' dissatisfaction with working conditions and their resistance to the authority of supervisors and managers. An agent in the employ of the company for many years talked about the worsening quality of supervision and of the unwillingness of some of the new agents to accept the authority of low-level management:

The rot's set in. They're not interested in you as a person any more, you're just a number today. You just sort of sit back and look at it and think, where's this company going, what's going to happen in the future, what's going to happen when this privatization really comes into effect. Because something's got to happen. Supervisors don't have the job knowledge. They're making decisions that go against the grain of most of the agents. They're just there. They have had no training in dealing with individuals like ourselves. They can't cope with strong-willed individuals, they just fall apart. They seem to pick on people that they can more or less browbeat, like people who would never answer them back in the first place. If they ever said anything to me or some others, they'd get it right back. You know, they can discipline me if they want, but I'll put up a good fight just to prove my point. But they seem to pick on the wrong people and that's a shame. Supervisors are finding they have a hard time coping with younger people. They tend to shy away from them because they're not shy about it. You know the younger passenger agents, they'll just tell a supervisor off in no uncertain terms. I heard one confrontation, the agent actually told the supervisor to go F-off. And the guy looked at her - well that's a strict discipline case you know - and when he sat back after what she said, she told him, "you think I'm going to take this nonsense for \$5.75 an hour." And then, he sort of had to stand back and all he could do was laugh. And he said, "you know, you are right," and he walked away. The older supervisors really can't cope with that. The rot is setting in. Supervisors are causing a lot of problems. They're not doing the job at all. They're just there, period.

I think the supervisors have negated their responsibilities. They seem to have lost all interest. It's like the inmates have taken over the asylum. The way I hear some of the agents talk to supervisors today, if I had said that fifteen years ago, I'd be right out the door, I wouldn't have the nerve to say a thing like that. But it doesn't bother me now.

Rank and file workers adopted their own means of resisting management practices which resulted in deteriorating working conditions and workplace relations. Effective tactics used by workers to express their discontent with management's decisions consisted in refusing to work overtime or accept acting supervisory assignments, and in initiating work-to-rule campaigns which included taking rest and meal breaks on schedule regardless of work demands. Workers occasionally held information demonstrations during meal periods to raise public awareness about specific work-related issues. Finally, absenteeism was a clear indication that passenger agents were not satisfied with their working conditions and overall work environment.

In the context of the many problems arising at the local level, the union and agents were critical of the company for not selecting supervisors skilled in interpersonal relations and for not sufficiently exposing them to training and development courses in areas such as human and labour relations and personnel policies. It was also felt that problems arose because supervisors and managers were interpreting the agreement in an arbitrary and inconsistent manner. The union maintained that this situation occurred partly because local company officials lacked sufficient knowledge of the collective agreement and training in contract administration. The feeling was also expressed that some members of management at both local and headquarters levels showed a flagrant disregard for the collective agreement and that grievances could not solely be attributed to differences in interpretation. Unequal power was a deciding factor in the overall

outcome.

The union's strength was also curtailed because deals that contravened the contract were being made in certain locations between management and union officers. This was a consequence of district chairpersons responding to pressures from members who demanded working conditions different from those provided for by the collective agreement. Some district officers argued that the contract should be used as a guide only, as it was next to impossible to enforce its provisions to the letter. They further contended that cooperation was more effective than grievance action and that flexibility was sometimes needed in order to ensure that workers' desires come first even though this could potentially lead to violations to the collective agreement. A district union representative offered his views on this subject:

The other night, it was busy. The supervisor came to me and said, "I suppose if I push this wheelchair, you're going to grieve me." So I turned to him, "if you don't push it I'll grieve you." You know, it goes with the operation, you can't be finite on these things, you've got to have grey areas. If you're helping out the members and it's nothing major, let it go. When somebody gets carried away, if they're doing it on a daily basis, five to six times a day, you tell them once or twice. If they don't stop, then you grieve. There are situations where you don't cross the line, you either did it or you didn't. But the grey areas is where nothing really major is involved. You can't say, whatever it says in the contract, that's it. That's just guidelines. There are areas where you don't cross over, agreed. That's my discretion.

Other local union officers as well as national and regional representatives maintained, for their part, that the contract was not a guide, but a legal document which was binding on both parties. While the problem of local agreements had plagued the union for many years, it took on greater significance beginning in the mid-1980s because of the need to mobilize workers in light of deteriorating working conditions and in the face of a more

aggressive employer.

Although the union provided passenger agents with greater collective strength to resist management practices, it was nonetheless required to carry out the collective bargain struck with the employer, thus becoming part of the overall structure of control. Conflicts were channelled into impersonal procedures and subsumed to a web of rules, a situation which tended to diffuse the potential for radical change. In addition, the excessive attention paid to bargaining and servicing contracts left the union with insufficient resources to engage permanently in other important activities geared towards developing a more militant membership concerned with broader social and political issues. While the situation was somewhat less restrictive following the CALEA's merger with the CAW-Canada, the larger union was itself limited in its abilities to direct the necessary resources into mobilization and organization activities, especially in the wake of the economic crisis which had a heavy impact on its financial situation.

Collective Bargaining

The state of contract negotiations between the union and the company during the entire period from the early 1970s to the early 1990s clearly reflected overall relations between the parties and contributed to their development. Beginning in the late 1950s, but especially throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the union had made inroads in certain areas of managerial rights which resulted in significant achievements for passenger agents. From the mid-1970s on, however, there occurred a gradual erosion in the union's ability to continue to register gains for passenger agents. Moreover, the union was more often than not forced to fight in order to preserve existing provisions in

the face of an employer increasingly seeking concessions. In this context, collective bargaining became more strained, time-consuming and costly. Key matters, such as part-time work, work schedules, technological change and seniority rights, which had emerged as areas of conflict during the 1960s, became even more controversial. In addition, new contentious issues arose, such as job security, transfer rights, the contracting out of work and the cross-utilization of employees, job expansion, electronic measurement and monitoring, health and safety and pensions.

Most rounds of contract talks were carried out with the involvement of federal conciliators and mediators, and collective agreements were twice renewed under the pressure of the federal government's wage restraint programmes implemented in 1975 and in 1982. Of the ten sets of contract discussions, three were concluded close to one year after the expiry date of the previous agreement. Of these, the 1973-1974 talks led to limited rotating strikes, and the contract ending in September 1984 was only renewed following the first full-scale strike waged by passenger agents against Air Canada in the spring of 1985. The rounds of collective bargaining undertaken in 1973-1974, 1976-1977 and especially in 1984-1985 are worth exploring at greater length because they all raised fundamental issues, were particularly trying and were marked by high membership involvement.

The 1973-1974 Round of Contract Talks

Contract talks initiated in 1973 followed the trend characterized by arduous and protracted negotiations which had been developing since the mid-1960s. After slightly over a month of very difficult direct bargaining to renew the collective agreement

expiring in late September, two conciliation officers were appointed to assist the parties in reaching a settlement.³⁸ The CALEA negotiators protested before the conciliators that Air Canada was distributing copies of the bargaining agenda to passenger agents. Even though the company indicated that the information had been intended solely for line management and not for contract employees, the union questioned management's integrity, stating that similar tactics, which could lead to a misunderstanding of the intent or progress of discussions and give rise to dissension within its ranks, had been used during previous negotiations.³⁹ It also complained that since the reorganization of Air Canada undertaken in 1970, company negotiators tended to discard the original intent and meaning of words and phrases in the collective agreement, thus rendering collective bargaining more antagonistic.⁴⁰

When conciliation discussions held during October and November were terminated due to the inability of the union and the company to reach an agreement, a conciliation board was formed to break the deadlock.⁴¹ While many issues had been resolved with the aid of the two conciliators, a lengthy list of key items remained outstanding when the parties met with the board in early February 1974, including the term of the agreement, the number of allowable part-time employees, wages, and scheduling and pension provisions. The chairperson of the conciliation board indicated that this situation appeared to be due in part to a lack of trust between the parties.⁴² When the board's report was tabled in late February, the CALEA's negotiating team refused to recommend acceptance because not one of the major contentious issues had been addressed or resolved to its satisfaction. In a bulletin to the members, it stated:

Some recommendations of the Report were not even discussed in depth

and their ramifications are both far-reaching and extremely serious for the CALEA members. Agreement was reached on several issues in earlier stages of the discussions; these items are included in the recommendations of the Report but are not, in fact, an award of the Board. We recognize that the contents of this Report may be released by management. However, comments which you may hear from such sources will be predicated upon management interests and will only reflect portions of the proposed settlement. We must warn you not to form conclusions until you have the opportunity to hear a comprehensive analysis of the complete proposed settlement.⁴³

Following district meetings in early March, the board's report was overwhelmingly rejected by the membership. Shortly thereafter, following the appointment of a mediator, the union received another offer from the company which was considered to be inferior to the recommendations of the board. Because of this backward step and the lack of progress in mediation, the union decided it was no longer feasible to withhold economic action. Mediation broke down and a work-to-rule campaign called RSVP (Regenerated Service Vivaciously Proffered) was initiated in most locations. Passenger agents were also encouraged to refuse all overtime and acting assignments as relief personnel for management. Rotating strikes at the Toronto and Montreal bases followed. Because these highly effective actions prompted a resumption of mediation, regional strikes and a full-scale work stoppage, the final two phases of the strike implementation programme, were avoided.⁴⁴ A tentative agreement reached in mid-March was subsequently ratified by the membership.⁴⁵

While the union agreed to a thirty-six month contract and an increase in the proportion of part-time workers, two company demands it had strongly resisted, it nonetheless made important breakthroughs for passenger agents. For the first time ever, the company negotiated a pension provision at the bargaining table. A cost-of-living

adjustment clause was also included in the agreement, as was language which made severance pay mandatory. Finally, scheduling provisions were greatly enhanced.⁴⁶

The 1976-1977 Round of Contract Talks

The following round of contract talks, which began in the summer of 1976, was undertaken in a more constructive atmosphere when compared to the difficulties and animosity that pervaded the 1973-1974 negotiations and earlier sets of discussions. Indeed, for the first time since the mid-1960s, a tentative agreement was reached relatively quickly and without third party intervention.⁴⁷ During the ratification process, however, resistance was encountered from the rank and file, with many members voicing their opposition to the proposed settlement. Slightly over 80 percent of the membership exercised its right to vote (a high rate of participation), with only 62 percent in favour of the settlement. Some passenger agents felt that the agreement was a company ploy to secure concessions in areas other than wages because it knew that the Anti-Inflation Board, which was established by the federal government in 1975 with a mandate to review all negotiated agreements, would undoubtedly roll back wage increases of 15 percent in the first year and 8 percent in the second year. Moreover, workers were angered that the cost-of-living allowance included in the expired contract was absent from the tentative agreement at a time when inflation continued to rise dramatically. Finally, many felt that only a one year agreement should have been signed, especially given that CALEA members had lost ground to other groups of workers as a result of the previous three year contract.⁴⁸

The company negotiators maintained, however, that it was a just and equitable

settlement and that they were committed to work towards achieving Anti-Inflation Board acceptance.⁴⁹ In its submission to the board in January 1977, the employer relied on several arguments to justify the high salary hike. The most important of these rested on the fact that a significant portion of the increase would be offset by improvements in employee productivity, thereby enabling the company to keep overall costs within acceptable limits. The cornerstone of the productivity enhancement strategy consisted in the permanent elimination of restrictive work practices, mainly through the easing of certain rules governing the use of part-time labour and through an increase in the proportion of part-time employees from 15 percent to 20 percent; the inclusion of a clause enabling Air Canada to continue marketing its products through travel agencies, tour wholesalers and other airlines even though these companies might be performing passenger agent duties; and the ability to cross-utilize agents between work locations in certain bases. The new agreement also provided for major direct cost savings. In addition, the previous contract had guaranteed the company three years of labour stability and predictable labour costs. Furthermore, while the wage hike was substantial, pay settlements of a similar magnitude for other bargaining groups at Air Canada had received Anti-Inflation Board approval. Finally, a large raise was required to restore the relation that had existed for many years between the rate paid to cargo agents covered by the IAMAW and the rate paid to passenger agents until the IAMAW settlement in April 1975 which disrupted this pattern. At that time, cargo agents moved ahead of passenger agents following an agreement reached just prior to the implementation of wage and price controls. The two groups of employees performed similar work, the major difference being that passenger agents dealt with passengers whereas cargo agents

dealt with shippers.⁵⁰

Notwithstanding the many justifications put forth in support of the wage increase, the Anti-Inflation Board ruled that the tentative agreement was in excess of the acceptable guidelines and rolled back the settlement.⁵¹ Passenger agents at Air Canada experienced the crippling effects of legislation creating the Anti-Inflation Board, a body which imposed severe limitations on the collective bargaining rights of many workers. In light of the board's decision, Air Canada and the CALEA cooperated in preparing a brief to further substantiate cost savings to the employer flowing from the elimination of restrictive work practices.⁵² Even though the board did not reverse its ruling following a joint company-union presentation in April 1977, the CALEA decided against lodging an appeal because the majority of requests for review had been unsuccessful and in some cases had resulted in further rollbacks.⁵³ Approximately ten months after the initiation of contract talks, the negotiating parties reconvened for the purpose of finalizing a collective agreement which was later ratified by the membership.⁵⁴

Collective Bargaining in the 1980s and Early 1990s

Workers' collective bargaining rights were once again abrogated when the three year contract covering the period from September 1980 to September 1983, which had been hesitantly agreed to by the membership, was extended for an extra year under the federal government's '6 & 5' wage restraint programme. Bill C-124, which overrode all collective agreements between unions and the Government of Canada or its crown corporations, also sliced to 6 percent a pending 10.5 percent wage hike for the third year of the agreement.⁵⁵ The regressive legislation not only had the effect of holding wage

increases below the rate of inflation, but also prevented the union from bringing important issues to the bargaining table, including technological change, health and safety, pensions and improved seniority and layoff rights for part-time workers. However, in order to minimize the impact of major staff reductions on members during this recessionary period, the company and the union entered into a number of agreements to allow for voluntary early retirement, leaves of absence and job-sharing.

In the context of the difficult economic conditions of the late 1970s and early 1980s, employers and governments launched an offensive to limit the rights of workers. In the face of this attack and given impending negotiations that were expected to be difficult, the union recognized that a well informed and involved membership was essential to ensure bargaining strength. Thus far, negotiations had been conducted in a spirit of confidentiality which meant that only general information concerning the state of contract talks had been communicated to members and elected officials until either an impasse or a tentative agreement had been reached. In order to rectify this situation, delegates to the 1983 general meeting adopted a progressive policy and supporting procedures aimed at ensuring that collective bargaining function in as open a manner as possible and that membership participation in, and support of, this process be encouraged. It was felt that if members were informed and consulted throughout contract negotiations, the employer would have greater difficulty in undermining the effectiveness of the union's bargaining representatives, and workers would be more willing to withdraw their labour should such action be required.⁵⁶

The 1984-1985 Round of Contract Talks

When the time came around to negotiate a new collective agreement in 1984, the world economy as well as the airline industry were in a state of turmoil, and passenger agents were still hurting from the cumulative effects of a four year contract and staff reductions. As usual, when the company and the union met to begin collective bargaining, they tabled quite different agendas, but this time both sides were keenly aware that the events of the past few years and impending airline deregulation in Canada presaged very difficult discussions. Indeed, negotiations began on July 11, 1984 and the ratification process was completed almost eleven months later, making this one of the longest and most difficult sets of contract discussions with Air Canada in the history of the union.

During negotiations, the company indicated that it was seeking to significantly improve productivity and efficiency in order to compete and prosper under newly deregulated skies. Wage costs were being lowered throughout the industry and Air Canada argued that it could not continue to pay more for labour than other carriers and still remain competitive. Cost control, greater work flexibility and enhanced productivity, which were focal points in discussions with all unionized employees, could be achieved through a significant relaxation of restrictions on those allowed to perform scope work, the elimination of restrictive scheduling and staffing practices (especially relating to part-time work), the hiring of temporary employees and major wage concessions.⁵⁷

For its part, the CALEA bargaining committee stressed that passenger agents were not prepared to make concessions even if they were aware of the state of the

industry and the prevailing economic climate. The union feared that there would be a wholesale attack on jobs, working conditions and employment security similar to the American situation where, in the wake of deregulation in the late-1970s, carriers laid off thousands of workers and pushed unions into accepting wage cuts and freezes, two-tier pay scales, reduced benefits, increased working hours and less restrictive work rules. Job security was the single most important issue for the membership, especially given the looming threat of deregulation, high unemployment and impending massive technological change in the form of the PRISMAC initiative. Other main issues included wages and benefits, electronic measuring and monitoring of work performance, rights for part-time agents, hours of work, health and safety and pensions.⁵⁸ In keeping with the CALEA's new bargaining policy, the negotiations committee surveyed passenger agents to identify main contract issues and organized meetings to discuss proposals to ensure members' participation in setting the bargaining agenda.⁵⁹ Throughout negotiations, regular and extensive bulletins were distributed to keep the membership well informed on the progress of discussions, and meetings were held to consult with agents.

From the outset, contract talks were extremely tense and conflict-ridden, the effects of which were felt at the local level. While relations remained cordial in some locations, hostility prevailed in others, with union officers reporting that management appeared to be on an all-out offensive.⁶⁰ During interviews, passenger agents talked about the high level of tension experienced at certain stages of bargaining. When Pierre Jeannot, Air Canada's president and chief executive officer, began touring the major bases in early August to speak to employees about the need to reduce costs, especially those related to labour, in order to compete aggressively and successfully in the

deregulated marketplace, the union accused the company of attempting to sway passenger agents into accepting its demands for concessions.⁶¹ In response to Jeanniot's call for workers' cooperation in improving Air Canada's competitive position under deregulation, the union president wrote:

Since CALEA has consistently and adamantly opposed deregulation in all forums available to us, you can hardly expect us now to abandon our good sense and, "in a spirit of partnership", agree to erosions in our wages, working conditions and job security. Curiously, that "spirit of partnership" often seems to be absent on your part when we discuss health and safety protection and job security safeguards related to technological change.⁶²

During the first few months, contract talks progressed extremely slowly.⁶³ By October 19, the union's bargaining team decided to bring the package developed through negotiations to district officers for further guidance because of the profound impact company proposals would have on the collective agreement and on job security. When the union's bargaining committee placed the package before district chairpersons on October 24, they responded very negatively to the employer's major demands for concessions, especially in the area of job security.⁶⁴

This issue had dominated negotiations thus far with the company pressing for the right to lay off full-time employees before part-time employees, make use of an unlimited number of part-time employees and increase their daily utilization. It also sought a greater ability to allow management, flight attendants and others to perform passenger agent work. In exchange for these concessions, Air Canada was prepared to offer a lifetime employment guarantee at the level of the base for all full-time agents on staff as of September 25, 1984.⁶⁵ Arguing that the protection available under the collective agreement was greater than that provided by the company's lifetime job security package,

the union pointed to important problems with the proposal. Firstly, because a collective agreement with a finite term does not bind an employer beyond the expiry date, any lifetime job security provision is legally secure only for the duration of the contract, thereby offering no long-term guarantee. If passenger agents gave up existing contract rights, they could not be assured that Air Canada would accept to renew the lifetime job security clause when renegotiating the agreement, thus potentially making full-time workers more vulnerable in the event of staff reductions. Secondly, the company attached exceptions to the base job guarantee, including telpaking and other technological changes (such as PRISMAC) and the closure of a base, in which case the guarantee would be within Canada. Under existing language, should a base be closed, agents were protected by their seniority and bumping rights. The new job security clause added nothing to these rights. Finally, the protection extended for the career life of the employees covered, barring disastrous shrinkage in business over which the company had no control. The specific conditions under which this exception would apply were not clearly defined, thus leaving workers unprotected.⁶⁶

Because of these restrictions, the union opposed trading established provisions for a limited employment guarantee. Given its policy of supporting full-time employment, the CALEA was against the elimination of contract language which imposed limits on the number of part-time agents and guaranteed that full-time employees would not be laid off before part-time employees. It feared that if all new jobs created were part-time, full time employment would be jeopardized and the ability to transfer as well as the choice of shift would be significantly reduced. In addition, the union was unwilling to allow for a weakening in job-scope provisions that would result in the company gaining a

greater ability to cross-utilize employees.⁶⁷ The CALEA had fought to achieve job security and district officers gave a clear message to the negotiators that they were determined to struggle to retain these fundamental provisions in the face of such a major challenge from the employer.

Reaction to management's demands was extremely negative, with officers pressing for agents to take immediate action against the company in the form of a refusal to work overtime and fill acting supervisory assignments. The union's executive would not condone the former tactic because of its unlawful nature, but it did support the latter. It was also decided that lapel buttons which read 'I support CALEA' would be issued to members who would be encouraged to wear them while on duty. Furthermore, passenger agents were to be urged to voice their frustration to supervisors and managers over Air Canada's proposals.⁶⁸

When the union and the company met on October 31 to continue bargaining, management was informed of the results of the meeting with CALEA officers. The union advised the company that several changes to the proposals would have to be made if they were to be accepted. The company refused to modify its offer and informed the union that it would meet with field managers and supervisors to provide them with an update on negotiations to ensure that they were able to respond to passenger agents' questions. The CALEA decided to embark on its own information tour. Talks broke off, and from November 5 to November 16, the bargaining committee attended membership meetings across the country to discuss the impasse.⁶⁹ This was in keeping with the CALEA's new policy on collective bargaining aimed at ensuring that the membership be well informed and active in the bargaining process. Workers displayed

much anger and hostility when discussing the company's concessionary demands. Once again, the union's leaders refused to sanction resolutions to ban overtime, but supported a proposal for agents to decline acting supervisory assignments. A large number of members pledged their support to the bargaining committee and urged it to stand firm against the company's demands for concessions.⁷⁰

Following these meetings, workers in every location began wearing 'I support CALEA' buttons to express their solidarity with the bargaining team. Local management first requested, then ordered the removal of the buttons, especially in cases where agents worked at public-contact counters. In at least one location, management carried out disciplinary interviews on this matter.⁷¹ On November 23, the CALEA filed an unfair labour practice complaint against Air Canada, alleging that the company violated provisions of the Canada Labour Code by interfering with the rights of employees to wear union buttons. (As mentioned in the previous chapter, an arbitration award in April 1985 upheld the CALEA's grievance.)⁷²

On November 20, Air Canada filed charges with the CLRB against the CALEA for declaring an unlawful strike because certain passenger agents had refused to work overtime or had turned down acting assignments.⁷³ Although the union maintained that it had not authorized a ban on overtime, but that actions by Air Canada management had brought on an impulsive response from some passenger agents, the board nonetheless ruled in early December that the conduct of officers and members constituted an illegal strike and ordered them to cease these activities. Two criteria for not issuing an order had been considered by the board: firstly, the overtime ban had been lifted on the first day of the hearings, therefore putting an end to that part of the unlawful strike, and

secondly, the officers' involvement in members' refusal to accept acting assignments was not a deliberate transgression of the Canada Labour Code. Nevertheless, two underlying factors persuaded the board that an order was appropriate under the circumstances. It stated:

First, throughout these proceedings, the words "anger and hostility" became embedded in everyone's minds. The terms were used, not to describe the mood of an isolated group of members, it was all of the membership and all of the union's local officers from coast to coast. Given that the Air Canada - CALEA negotiations are stumbling down a very rocky road, we can foresee a likelihood of sporadic outbursts of frustration. In those circumstances, we have decided that an order at this time would go a long way to fostering some semblance of order through the predictably difficult sessions of collective bargaining ahead.

Secondly, the board felt the need to:

warn others who may be in similar bargaining positions. In the federal labour relations community, overtime bans repeatedly emerge as a bargaining tool. That issue has been dealt with once again and we have also dealt with the issue of acting assignments. Hopefully, these reasons may have some preventive value that will result in valuable time and resources being directed to fruitful collective bargaining rather than for proceedings before the Board.⁷⁴

Clearly, the state's active role in contract negotiations had an impact on their nature and direction.

In early November, the union requested the assistance of the Minister of Labour to restart negotiations.⁷⁵ After a few days in conciliation in early December, direct talks resumed but were soon recessed for the holiday season.⁷⁶ Conciliation was reconvened when talks broke off in late January 1985, a process which ended quickly due to the lack of progress in critical areas.⁷⁷ Once again, membership meetings were held across the country to inform passenger agents about the issues at stake and to seek a strike mandate. Members gave their bargaining committee overwhelming support with

an 85 percent strike vote.⁷⁸ Many passenger agents were well aware that they were engaged in a very serious struggle, and as contract discussions dragged on, membership solidarity continued to grow in its opposition to Air Canada's demands for concessions.

In late February, meetings began with a conciliation commissioner. During the conciliation period, tension between the company and the union remained high. When Air Canada mailed a copy of its bargaining position to each agent, the CALEA laid charges against the company under the Canada Labour Code for attempting to negotiate directly with employees. The union also criticized management for trying to frighten passenger agents by insisting that a strike would not succeed. These actions, the CALEA argued, were designed to weaken the growing strength demonstrated by the membership and to divide workers. After reading the company's letter, however, some members commented that the information being provided by the union was incomplete. Nonetheless, a number of workers, angered by what they considered unacceptable company tactics as well as by attacks on their job security, returned the Air Canada document either to the union or directly to the company president.⁷⁹

The conciliation report tabled on April 17 was rejected by the union's bargaining committee as the basis for a settlement because it recommended that the union accept concessions demanded by the company while failing to adequately address members' concerns about a number of key matters, including lump sum payments instead of a percentage increase, the long-term effects of a two-tier wage scale, the lack of job expansion programmes to counter the repercussions of technological change, and the impact of individual monitoring and measurement of workers' productivity and performance. More importantly, the commissioner's report did not make

recommendations acceptable to the union on significant issues such as the company's proposed increase in the proportion of part-time workers and its lifetime job guarantee offer.⁸⁰

Following the union's rejection of the conciliation report, direct talks resumed at the request of the company. Though the union was in a legal strike position as of April 24, it agreed to meet with management on April 25 and gave its assurance that no strike action would be taken prior to the meeting. It nonetheless announced a strike deadline for April 28. On the second day of negotiations, the union, arguing that the employer had not demonstrated any flexibility whatsoever in its basic proposals, contacted the Department of Labour to request the services of a mediator. Sessions were held on April 27, 28 and 29. Given that neither party indicated a change in its respective position, the mediator recessed talks on April 29. The strike nevertheless began, as announced, on April 28. The CALEA accused Air Canada of provoking the work stoppage because of its insistence on massive contract concessions.⁸¹

The strike lasted three weeks, during which time the strikers held firm with well organized pickets, mass rallies, telephone trees and good media coverage. The union worked hard at mobilizing its membership and was able to garner much support and involvement in the strike. One agent noted, "a lot of people who I never thought in my life would turn out on the picket line actually did." For many passenger agents, the work stoppage represented a struggle to avoid a wholesale increase in the number of part-time jobs at the expense of full-time jobs. That they might be faced with a choice between part-time work or layoff encouraged many agents to actively support the strike. Concerns about job security were also fuelled by impending technological change geared

towards customer self-service at airport locations and the centralization of reservations offices, both of which presaged considerable job loss for passenger agents.

During interviews, many passenger agents talked about how the strike, while frightening and financially difficult, had given them a sense of the power of collective action and solidarity. For many, the strike represented the first time they had ever become involved in the union and the experience pushed them to see the union in a new, more positive light. As one agent put it:

I think the union did a lot for us, with the loans. We were really grateful. I think it's the first time I've ever seen the union being so concerned and helpful. I bet you that was the best collective strong force that I've ever seen in my life.

Obviously, not all workers participated in the strike. Some indicated that they had not become involved because they were against such forms of job action. This was in light of the fact that they viewed themselves as professionals who should not follow the strike path. Others did not actively engage in the strike because of the need to seek out temporary employment elsewhere in order to survive.

The 1984-1985 talks marked the first time the CALEA focused explicitly on the implications for women of the employer's contract demands. It strongly denounced Air Canada's demands which would transform one of the few jobs where women had access to full-time and part-time work at decent wages and benefits into a part-time, low-paid, women's job ghetto.⁸² Indeed, the majority of full-time workers earned the maximum base pay level of just over \$13 an hour or approximately \$27,500 annually in 1984, which was above wages generally earned by women in the workforce.⁸³ The average 1984 earnings of Canadian women and men working full-time was \$18,087 and \$27,586

respectively.⁸⁴ In addition, other benefits and the relatively secure nature of the passenger agent job had, until then, made it an attractive employment opportunity. Women working as passenger agents therefore had the ability to be economically independent with a standard of living above the poverty line. Clearly, Air Canada's concessionary demands would have a detrimental effect on women's airline jobs and would decrease rather than enhance equality in the workplace. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women, amongst other groups, rallied behind passenger agents. This women's organization, the largest in Canada, also called on the federal government to intervene in the negotiations and order Air Canada, a crown corporation, to drop its concessionary demands which would create a job ghetto for women.⁸⁵

When the CALEA announced its strike deadline, other unions pledged to support passenger agents in their dispute against Air Canada. Given that the CALEA was without a strike fund, support from outside organizations was important to the strike effort. Robert White, then director for Canada of the UAW, announced an offer to open a line of credit of up to \$250,000 to be used for strike support should agents find themselves involved in a protracted struggle.⁸⁶ By this time, a tentative merger agreement between the two unions had been reached, with the CALEA seeking to join the larger, more powerful UAW in order to bolster its bargaining clout in the face of serious challenges to passenger agents' job security and working conditions posed by airline deregulation, privatization and technological change. After close to three weeks of strike action, the CALEA invited White to join the talks. This gave a whole new tone to negotiations and a breakthrough occurred soon thereafter. A tentative agreement reached on May 19, which was subsequently ratified by an 83 percent margin, put an end

to the strike.⁸⁷

As discussed throughout the previous chapters, a number of clauses in the collective agreement were watered down considerably, thus impinging on the job security of passenger agents. The company was successful in obtaining greater labour flexibility through the erosion of the CALEA work jurisdiction, less rigid procedures for establishing and revising work schedules, the ability to hire temporary employees, an increase in the use of part-time labour and the right to lay off full-time workers before part-time workers with certain restrictions. Finally, a level was added to the bottom of the pay scale and the previous base level was modified, thus increasing the numbers of steps to ten and setting the entrance rate at \$6.13 an hour as compared to the old hourly rate of \$7.43. The maximum hourly base rate was now \$13.24. A 4 percent wage increase and a signing bonus were also part of the settlement package. Though the union had not been completely successful at fighting against a reduction in passenger agents' income, it had resisted company demands for lump sum payments instead of percentage salary increases, a 22 percent rollback in the starting rate, a revised pay scale with four extra levels at the bottom of the scale and delays in pay progression for absences such as maternity leave, illness and personal leaves of absence.⁸⁸

The strike was not a complete loss for passenger agents as some of management's more threatening demands were successfully resisted and certain important gains were registered in terms of technological change, job expansion, health and safety, electronic monitoring, seniority rights, and wages and benefits for part-time workers. Most of the passenger agents interviewed felt that the strike had been necessary in order to make progress in some areas and fight the employer's attempt to wrest concessions from them.

One agent noted:

I don't think we could have pushed it much further. I think that what we got was all that we could get. At that point in time, I had talked to the bargaining committee members and they had said that we had reached an impasse. I think that when Bob White stepped in, he got us a little more than we expected. There was a little more money in the pot because of his involvement in the final days.

Agents, however, were not unanimous on the success of the strike as evidenced by the following remarks:

J'ai la certitude qu'on a fait trois semaines de grève inutilement. On a perdu beaucoup avec cette grève, ça j'peux dire ça. Le temps partiel, la planification des effectifs, ça c'est les deux grosses affaires, juste pour ça, c'est épouvantable. Le fait qu'on a accepté que des temps partiels qui soient engagés à des salaires qu'on appelle 'two tiers', ça c'est épouvantable. On a perdu beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup.

During the strike, Air Canada lost some of its market share, and passengers who continued to patronize the carrier experienced some inconvenience. The striking passenger agents did not succeed in shutting down the airline, something pilots or aircraft machinists were easily able to accomplish. As illustrated by the following quote, agents were aware that they lacked the power to bring the company's operations to a halt through strike action, a situation which partly reflected the fact that automation provided outside workers with the tools to offer customers most services:

They [travel agencies] have our reservations computer system. It gets particularly scary because we've had one strike in all the years I've worked here and it just went on and things just kept going, people got on planes, tickets were issued.

Flight attendants who went on strike against Air Canada for five weeks during the summer of 1985 also failed to stop the carrier from providing the majority of its services and were thus unable to resist the watering down of their collective agreement. Even

though concessionary bargaining has impinged on the working conditions of all airline employees, groups of workers where women predominate, such as passenger agents and flight attendants, have enjoyed relatively less bargaining power than other main groups of airline employees where men predominate, such as pilots and aircraft machinists. Women have thus been more vulnerable to company demands for greater work and employment flexibility.

The 1984-1985 negotiations redefined the terrain for battles over several important issues such as part-time work, work schedules, technological change and job security. These issues increasingly coloured labour-management relations in the context of the restructuring of the economy. This round of collective bargaining also marked the beginning of a struggle by the union to protect members against deregulation and recession related concessionary demands by Air Canada.

Post-1984 Rounds of Contract Talks

The four rounds of contract talks following the 1985 strike, which took place against a backdrop of fundamental changes in the industry and the economy in general, were also very difficult for passenger agents. The company continued to make demands for concessions after the implementation of airline deregulation. Collective bargaining in 1988 was held on the eve of the privatization of the crown carrier, negotiations in 1990 took place amidst fears of a deep recession and of the effects of the then proposed federal goods and services tax, while the 1992 round of talks was undertaken in the context of a major recession and an intense battle for market control between Air Canada and its main rival CAIL.

The union had also undergone changes which were to have an impact on the process and outcome of contract talks. Shortly after the signing of the collective agreement in 1985, the CALEA merged with the UAW-Canada which became the CAW-Canada later that year. The CAW-Canada's approach to negotiations was somewhat different from the CALEA's. To expedite the bargaining process, detailed proposals were tabled at the outset of negotiations together with the rationale and justifications for each proposal. In addition, CAW-Canada style bargaining called for a new settlement to be reached by the expiry date of the existing collective agreement. An internal deadline was set by which time a tentative agreement had to be concluded, and if discussions failed to produce a new contract by the preset date, the union negotiators were to recess talks and seek a strike mandate from the membership.⁸⁹ This strategy, which was aimed at putting pressure on management to make decisions more rapidly, was important because collective bargaining with Air Canada tended to continue well beyond the termination of the old contract.

The first three rounds of contract talks which followed the 1984-1985 bargaining session ended with a tentative agreement reached within the union's internal deadline. Members benefited in two major ways from this shortened time frame of direct negotiations. The period of uncertainty was considerably reduced as were the costs associated with collective bargaining, thereby allowing resources to be redirected to other union activities. The 1992 round of talks, however, followed a more difficult path. After initially requesting that the CAW local 2213 agree to extend the expiring contract for an additional year, Air Canada retracted its offer and direct bargaining began. After several months of very difficult negotiations and following an 83 percent strike vote by

the membership, an agreement was reached in early December 1992 to extend the contract for one year with only minor modifications. The union favoured this course of action which provided some stability for members and prevented the company from pursuing its concessionary agenda.⁹⁰

During contract talks in 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992, the union fought to bring back some of the dignity to the workplace and regain the job security which had gradually been eroded since the mid-1970s and especially in the 1985 settlement. Major proposals were tabled which focused on protecting members against the dehumanizing effects of computer-based individual monitoring and measurement, radical technological change, the impact of deregulation, the trend towards the contracting out of passenger agent work to travel agencies and alliance carriers, unhealthy work schedules, the reduction in full-time employment and the decline in real wages.⁹¹ The union was determined to make progress while resisting the employer's demands for additional concessions. Even though passenger agents did not want to suffer further through takebacks, they clearly indicated that they wished to avoid strike action. In spite of the dismal climate prevailing in the airline industry during the late 1980s and early 1990s when givebacks were regularly demanded by companies, no major contract concessions were made by passenger agents at Air Canada during contract renewal talks. However, the union succeeded in registering some gains for members, including improvements in wages, benefits and pensions, limited job expansion guarantees, improved severance provisions, restrictions on the monitoring and measurement of work and enhanced health and safety clauses. More importantly, following intense discussions on the union's demand for a cost-of-living adjustment, a GST clause was obtained in 1990 which helped

prevent the erosion of workers' standard of living in the face of strong inflationary tendencies and the potential effects of the goods and services tax.⁹²

The high percentage of votes in favour of ratifying the four tentative collective agreements reached following the 1985 strike⁹³ lends testimony to members' general satisfaction with the outcome of contract talks during these years, yet also points to workers' resignation in the face of constraints imposed by the prevailing climate within the industry and the economy in general. Activists within the union were aware of the increasing difficulties that confronted them in their efforts to mobilize workers in order to make progress and resist the employer's attacks on working conditions and job security. Referring to company demands for wage concessions in 1993, the president of the union noted:

When people are very busy just trying to hold on to what they've got, they're not out there looking for more. As long as the company keeps saying to them, "we want 5 percent, we want to take away 5 percent," their attitude is "well let's just try and keep what we've got, that would be an improvement." So you can't make any progress, you can't do anything. And the company is playing on those kinds of fears. Deep down inside, they don't want 5 percent, they don't care about the 5 percent. The CAW payroll is \$90 million a year. It's going to save them \$4.5 million our 5 percent, and they're losing more than \$1 million a day. So it's four-and-a-half days. I know it doesn't mean anything to them, they know it doesn't mean anything to them. But what it does do is mobilize people around that issue. Our members, that's all they're talking about. It's "do I have to give up my 5 percent, what would it mean. My hydro's going up, my phone's going up. I don't want to give it up, but on the other hand, I don't want the company to fail." And they're not saying, "what about family care leave, what about childcare, what about those changes they wanted." They're not talking about that. And that suits the company just fine, because at the end of the day, the company will settle for 0 and they will have won, because that's all they really want. And that attitude is really permeating. You just can't get your members to start talking about gains and about progress. In fact, you've got a lot of people in the labour movement today who won't talk about it. They're just desperate to hold on to what they've got. And I think it's a

real shame. And I think that as a labour movement, we've got to be very careful here, because I think we're heading down a road whereby we're jubilant when we just hold the status quo. We're putting out press releases when we get 0, 0, 0 over 3 years. I understand where they're coming from, they're saying, "well if it wasn't for us being such a progressive union, they would have taken stuff away." Well I understand that, but you can't be happy about it. You can't be saying that it's progress, that it's wonderful that you were just able to hold on. So I think that you keep yourself in the right mental frame of mind. You have to say, "it's unfortunate, we didn't make progress here, but what we settled for was not anything to be proud of either. It's just that we got by a tough time."

Immediately following the deregulation of the air transport industry, the CAW local 2213 and other airline unions in Canada did not face the massive assault on their contracts or their very existence that confronted airline unions in the United States as a result of deregulation in that country, but Canadian workers nonetheless experienced fundamental changes to their working conditions. However, in the wake of a major worldwide economic downturn and continuing airline industry restructuring, workers experienced mounting threats to their working conditions and employment security. In this context, labour-management relations became even more conflictual as the company increasingly made concessionary demands and the union resisted these pressures.

Conclusion

This chapter, which has focused on the overall shift in industrial relations over the years, has reinforced the analysis developed in previous chapters on changes in labour-management relations. I have demonstrated that labour-management relations grew increasingly conflictual beginning in the 1960s and significantly worsened over the course of the past ten years. My examination of collective bargaining, contract

maintenance and workplace relations in general has revealed that during the past few decades, workers have been more willing to take collective action to define their working conditions. Passenger agents' growing militancy and collective resistance has taken new forms, including different degrees of strike action and work-to-rule campaigns. Despite heightened industrial conflict, labour-management relations have become more institutionalized. An internal state has taken root and has served to organize, transform and repress struggles, thereby minimizing resistance to overall relations of production. The capitalist state has been an active participant in the shaping of workplace industrial relations.

While increasing militancy has been made possible by the fundamental transformation of the union, it has also been instrumental in this transformation. Activism and organization were rooted in changes at the point of production where employer practices resulted in the radical altering of the labour process and labour market conditions of passenger agents. These workplace changes occurred in the context of the restructuring of the airline industry and a crisis-ridden economy. The heightened degree of industrial conflict thus reflected both greater militancy on the part of workers and more determined attacks by an employer seeking concessions.

Other groups of workers have also displayed more militancy since the 1970s, although there remains much quiescence as well as higher levels of radicalism in the labour movement. White-collar workers in the public sector have often been at the forefront of union militancy over the last two decades. Many of these workers are women. The latter's more permanent attachment to the labour force partly explains the growth in the union militancy of white-collar workers. Moreover, like their blue-collar

co-workers, white-collar workers have often been compelled to resist deteriorating working conditions and market opportunities, a situation that held true for passenger agents. In their comparative study on different groups of white-collar workers, Crompton and Jones⁹⁴ also found that the fundamental reorganization of work and changing managerial practices tended to incite resistance and action. Pat Armstrong⁹⁵ and Elaine Day⁹⁶ point to similar transmutations in the case of nursing.

During the post-war boom, workers were able to realize increases in real wages and achieve improved working conditions. Throughout this period, the threat of massive layoffs did not overshadow collective bargaining. However, with the accelerating pace of capitalist restructuring since the late 1970s, employers and the state have become determined to halt and reverse gains made by workers that reduce flexibility in the workplace and cut into profits. As Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz⁹⁷ have demonstrated, the assault on workers and their unions by employers and the state has jeopardized the post-war accord between labour and capital. Workers have not stood by and passively accepted worsening conditions. Clearly, the fundamental conflict of interest built into the exploitative relationship between capital and labour is being increasingly exposed. While capitalist production relations establish the possibility that workers will organize to resist and fight employers over the terms and conditions of labour, the process of class formation and organization is never automatic, but is contingent on mobilization efforts as well as on the actual reactions of individuals to their material conditions.

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11. CONCLUSION

Paid work, which is a central aspect of most people's lives, has long been of interest to social scientists. Research concerning wage work, however, has more often than not focused on men's experiences. Such an agenda distorts reality, given the massive entrance of women in the paid labour force since the Second World War. The overemphasis on men's paid work settings has tended to lose sight of the fact that labour force work in advanced capitalism increasingly involves manipulating symbols or servicing people as opposed to producing and handling things. This narrow focus has resulted in weakened theories on work. My investigation of the nature, conditions and relations of passenger agents' work is a contribution towards addressing some of the shortcomings of the literature on paid work under advanced capitalism.

As this study has shown, the labour process of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada has been fundamentally reshaped since the establishment of the air carrier in the late 1930s. I have argued that the historical transformation of the labour process of passenger agents is part of the general process of proletarianization of white-collar work. The redesign of the labour process of passenger agents has paralleled the mutations taking place in many other workplaces. The passenger agent occupation has also undergone feminization over the course of the past half-century. This process can partly be explained by the huge growth in women's labour force participation and their movement into clerical, sales and service areas of work. These changes have not occurred in a vacuum but must be understood in the broader context of the historical development of the airline industry and the general political economy. The structural changes at the levels of the economy, the company and the specific labour process of passenger agents created the conditions for the rise of conflictual labour-management

relations and their subsequent worsening, and for the emergence of a more militant union capable of influencing outcomes. These overall transmutations provide the backdrop for an understanding of the willingness of passenger agents to wage a full-scale strike against Air Canada and merge with the more radical and progressive CAW-Canada in the mid-1980s.

Since the Second World War, the airline industry has undergone massive changes, especially in terms of the growth in the volume of passengers carried, the introduction and diversification of fares and other products, advances in aircraft technology, the growing complexity of route structures, deregulation, the intensification of competition on an international scale and the concentration in carrier ownership. With the expansion and metamorphosis of the airline industry over the years, which was part of structural shifts in the overall economy and the political environment, the labour process of passenger agents underwent fundamental modifications. Central to these workplace transformations were major waves of technological change. A succession of technological innovations, mostly connected to telecommunications functions were introduced during the first two decades of the air carrier's existence, and a division of labour took shape. Nonetheless, during this time, the labour process remained highly labour intensive and agents were called upon to understand and carry out many aspects of the job and could operate with a certain degree of independence. By the 1960s, the division of labour had intensified. The decade was characterized by the first major wave of automation. The new technology, especially the ReserVec and automated passenger name records systems, mostly affected the organization of work in reservations offices. With these new systems, the trend towards the programming of agents' tasks and

decision-making into the computer had begun. This workplace restructuring was accompanied by the first generation of Telpak technology which signalled the beginning of the centralization of reservations operations. While these changes brought fears of job loss, the explosion in air travel and consequently in passenger handling functions precluded any possibility of massive staff reductions. Far-reaching technological changes, which were to have a heavy impact on the work of passenger agents, followed closely on the heels of this first wave of computerization. The 1970s were marked by the introduction of, and continuing enhancements to, ReserVec II, while the 1980s were marked by the implementation of the PRISMAC project, which also underwent constant refinements. Both major technological systems have affected the labour process. The 1980s and early 1990s have also witnessed the massive centralization of reservations offices, with Air Canada eventually succeeding in concentrating all reservations services into four major bases. The implementation of these sophisticated automated systems, which have grown tremendously in terms of flexibility and versatility to accommodate the spread of passenger handling functions, has played a major role in redesigning the labour process of airline passenger agents. Extensive workplace capitalization and the consequent restructuring of work have facilitated increased managerial control over workers and have resulted in deskilling. With the introduction of these advanced automated passenger processing systems, many of the tasks once performed manually by passenger agents have been computerized and a vast quantity of information as well as decision-making abilities have been transferred to the computer. These technological innovations have also intensified work, as reservations agents now deal with a greater volume of calls and airport agents now process a greater volume of passengers than

before in a given period of time. By facilitating the contracting out of work, especially to travel agencies, new technologies have also had indirect implications for the deskilling of passenger agent work. Indeed, with an increasing proportion of bookings (especially more complicated journeys) being made through agencies, airline agents have generally been relegated to more routine bookings and general queries from customers. These numerous changes have deeply affected the experience of work and job satisfaction.

Notwithstanding the fact that the introduction of workplace technologies and the reorganization of work have resulted in deskilling, significant countervailing forces have mitigated against a direct deskilling process. The massive growth of the industry as well as intensified competition have led to the introduction of a wide range of new products, the proliferation of fares and the consequent modification of rules and regulations, thereby making the job more complex. However, in an effort to simplify the job, standardize products and reduce costs, the company has continued to introduce new computer software and hardware. This revolutionizing of the labour process has furthered deskilling. A second factor that mediated the deskilling process resided in the service nature of passenger agent work. Agents have been increasingly called upon to make use of well-honed communications and interpersonal skills as customers have become more sophisticated in their product knowledge and more demanding in terms of service delivery. The existence of these 'people' skills has generally been taken for granted and the provision of training to enhance such skills has been given low priority. The employer has assumed that people hired to carry out passenger agent work are naturally endowed with interpersonal and communications abilities and will call upon them when delivering the product. Despite the fact that most agents possess well

developed 'people' skills and can readily exercise them, they may choose not to do so, given worsening working conditions and low morale. It is when these essential unseen skills are not deployed that their importance becomes more visible. The low value attached to 'people' skills in the workplace has both reflected and contributed to women's low status in society.

Since the creation of the carrier in the late 1930s, there has been a general shift in the employer's control strategies. During the early years, management relied on paternalism to integrate the workforce. Traditional methods of supervision, which tended to be sporadic and intermittent, were used to monitor workers' performance. Rewards were largely based on supervisory and managerial discretion. With the growth of the airline, the means of management control became highly sophisticated as new methods were developed and old ones modified. The large-scale implementation of automated systems and the increasing division of labour have ensured the entrenchment of technical control as well as a more systematic Taylorist form of control. Moreover, in the late 1970s, technical control was enhanced when the company began relying on advanced forms of computer-based monitoring to constantly track workers' performance in great detail. These automated programmes have resulted, not only in tighter control over passenger agents, but also in work intensification and standardization as well as in an increase in the pace of work. They have also facilitated the extraction of surplus labour and the enhancement of productivity. These systems of technical control have been presented as inevitable and as necessary for profit accumulation and economic survival.

The company has also historically relied on bureaucratic means of management to integrate its workforce. This form of control underwent much development and

refinement over the years and, by the 1980s, it had become one of the main methods of managing workers. Bureaucratic control, with its formal rules and procedures has come to bear on the labour process and the employment relationship. The direction of work and evaluation of workers' performance, the distribution of rewards and the imposition of sanctions have been rationalized and codified. For passenger agents at Air Canada, bureaucratic control has largely focused on the areas of work functions, transfers and layoffs, wage scales, scheduling systems, travel and other benefits. Given that many of these aspects of the internal labour market have become fixed in the negotiated contract between the company and the union, both parties are required to abide by the rules and procedures, a situation that has constrained the union and compelled it into participating in bureaucratic control. Because this form of control is an integral part of the institutional structure and appears to be dependent on systematic rules and procedures and not on human agents, its visibility as a control mechanism has been somewhat limited. Moreover, because the gains flowing from the bureaucratic structure of the workplace are largely the result of arrangements fought for by workers, the control element once again loses its visibility as the benefits tend instead to remain manifest. While providing protection from unfettered managerial authority, bureaucratic structures have helped ensure the transformation of labour power into labour.

Despite the fact that the company has been able to rely increasingly on structural forms of control, traditional strategies nonetheless remain. Structural forms of control may alter, to a certain extent, the role of direct supervision, but they are always dependent on human agents. As my study has shown, one form of control has not superseded another. Indeed, different methods have usually been combined, though one

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or another has been predominant at different times and in different contexts. Moreover, control strategies have varied according to worker resistance and accommodation. Contrary to the conclusions drawn by many labour process commentators, managerial strategies of control have not become more consensual overall, given the continued and heavy reliance on repressive means of management and given the more recent weakening of the internal labour market. The existence of various types of control reflects the fundamental contradiction that management faces in attempting to obtain the maximum output from labour power that is alienated yet embodied in living, thinking and potentially hostile human agents. There are elements of control and of resistance in all workplaces. Control engenders either resistance or compliance and each leads to a new set of circumstances.

The employment relationship and the labour market-household nexus are fundamental dimensions of the work experience of passenger agents. These concepts help understand the link between the immediate workplace and external structures and realities. The company has generally had access to a large labour market for both its full-time and part-time staff requirements due, to a great extent, to the growth in women's labour force participation. Despite the fact that employment growth slowed and technological innovations somewhat reduced the need for labour, the air carrier was able to rely on staff turnover to balance its labour requirements and thereby avoid major layoffs, at least until the early 1980s. With the need for the company to significantly reduce its variable costs in the context of increased competition and poor economic conditions, massive layoffs, employment insecurity and diminished job transfer opportunities have been a central feature of passenger agents' employment experience.

Much of the reduction in direct labour costs has been accomplished through the implementation of labour-saving technologies and the contracting out of work to independent travel agencies. Contracting out of work, an employment practice which is becoming a fundamental feature of the contemporary employment relationship of many white-collar workers, has greatly impinged on women's labour force position.

Work scheduling and hours of work also constitute central elements of the employment relationship and the labour market-household nexus. The allocation of paid work time affects all workers, but women tend to have a particular relationship to this aspect of the paid labour market, given the household sexual division of labour. Women passenger agents, like other women, have been available for part-time work and have often had no choice but to take on this type of employment. Moreover, the incidence of shift work has meant that women agents have had to rely on the availability of shift trades to balance the requirements of paid and non-paid work. There is evidence, however, that the requirements of shift work have contributed to a renegotiation, albeit always tenuous, of the household sexual division of labour.

With the growth of the airline industry and the continual restructuring of the labour process of passenger agents, there has occurred a fundamental shift in the organization, policies and actions of the union. The union representing passenger agents at Air Canada began as a small, independent and company-oriented association following the Second World War and, by the mid-1980s, had been transformed into a larger and stronger union regrouping workers from several airline companies. At that time, it undertook to merge with the more powerful and progressive CAW-Canada and continued its expansion thereafter. The merger strategy was deemed necessary to ensure survival

in the wake of mounting pressures brought on by the economic crisis, the deregulation of the airline industry and growing attacks from employers and the state. The union also underwent a political and ideological transformation in that it became more militant in its actions and more progressive in its policies, a situation similar to that of other white-collar unions. The expansion and strengthening of the union was a consequence of, and also contributed to the shaping of, this rising militancy. While the proportion of women in the union membership increased from approximately 50 percent in the late 1950s to approximately 70 percent in the early 1980s, it was not until the mid-1980s that the union began systematically placing women's particular concerns on the agenda. These issues, however, have not been central to the agenda and women's participation in leadership roles has remained relatively low despite their predominance in the membership.

Industrial relations also took on a new character as the labour process was modified under changing socio-economic conditions. Though labour-management relations were of a paternalistic style during the early years of the company's existence, more conflictual relations emerged during the late 1950s and worsened thereafter. This situation has been reflected in the huge increase in the number of grievances and arbitrations, especially since the 1970s. Furthermore, beginning in the 1960s, most rounds of collective bargaining were punctuated by rising worker militancy as passenger agents adopted new forms of action such as work-to-rule and rotating strikes in an effort to pressure the company into accepting demands for improved working conditions and also to resist a more aggressive employer. During this period, the state became a regular party to collective bargaining as federal conciliators and mediators were appointed to help resolve major disputes. The state has thus helped shape the overall nature of workplace

industrial relations.

While the union succeeded in making important gains during contract talks in the 1950s, 1960s and first half of the 1970s, the situation was reversed beginning in the late 1970s as the company began pressing for far-reaching concessions from workers in the context of a worsening economy and a need to reduce labour costs under deregulation. Contract talks in 1984-1985 led to a full-scale strike by passenger agents against Air Canada and resulted in a significant diluting of the collective agreement. While the union was left in a much weaker position following these talks, the merger with the CAW-Canada has provided airline workers with more clout and resources to ward off continuing attacks on their working conditions and job security. At the time, women accounted for over 70 percent of the passenger agent group. Women's more permanent attachment to the labour force partly explains their willingness to take strike action in order to fight the continuing erosion of their working conditions and job security, and to favour a merger with a larger, progressive labour organization.

Without a doubt, the airline industry has undergone major changes since the Second World War. Indeed, when one takes into account the growth of air carriers, the diversification in fares and products, the advances in aircraft technology, the ownership patterns and the intensely competitive environment, the industry is barely recognizable from its early days. During this same period, the labour process of passenger agents has also been subjected to profound modifications. Even though the basic job of selling space and getting customers onto the airplane remains the basic function of airline passenger agents, the manner in which this task is accomplished and the conditions under which the work is performed have been altered dramatically. Moreover, the union

representing passenger agents has clearly matured beyond the structural and political limits that characterized the organization in its formative years. Labour-management relations have also increased in complexity and have taken a more conflictual orientation.

The future of the airline industry promises to be more turbulent, a situation that does not bode well for passenger agents. The dismal economy has, and will undoubtedly continue to, hurt air carriers' bottom line given that business and leisure travel has, and will continue to be, deeply affected by the lingering economic crisis. The industry shake-up that has been going on for well over a decade has not yet run its course. The battle for control between Air Canada and CAIL, which is quickly reaching its apogee, has forced the state to intervene once again in the air transportation sector following its general withdrawal with deregulation. The attractiveness of unbridled competition is waning as carriers seek state protection in one form or another. Should one of the main domestic carriers survive the present carnage over the control of air transportation, either through a merger with, or the bankruptcy or foreign takeover of, its rival, it would still be operating within a cutthroat global industry where mega-carriers are rapidly dominating air transportation. The signing of a liberalized bilateral air agreement between Canada and the United States as well as the purchase of large amounts of Canadian airline stock by American air carriers could rapidly lead to the balkanization of the Canadian airline industry.

The current restructuring of the industry, whatever its outcome, will have a significant impact on passenger agent's labour process and job security as well as on labour-management relations. The airline industry has been at the forefront in implementing new forms of information and telecommunications technologies, a strategy

which has resulted in improved service to customers while facilitating the reduction of labour costs. Capitalization of the passenger agent labour process will, without a doubt, continue. Reservations and airport handling functions, both still relatively labour intensive, provide possibilities for future automation. The trend towards the contracting out of work to independent travel agencies will persist as carriers attempt to reduce their direct labour costs and externalize risk in the context of domestic and international competition. The unionization of travel agency employees would address some concerns about job security, but this strategy is highly unlikely because of the difficulties inherent in organizing such groups of workers. While Air Canada has already concentrated its reservations facilities in four major Canadian cities, forecasted reductions in the cost of long-distance telecommunications could prompt the company to further consolidate these offices. Given the reality of economic globalization, there is a likelihood that centralized reservations services could be moved to another country where labour costs are low, employment standards are less stringent and labour unions are weak. Moreover, the drive to reduce costs, combined with the sophistication of personal computers and telecommunications technologies, could lead to the adoption of homeworking in the future. This strategy would allow Air Canada to lower overhead and labour costs and achieve increased flexibility in terms of work scheduling. Such a situation would have negative consequences for passenger agents. Indeed, studies on homeworking arrangements for white-collar non-professional groups have underlined the difficult conditions faced by such workers. Homeworking could also have serious implications for union activity and resistance. Finally, there are indications that the carrier is increasingly moving towards the self-service concept, a change made possible by the

development of user-friendly technology and the computerization and centralization of reservations information. While the Ticketmatique experiment, the first attempt by the company to introduce self-service, was not successful, the PRISMAC initiative, which includes self-service possibilities for both reservations and airport handling functions, has marked a major step in this direction. The technical capability exists for self-service travel centres in shopping malls or other public areas where reservations can be made and boarding documents printed, and for direct electronic bookings to be made from the home or office through personal computers. Bar-code reading technologies also allow self-service check-in at airports.

Clearly, probable changes in the industry as well as the redesign of the labour process, especially through the introduction of new technologies, would have profound implications for the job security of passenger agents, the majority of whom are women. Given present labour market conditions, the prospect of obtaining other well paying jobs with good benefits is gloomy. Modifications to the organization of work and reduced job security would also have an impact on workers' ability to resist. The choice between worsening working conditions and job security, albeit precarious, leaves airline workers in an unenviable position. As well, regressive labour legislation and the overall attack on labour by employers and the state could aggravate an already dismal situation.

This study has revealed that the labour process in a state-controlled enterprise exhibits characteristics similar to the labour process in privately owned corporations. This is probably even more the case for state-controlled companies involved in the production and sale of goods or services. The production and sale of transportation services is clearly different from the provision of state welfare services where the state's

activities are not sold on the market. While theoretically, surplus value is not pumped from state workers, passenger agents, as wage labourers employed by TCA/Air Canada before and after privatization, have had to sell their labour power under similar conditions to that of private sector workers and have never owned nor controlled the means of production nor the product of their labour. Moreover, surplus labour has been extracted from such workers as managers have acted according to capitalist criteria of efficiency and productivity in order to contain costs and achieve profitability, at least to an extent that has ensured that the corporation has not become a major burden on taxpayers and has thus been able to keep the government out of its affairs. While working conditions have clearly worsened, first following the passage of the Air Canada Act in 1977 - which directed the company to contemplate profit-making - and, once again, when the airline was privatized in 1988 and 1989, there is no evidence of a sudden break in managerial practices. The changes have been part of ongoing structural shifts. Furthermore, similar transmutations were being experienced by most groups of non-state workers during these periods of economic downturn and crisis.

This specific case study of women's white-collar work points to important trends in the changing nature, conditions and relations in this type of work under advanced capitalism. These modifications are a reflection of fundamental shifts in the forces and relations of production. Women passenger agents, who had access to relatively well paying and highly secure jobs with better working conditions than those in many other areas of employment, are now facing worsening prospects. It is clear that changing conditions will continue to have negative consequences for women's white-collar and service sector work.

If passenger agents' experience is a reflection of the transformation of white-collar service work in general, and if a huge expansion of the service sector is the solution to the current economic crisis, this study strongly suggests that a future based on such a recovery is tenuous at best and will be problematic for workers. This study also suggests that the continuing destructive effects of the forces and relations of production in capitalist societies on human potential will likely sharpen the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production as workers refuse to lie down and be crushed.

APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The case study is the form of investigation adopted in this dissertation. In order to trace the historical development of the labour process of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada, I have opted for two main qualitative research methodologies, namely interviewing and the review of archival documents. Although these methods were used to generate the bulk of information necessary for the analysis, I also relied, to a lesser extent, on data obtained through observation. Tours of reservations offices and airport facilities were provided by management at the locations where interviews were conducted. In addition, when making reservations for personal travel, I kept notes of my conversations with passenger agents and during the trips, I made notations on the interaction between passengers and agents at airports. I also made several visits to airports in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto where I observed passenger agents at work. Throughout the entire period of data collection, both the union and the company provided ready access to individuals and organizational documentation.

There are different reasons for opting for a case study methodology and for using more than one qualitative data gathering technique. Clearly, the questions asked will inevitably affect the choice of type of empirical inquiry. The single case study methodology offers the possibility of carrying out an in-depth investigation of a series of interrelated issues and of establishing their linkages in order to produce a more complete analysis of social processes. The case study approach is flexible because it allows for a variety of information on a given subject to be considered as relevant. It also ensures that new insights and questions will constantly emerge from the data. Because research is conducted in a receptive fashion, the project is continually undergoing a process of reformulation and redirection as new evidence is uncovered.

With a qualitative historical case study using the data gathering techniques of interviewing and archival research, one can more easily place people in changing contexts. This provides for a richer analysis of the contradictory nature of social conditions and relations, given that human lives are understood as the product of the dynamic between personal and structural factors. The use of multiple methods also ensures a more complete and refined analysis by producing layers of information and by facilitating the cross-verification of data.

Despite the fact that with the qualitative case study approach the statistical representativity of the sample survey is lost and generalizations cannot therefore be made, this limitation is offset by the quality of data generated. Quantitative evidence has generally been highly valued as offering the most complete and accurate basis for explaining social reality. Without doubt, it has been instrumental in ensuring the establishment of social trends and patterns concerning various aspects of society. In addition, it has helped document inequalities. Evidence generated by quantitative techniques is needed to argue for, and bring about, change. The primacy given to quantitative methods, however, has meant that many dimensions of people's lives remain overlooked and thus untheorized.

The overreliance on the limited type of information generated by quantitative methods has created major gaps in our analysis of women's work. Indeed, while quantitative data has been used to measure specific characteristics of women's work and has been crucial in drawing patterns over time concerning the structure and composition of the labour force, little detailed information has been gathered on the nature, conditions and relations of their work. Given our limited knowledge of women's lives, it is

imperative that more qualitative case studies on women's experiences be undertaken as a means of uncovering the relationship between individual lives and societal arrangements.

In order to provide a qualitative analysis of the changing nature, conditions and relations of work, I have undertaken a historical case study of the passenger agent labour process at TCA/Air Canada. There are important reasons for limiting the scope of the dissertation in this way. A detailed analysis of all labour processes in the Canadian airline industry in general is beyond the scope of a single research project. TCA/Air Canada has historically been the largest Canadian commercial passenger air carrier employing a major proportion of airline workers. Given that TCA/Air Canada was a crown corporation until the late 1980s, a huge amount of documentation on characteristics of the carrier and on working conditions and labour-management relations is available for public perusal. Had I decided to undertake an investigation of the labour process of passenger agents at several airlines, the study would, by necessity, have been much more general. Because my goal was to capture the changing nature of women's work, I decided to limit my agenda to a case study of one group of workers characterized by a high degree of sex segregation and employed by a single air carrier. Given that my endeavour required much in-depth investigation, an attempt to analyze several groups of workers employed by various airline companies seemed unwise as this would have greatly limited my time with each case, thereby reducing the quantity and diluting the quality of field data. While my initial plan had been to examine the historical development of the production processes of both passenger agents and flight attendants at TCA/Air Canada, I subsequently decided to limit my focus to the former group. This

decision was motivated by several interrelated factors. Though I had begun unearthing information on the labour process of both groups of workers, it became clear after several months of research that there were significant gaps in the quantity and quality of material available on flight attendants. A study of both groups would thus have required me to forego the more detailed analysis that I had set out to accomplish, and would instead have led me to produce a more general comparative study.

The first stage of the data collection process involved examining historical and contemporary archival documentation. The absence of studies on the labour process of passenger agents meant that extensive archival research was necessary. The archival material was gathered from the files of three main institutional bodies, namely the CALEA/CAW local 2213, Air Canada and federal government departments. The union's archives consisted of minutes of different types of union-management meetings, grievance and arbitration documents, preparatory research and proposals for contract negotiations, minutes of collective bargaining sessions, conciliation reports, collective agreements, minutes of membership meetings, constitutions, general correspondence, magazines, newsletters, bulletins, pamphlets, membership lists, studies, presentations, reports and other miscellaneous documents. The company's archives consisted of employee magazines and annual reports available to the general public. In addition, other material accessed from Air Canada's private collection included management newsletters, general correspondence, negotiations material, employee manuals, operations manuals, studies, reports, pamphlets and other miscellaneous documents. Information was also gathered from documents obtained from Labour Canada, Statistics Canada, the National Transportation Agency (formerly the Canadian Transport Commission), Transport

Canada, Employment and Immigration Canada, as well as from minutes of the Standing Committee on Transport. Finally, general information was collected from industry organizations and trade magazines. As well, newspapers were systematically perused beginning in 1987.

I initially explored lists of collections held by the National Archives of Canada and was elated to discover that both the CALEA and Air Canada had deposited a huge volume of documents with the federal agency. Because access to these organizations' files required their authorization, I contacted the headquarters office of each to obtain permission to consult the material. I also spent time reviewing files in the library of Air Canada's head office in Montreal as well as in the documentation centre of the CAW local 2213 and in the labour relations section of the CAW-Canada's airline division, both of which are located in Toronto. Moreover, I examined documents at the various locations visited. Data collected from government sources was found in departmental libraries in Ottawa.

While an outline of general themes was initially prepared to serve as a guide in determining which information would be recorded, specific categories were expanded or eliminated as the research progressed. I took extensive notes on all major themes and recorded sufficient information on secondary issues for possible use in the analysis. Fully aware that the research process would be time-consuming and hence that there would be a lag between the gathering of archival data and the final analysis, I left little to memory. As I discovered an ever-increasing number of untapped sources, I could not but be amazed at the wealth of evidence available in terms of both quantity and quality. In recording information, I made remarks for future reference and noted questions that

immediately came to mind. Moreover, at the end of each day of archival exploration, I reviewed my notes and integrated them with previous recordings. I kept thematic files and cross-referenced where necessary. Finally, I noted additional questions that would eventually need to be answered to make all the links and resolve some of the inconsistencies that cropped up. I also began designing interview schedules and making notations that provided elements for shaping the analysis.

The initial archival research stage was important because it provided much of the data necessary to tell the story, and also because it ensured familiarity with key terms and issues concerning the airline industry and the labour process of passenger agents. The archival investigation was intimately linked to the interviewing phase of the research. Not only did the documentary evidence supply the material for interviews, but it also acted as a check on the recollection of the participants. When the responses of interviewees yielded information that contradicted previously recorded written material or offered new insights, the archival sources were once again consulted.

The second stage of the data gathering process involved interviewing airline industry people. To a large extent, the interviews were conducted following the gathering and preliminary analysis of most of the archival material. Nonetheless, the research process was not neatly divided into distinct phases of data collection as there occurred interaction between the two research techniques. While carrying out interviews, I continued to keep abreast of changes in the industry and unearth new sources of information.

A total of fifty-eight formal interviews were conducted and conversations also took place with close to one hundred other individuals connected in some way to the

airline industry, some on more than one occasions. While most of the people interviewed were located in Toronto and Montreal, with a small number in Ottawa, some of the participants from the two major bases had previously been employed in other bases. A sample of workers was selected from reservations, airport and city sales locations. Furthermore, an effort was made to talk with people who had worked in different functions. The majority of interviews were conducted in the Toronto base during the summer of 1989 and in the Montreal base during late autumn and early winter 1990. Interviews in Ottawa were completed in the summer of 1990. Further interviews carried out in Toronto in early 1993 enabled me to bring the story up-to-date. Because much of the archival material was located in Toronto and many interviews were to be conducted there, I moved to that city for close to one year. I also travelled to Montreal when required, usually for a few days at a time, to carry out interviews and review archival documentation. The Toronto and Montreal bases were chosen because together they represent over half of all agents at Air Canada. Financial resources, the size of the country as well as the time needed to carry out and analyze each interview - especially given that archival research also consumed a huge amount of time and resources - limited the number of bases I could visit.

Interviews lasted approximately three hours on average. None were less than one hour and forty-five minutes, with one lasting over five hours. When contacted, individuals were informed that interviews would require approximately two hours of their time. Towards the end of the interview, most expressed a desire to continue the conversation for much longer. The shared interviewee/interviewer guided nature of the research partly explains the variation in the duration of interviews. Participants were

given the option of being interviewed either in English or French. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

In identifying potential union officers and rank and file members as participants for formal interviews, the following method was adopted. A letter of introduction from the president of the local union was sent to all regional vice-presidents. In addition, at the invitation of the president of the CAW Local 2213, I made a presentation on my project to a meeting of the executive board, which was well-received. Both of these undertakings facilitated access to union district officers and members. Past and present union officers and activists who could provide a maximum amount of information on historical and contemporary issues were selected from union records. Incumbent officers (at the time of the interviews) were contacted directly to be interviewed. In the case of past union activists, district officers contacted individuals that I had selected and asked them if they would agree to meet with me for a formal interview. As for rank and file members, district officers identified potential interviewees and contacted them to find out if they would be willing to participate in the project. The choice of these people was based, to a certain extent, on criteria I provided to officers. For example, I requested that some potential participants be long-standing workers and that others be more recently hired workers. I also wanted to speak with people who were either supporters or non-supporters of the union to ensure the expression of different viewpoints. Finally, as mentioned previously, I sought passenger agents who had worked in different bases and functions. During interviews, participants suggested names of other individuals I should meet, some of whom I eventually interviewed. Moreover, I interviewed a few people I encountered through friends and acquaintances.

All potential participants were contacted by telephone and provided with details about the research and what their involvement would entail. A meeting place and time suitable to the participants was set. Interviews with union officers were conducted in union quarters while most sessions with rank and file workers took place in their homes. One interview was held in a park and another in a restaurant. During the initial contact, participants were asked if they would be willing to allow the interview to be tape-recorded. All agreed without hesitation except for one individual who indicated that she would give me an answer when I arrived at her home for the interview. She then accepted.

In order to obtain access to Air Canada officials for interviews, I wrote a letter to the vice-president of passenger sales and service requesting assistance. Following a positive reply, contacts were initiated with local-level management in the selected locations, and interviews were set up with company representatives. Interviews were conducted on company premises at times convenient to participants. All accepted that the interview be tape-recorded.

Immediately following each interview with workers, union officers and company representatives, I recorded my general impressions about the session. I also took notes on the conversation that occurred before the tape recorder was turned on and after it was turned off. Participants were warm and welcoming and demonstrated enthusiasm for the research project. Some were surprised that an outsider would be so interested in learning about them and their work experiences. People were extremely generous with their time, a precious commodity due to the demands of their paid and unpaid work. Given the double day of work for many women, fitting in several hours for an interview could be

quite onerous.

In addition to formal interviews, I gained much insight into the labour process, labour-management relations and the airline industry through informal conversations with numerous airline industry people. While many of these encounters were of a short duration, a few lasted over three hours. Though these interactions were not tape-recorded, extensive notes were taken immediately following each exchange.

The decision to interview rank and file workers, union officers and company representatives called for the construction of three different interview schedules, all of which were produced in both English and French. Even though a basic list of questions was devised for each group of informants, with a series of additional areas to be covered depending on the work history of the individual, there was some overlap between the three different interview schedules. I asked questions that solicited both specific and open-ended responses.

I began the interviews by briefly restating the general goal of my project and by reassuring the participants that the conversation was confidential in that their names would never be used and when quotes from tape recordings were selected for inclusion in the dissertation, they would not be identified. Indeed, when using quotations I was careful to avoid the possibility that interviewees could be easily recognized. I then proceeded to ask respondents why they had chosen to work for Air Canada. This general opening question, which was meant to establish the person's work history, produced preliminary information that helped ascertain the specific areas that would have to be dealt with above and beyond the list of questions asked of all interviewees. While basic topics were covered during each interview, the open-ended format of the questionnaire

and the in-depth interview technique allowed for probing. This approach facilitated clarification and follow-up and favoured the exploration of issues that were of particular relevance to each participant. Because some of the events discussed had occurred many years prior to the interview, participants could not always recall exact dates or sequences of events. Nonetheless, given the large amount of archival documentation already accumulated, I was able to probe using some of the information gathered previously. This technique worked quite well as it prompted interviewees to recollect many past occurrences in great detail. I was not, however, only interested in the 'facts'. Indeed, one of the goals of the interview was to record people's interpretation and reactions to work experiences.

I did not attempt to structure the interview too rigidly, thus allowing it to take on the character of a conversation. The use of a tape recorder enabled me to listen attentively to the participants' responses. Though I tried to follow the pre-established order of the interview schedule, I moved easily from one general set of questions to another when warranted by the direction of the conversation. Because of the format adopted, the interviewees felt at ease to ask questions in return. The semi-structured interview technique thus facilitated the active involvement of the participants in the production of data about their experiences. Because interviewees were encouraged to digress into details about their work and other life experiences, they were able to report on happenings and feelings that could not easily be captured by a close-ended questionnaire. Moreover, the conversation-style of, and non-judgemental approach to, the interview often led participants to recount certain moments in their lives that were clearly difficult and sometimes quite painful.

The tapes were carefully transcribed as soon as possible following interviews. During the transcription, I made notations about the various topics and established links. I then carefully read the transcripts several times in order to draw an overall picture of the nature, conditions and relations of the work of passenger agents. I searched for patterns as well as for differences in the themes and in the interpretations. In reviewing the interview material, I integrated the data with the archival documentation which allowed me to reach some general conclusions. The interviews were essential in generating a significant amount of important information that could not have been obtained solely through archival research, and provided a more complete picture of the labour process of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. They also acted as a check on data gathered from documentary sources.

The tape-recording of interviews captured the richness and eloquence of participants' accounts and provided a means to let the latter speak in their own voices. Included in this dissertation are quotations from interviews that vividly illustrate people's experiences and thoughts in their own words rather than in mine. Clearly, however, the product is not simply a presentation of raw and unworked data, given that I have selected the general areas to be recorded and the responses to be reported according to the thematic structure of my dissertation. The quotes used were generally typical responses. When quotes were used that did not reflect the responses of the majority, this was noted.

Even though the number of interviews conducted is not statistically representative, I can nonetheless claim that I found many of the common patterns and experiences of passenger agents at TCA/Air Canada. While a single case study cannot yield definitive generalizations, it can provide important evidence that will contribute to answering

broader questions.

APPENDIX II:

TABLES

AND

FIGURES

Table 1
TCA Operating Results and Number of Employees, 1937-1959

Year	Number of Passengers Carried	Profit (Loss)	Number of Employees	Average Number of Employees
1937 ¹	-	(111,005)	71	-
1938	2,086	(818,026)	332	-
1939	21,569	(411,657)	497	-
1940	53,180	539,263	789	-
1941	85,154	302,437	1,123	-
1942	104,446	494,915	1,662	-
1943	140,276	147,889	2,343	-
1944	156,884	7,409	2,790	-
1945	183,121	32,772	3,272	-
1946	305,442	(1,269,624)	3,641	-
1947 ²	427,967	(1,761,043)	-	-
1947 ³	15,815	136,303	-	-
1947 ⁴	443,782	-	4,393	-
1948 ²	532,555	(1,183,022)	-	-
1948 ³	32,821	(1,750,218)	-	-
1948 ⁴	-	-	5,084	-
1949 ²	648,574	(1,419,444)	-	-
1949 ³	36,512	(2,898,149)	-	-
1949 ⁴	685,086	-	5,137	-
1950 ²	790,808	201,206	-	-
1950 ³	32,701	(1,526,412)	-	-
1950 ⁴	-	-	4,904	-
1951 ²	930,691	3,843,726	-	-
1951 ³	42,646	47,231	-	-
1951 ⁴	973,337	-	5,512	-
1952	1,132,518	807,879	6,224	-
1953	1,307,810	256,230	7,072	-
1954	1,438,349	496,146	7,991	-
1955	1,682,195	190,095	8,503	8,414
1956	2,072,912	1,556,212	8,932	8,788
1957	2,392,713	404,674	9,726	9,480
1958	2,785,523	547,429	10,043	10,020
1959	3,209,197	152,554	10,452	10,358

¹ June 1 to December 31, 1937

² North America

³ Overseas

⁴ Total

- Data not available

Source: TCA Annual Reports, 1937-1959

Table 2
TCA/Air Canada Operating Results and Number of Employees, 1960-1992

Year	Number of Passengers (millions)	Profit (Loss) (million \$)	Number of Employees (000s)	Average Number of Employees (000s)
1960	3.4	(2.6)	11.2	11.2
1961	3.7	(6.5)	11.5	11.7
1962	3.9	(3.5)	11.7	11.9
1963	4.0	.5	11.3	11.6
1964	4.2	1.4	11.7	11.6
1965	4.8	4.0	12.7	12.3
1966	5.3	2.9	14.4	13.7
1967	6.4	3.5	16.2	15.8
1968	6.5	8.2	15.8	-
1969	6.6	1.5	17.3	-
1970	7.5	(1.1)	17.5	17.8
1971	7.4	1.7	17.4	17.6
1972	8.4	8.6	18.5	18.1
1973	10.1	6.1	20.9	19.9
1974	10.7	(9.2)	21.5	21.6
1975	10.7	(13.1)	20.8	21.2
1976	10.9	(10.5)	20.7	21.0
1977	10.9	20.0	20.5	20.6
1978	11.3	47.5	21.0	20.7
1979	12.8	55.4	22.8	22.2
1980	13.1	57.0	23.4	23.7
1981	12.5	43.4	23.3	23.5
1982	11.4	(35.6)	22.6	23.3
1983	10.5	3.1	21.1	21.6
1984	11.3	28.1	-	21.8
1985	11.2	(17.0)	-	22.1
1986	11.3	37.0	-	22.2
1987	11.0	43.0	-	22.2
1988	11.9	89.0	-	22.6
1989	12.0	149.0	-	23.2
1990	11.8	(74.0)	-	23.1
1991	9.9	(218.0)	-	20.6
1992	9.9	(454.0)	-	19.4

- Data not available

Source: TCA/Air Canada Annual Reports, 1960-1992

Table 3
Union Membership by Sex, Air Canada Unit, Selected Years

Year	Members				Non-Members
	Total	Women	Men	Women as a Percentage of the Total	Total
1955	--	--	--	50.0 ¹	--
1957	--	--	--	50.0 ¹	--
1963	1,402	662	740	47.0	--
1966	1,646	869	777	53.0	--
1968	1,852	1,108	744	60.0	--
1971	2,144	1,320	824	62.0	--
1973	2,285	1,434	851	63.0	122
1975	2,524	1,640	884	65.0	14
1978	2,738	1,842	896	67.0	--
1981	3,162	2,265	897	72.0	--
1982	3,082	2,159	923	70.0	--
1984	2,908	2,026	882	70.0	--
1986	3,174	2,219	955	70.0	168
1988	3,346	2,342	1,004	70.0	158
1990	3,471	2,603	868	75.0	119
1991	3,286	2,302	984	70.0	126
1992	3,318	2,323	995	70.0	55

¹ Approximate value based on incomplete data from TCA Labour Turnover Reports

-- Data not available

Source: Statistics Canada, Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act, Part II - Labour Unions; Trans-Canada Air Lines, Labour Turnover Reports, January 1955, December 1955, November 1957.

Table 4
Union Membership by Sex, All Units, Selected Years

Year	Members				Non-Members
	Total	Women	Men	Women as a Percentage of the Total	Total
1971	2,144	1,320	824	62.0	--
1973	2,975	1,825	1,150	61.0	238
1978	3,589	2,262	1,327	63.0	--
1981	4,601	2,953	1,648	64.0	--
1984	4,341	2,673	1,668	62.0	--
1986	4,743	3,336	1,407	70.0	279
1988	4,324	3,027	1,297	70.0	806
1990	4,067	2,802	1,265	69.0	201
1991 ¹	3,895	2,631	1,264	70.0	222
1991 ²	7,765	5,192	2,573	67.0	--
1992 ¹	3,949	2,668	1,281	68.0	184
1992 ²	7,324	4,841	2,483	66.0	--

¹ CAW Local 2213

² CAW Local 2213 and CAW Local 1990

-- Data not available

Source: Statistics Canada, Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act, Part II - Labour Unions.

Figure 3
Morning Work Schedule, Summer 1989, Rapidair, Pearson International Airport

AM	6:00	6:00	6:00	B 8:00	5:30	C 6:00	6:00	A 6:00	5:30	6:00	6:00	6:00
	1*	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MAY 05-07	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
MAY 14-16	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MAY 23-25	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
JUNE 01-03	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
JUNE 10-12	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
JUNE 19-21	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
JUNE 28-30	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
JULY 07-09	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4
JULY 16-18	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3
JULY 25-27	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2
AUG 03-05	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1
AUG 12-14	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
AUG 21-23	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
AUG 30-01 SEPT	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SEPT 08-10	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SEPT 17-19	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SEPT 26-28	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
OCT 05-07	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
OCT 14-16	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
OCT 23-25	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4

* Employee No. 1

A = 7:30 - Sunday

B = International Check-in - Saturday

C = International Check-in - Saturday/Sunday

Figure 4**Afternoon Work Schedule, Summer 1989, Rapidair, Pearson International Airport**

PM	13:00	14:00	15:45	14:00	14:00	15:30	15:45	13:30	14:00	15:30	14:00	15:30
APR 29-01 MAY	1*	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MAY 08-10	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
MAY 17-19	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MAY 26-28	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
JUNE 04-06	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
JUNE 13-15	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
JUNE 22-24	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
JULY 01-03	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
JULY 10-12	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4
JULY 19-21	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3
JULY 28-30	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2
AUG 06-08	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1
AUG 15-17	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
AUG 24-26	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
SEPT 02-04	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SEPT 11-13	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SEPT 20-22	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SEPT 29-01 OCT	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
OCT 08-10	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
OCT 17-19	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
OCT 26-28	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4

* Employee No. 1

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