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WORKING CLASS POLITICS, RACISM AND SEXISM:
THE MAKING OF A POLITICALLY DIVIDED WORKING CLASS IN VANCOUVER,

1900 - 1939

by

Gillian Laura Creese, M.A.

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

June 16, 1986

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submitted by

Gillian Laura Creese, M.A.

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

.....
Chairman, Department of Sociology
and Anthropology

.....
Thesis Supervisor

.....
External Examiner

Carleton University

July, 1986

Abstract

This dissertation addresses the articulation of class, ethnic, and gender relations among the working class in Vancouver during its formative period, between 1900 and the eve of the Second World War in 1939. The historical development of a labour market segregated by ethnicity and gender is traced, and the effect of labour market segregation, ethnic relations of white domination, and patriarchal relations of male domination on the political practices of the working class is assessed. It is shown that the economic and political marginality of Asian and women workers in British Columbia affected their involvement in the Vancouver labour movement. Although many Asian and women workers played an active role in labour struggles, both were in a much weaker position than white male workers. Moreover, the practices of the predominantly white male labour movement reinforced the marginal position of Asian workers through exclusion, and women workers through the perpetuation of relations of dependence. Political divisions within the labour movement reflected the salience of ethnicity and gender in defining workers' lives, while at the same time reproducing the subordination of Asians and women within the labour market and throughout civil society. Conditions facilitating solidarity within the working class began to develop during the severity of the economic depression of the 1930s, when socialist politics were strengthened, and when Asian workers and women workers began to place their own issues on the political agenda of the Vancouver labour movement.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This dissertation is a study of ethnic and gender divisions within working class politics. Most studies of working class politics have concentrated on the conflict between capital and labour to the exclusion of political conflicts occurring within classes. Such studies overlook the heterogeneity of working class experiences, the salience of other relations of inequality for political developments, such as gender and ethnicity, and the contradictory effects of political action pursued by some workers on the conditions facing other workers. In contrast, this study focuses on the articulation of ethnicity and gender with class relations in the structuration of a militant yet politically divided working class.

This study addresses the articulation of class, ethnicity, and gender within the working class in Vancouver during its formative period, from the turn of the 20th century until the eve of the Second World War. An ethnically and gender segregated labour market had formed in British Columbia by the turn of the 20th century. This study traces the parameters of a segregated labour market and analyses its effects on the political development of the Vancouver labour movement. The practices of white male and female, and Chinese and Japanese male workers are examined.[1] Both ethnicity and gender were important determinants of working class life in Vancouver. The material realities of working class life included an ethnic hierarchy between whites and Asians, and a gender hierarchy between men and

women that, to a large extent, defined the conditions of work and wages and the nature of citizenship and political rights within civil society. Ethnic and gender relations, therefore, had a profound effect on the development of the labour movement in Vancouver.

The history of labour organization in British Columbia has received considerable attention from historians and social scientists largely as a result of its more militant character in comparison with the rest of the country. Research has focused on the nature of 'western radicalism', concentrating on the institutional history of white male workers to the virtual exclusion of visible minority workers and female workers in the province. The history of trade union militancy is, however, intimately linked with ethnic conflicts within the working class and manifest in a history of anti-Asian agitation within the trade union movement. As white workers began to collectively organize in the workplace and in political parties to improve their living and working conditions, anti-Asian agitation to exclude Asian immigrants and protect white workers from cheap labour competition formed a major part of labour's strategy against capitalist employment practices in the province (see Bercuson, 1977; Loosmore, 1954; McCormack, 1977; Pentland, 1979; Phillips, 1967b; Roy, 1973, 1976, 1980b, 1981; Schwantes, 1979; Ward, 1978, 1981; and Wynne, 1978). In fact the conjuncture of a radical, often socialist, class consciousness expressed through the early trade union movement and the virulent racism embodied in much of its labour strategy, is one of the more notable features of British Columbia labour history.

There have been several attempts to explain the high level of anti-Asian agitation within the British Columbia labour movement. The most common explanations focus either on economic relations or on cultural differences and psychological factors, or sometimes on their combination.

Paul Phillips has made the most concerted effort to explain the coexistence of radical class consciousness and racism within the British Columbia labour movement. According to Phillips, the primary reason for anti-Asian agitation was labour competition between high-wage white workers and low-wage Asian workers. Lower wages, longer hours of work, and recruitment as strikebreakers, made Asian workers a considerable threat to the standard of living of white workers.-According to Phillips (1973:47), "the threat, as seen by the workers, to employment and safety standards posed by the orientals, both weakened and strengthened the labour movement". It weakened the labour movement by dividing the working class, but it strengthened the labour movement "in its resolve to unite for political purposes to gain legislative limitation of oriental immigration" (1973:47). Thus for Phillips, the economic threat posed by a minority of cheap workers actually facilitated the development of class consciousness among those workers who felt threatened. The presence of cheap Asian labour "stimulated labour political organization, militancy, and class conflict" in the province (1967b:163). Phillips outlines the contradictory effect of anti-Asian agitation, forming both a mobilizing focus for white labour and an ethnically divisive force at the same time. However, he fails to address why a perceived threat should result in exclusive rather than inclusive

organization in an attempt to end labour competition.

Like Phillips, Thomas Loosmore (1954) and Robert Wynne (1978) also explain anti-Asian activity within the white labour movement in terms of economic competition. Loosmore argues that opposition to cheap Asian labour was one of the few common elements found among British Columbia labour organizations in the late 19th century. Similarly, Wynne stresses the unifying nature of white working class opposition to cheap Asian labour in California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. "The Chinese provided the focal point around which the working men and some reformers could gather in their fight against big business and capital" (Wynne, 1978:463). However, neither author questions why economic competition should produce exclusive rather than inclusive labour practices.

Patricia Roy (1980b:161) has argued that anti-Asian agitation was in fact "rooted in fear of Asian superiority". Fear of the economic competition of Asian workers was based on perceptions of Asians as superior workers, superior in the sense that they worked harder, for less, and yet appeared to thrive. Direct competition for jobs may have been less important than the fear of potential competition in the future. Farmers and small businessmen, Roy (1976) argues, did not object to Asian labour so long as the latter laboured for them; however, when Asians began to save enough to open small businesses and farms that might compete with white businesses, then Asian competition became an issue for this group as well. Roy (1976:244) argues that economic competition was not the only factor in racial hostility, fear for the future of a "white" British Columbia was an additional

underpinning of the anti-Asian movement. Rather than integrate these psychological motivations into her analysis, however, Roy introduces them as an ad hoc addition to an otherwise economic theory of racial antagonism.

Carlos Schwantes also attempts to link the psychological with an essentially economic analysis of labour racism. Schwantes (1979:24-32) argues that "Sinophobia...blatantly combined job consciousness with class consciousness under the banner of white solidarity" and that at times workers "exhibited a class consciousness based on race". The racial nature of white working class consciousness was a result of the labour policies of "ruthless entrepreneurs" who used Asian workers to break strikes and to keep wages low. Schwantes also fails to explain why capitalist labour practices should result in exclusive rather than inclusive labour organization. Furthermore, Schwantes links race and class consciousness in a descriptive rather than an analytic fashion, thus limiting the explanatory power of his argument.

David Bercuson (1977) and H. Clare Pentland (1979) both consider the way that different ethnic groups were inserted into the economy in British Columbia. Bercuson argues that immigrants who came from conditions that were worse than those experienced in western Canada constituted a conservative element, whereas those whose expectations were for a considerably better life than they found in Canada were frustrated and radicalized. According to Bercuson, this resulted in a radical British white working class alongside a very conservative docile Asian labour force that was easily recruited for strikebreaking and accepted lower

wages and poor working conditions without resistance. For Bercuson, the difference in class consciousness accounts for the racial conflict between these two groups. In contrast, the research presented in this study challenges assumptions about the extent of Asian labour docility, and suggests that white racism contributed to the difficulties of Asian labour organization. Bercuson's theory fails to consider the relationship between white and Asian workers and the effect that the labour movement had in reproducing relations of subordination within the working class.

In contrast to Bercuson, Pentland considers the mix of different ethnic groups in mitigating or facilitating labour unity. When "low-status immigrants" constituted a small percentage of the labour force, British and other northern European workers were more likely to support "institutions committed to general welfare, such as industrial unionism and socialism" (1979:73). When there were larger numbers of low-status immigrants, however, each ethnic group tended to "retreat into their ethnic-status shell" and build exclusive unions. Pentland argues that the situation in British Columbia conforms to the first case. "The presence in the west of a minority of socially-untouchable Orientals only consolidated other workers the more" (1979:73). Pentland does not account for the fact that until the First World War support for industrial unions and socialism in British Columbia also tended to be exclusionary, and that the 'socially-untouchable Orientals' were not recruited into the labour movement. Thus Pentland does not provide an explanation for the coexistence of a radically class

conscious and explicitly racist labour movement in the western province.

A. Ross McCormack (1977) also considers ethnic-cultural differences and economic competition as the source of racism in the British Columbia labour movement. Racism was essentially a product of cheap labour competition in a context where the cheap labour group "remained unassimilated and, therefore, impossible to organize" (1977:10). McCormack's assertion that Asians were impossible to organize reflects the general argument of white workers at the time, but it is nonetheless a questionable assumption. The white labour movement did not try to organize Asian workers in the period before the First World War and yet, as we shall see, Asian workers did engage in strikes and labour organization. Thus McCormack reiterates the questionable assumption that the labour movement had no alternative other than to exclude Asians because to include them was impossible.

In contrast to all of the authors cited above, W. Peter Ward does not consider economic competition between labour groups a central feature of trade union anti-Asian activity. Ward advocates a purely psychological explanation for anti-Asian racism in British Columbia, and sees no difference between its expression within the working class or in any other class in the province. For Ward, racism is quite simply not a class issue. He writes:

For the most part those who have previously studied the Asian question in British Columbia have assumed, if not concluded, that anti-Orientalism was grounded in economic tensions created by the availability of cheap Asian labour in a maturing industrial capitalist economy. My argument, on the contrary, holds that racism in British Columbia was

fundamentally a problem in the social psychology of race relations. To me, economic strains, while in many instances important sources of racial conflict and prejudice, ultimately were subordinate to psychological tensions as the central locus of racial animosity (1978:ix).

Ward argues that the acceptance of stereotypes about the 'Chinese character' were at the root of the anti-Asian movement. He never considers, however, the historical development of those stereotypes, the conditions under which they affect social practices, or the class location of racial conflict. As we shall see, immigration policy was a class divided political issue in British Columbia. While employers of labour lobbied for increasing Asian immigration until the First World War, organized labour began agitating for the exclusion of Asians in the 1880s. In Ward's desire to reject the role of economic conflict in anti-Asian racism he goes on to reject the importance of class in provincial politics as a whole. "Class boundaries were at best secondary divisions in provincial society"; the major cleavages in the social structure in British Columbia were those based on race (1981:590). In fact Ward (1978:22) goes so far as to suggest that class radicalism was really an issue of race: "at the bottom of west coast radicalism lay the frustrated vision of a 'white' British Columbia".

We should not minimize the extent to which race formed a major social division within British Columbia. It is mistaken, however, to conclude that class is therefore secondary in importance. To attribute class conflict to racial antagonism is to ignore the central conflict between the interests of capital and labour and its expression within labour politics in British Columbia and elsewhere. It is important to recognize, however,

that because ethnicity was a major social division within British Columbia the nature of the class struggle was shaped by hierarchical relations of white domination and Asian subordination. What underlies Ward's assertion of the primacy of race is an essentially idealist analysis that makes no attempt to root racist stereotypes in an historical and social context where they have meaning and effect. For this reason Ward's analysis of racial conflict in British Columbia provides little insight into the anti-Asian movement since he denies that the working class context of this movement had any significance whatsoever.[2]

A flaw within all labour history in British Columbia has been the juxtaposition of class conscious yet racist white workers alongside ethnically conscious yet politically passive Asian workers. Due to the emphasis on labour institutions and political parties, however, the role of Asian workers within the labour movement has been ignored. Asian workers fell outside of these institutions before the Second World War. Thus we have been left with little more than impressions that the major role Asian workers played in the labour movement was to act as strike-breakers and cheap labour competition. As we shall see, however, assumptions about Asian labour docility have been exaggerated. Asian workers faced considerable impediments to successful labour organization, not the least of which were the anti-Asian activities of the organized white trade union movement. Nevertheless, Chinese, Japanese and East Indian workers did organize their own trade unions and took part in strikes which increased in frequency after the First World War and during the depression of the 1930s.

The following study will show that racism was not simply a product of labour competition in an ethnically segregated labour market. Anti-Asian exclusion within the white labour movement occurred in the context of the subordinate political status of cheaper Asian workers within civil society, with Asians denied political rights and citizen or settler immigration status. The marginal political status of Asian workers made the possibilities of successful labour militancy much less likely for Asian workers than for white workers, and legitimated white workers' exclusion of a group already defined as inferior by the state. Moreover, the practices of the white labour movement contributed to the economic and political marginalization of Asian workers, and to their relative docility within the workplace, by strengthening impediments to Asian labour organization. As we shall see, Asian workers were most militant during periods when socialist politics thrived in Vancouver and white workers adopted inclusive rather than exclusive strategies toward Asian workers.

Labour histories of British Columbia have centred on the 'radical' history of the formally organized labour movement. This has resulted in the absence of both Asian workers and women workers from the official histories of workers' struggles. A survey of the major sources on the labour movement in the province demonstrates a complete lack of reference to women workers, to their conditions of work, or to their involvement in the labour movement (see Phillips, 1967b; McCormack, 1977, Robin, 1968, and Schwantes, 1979). Women workers in British Columbia, as elsewhere, have been ignored by researchers. British Columbia labour history is flawed not only by its failure to record the

history of women's work, their involvement in trade unions, strikes, and other labour politics, but also by its failure to consider the impact of trade union strategies on the lives of female workers. As this study will demonstrate, the labour movement was often explicitly sexist in its practices, and its white male membership have helped to entrench the subordination of women in the labour market and in the home.

The role of women in the British Columbia labour movement has recently attracted attention from some feminist researchers. The history of female workers remains largely undocumented, but three recent articles have challenged assumptions that women were not active within labour politics (see Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg, 1984; Campbell, 1980, and Rosenthal, 1979). In addition, for the first time the role of Asian women in the labour market has been considered (see Adilman, 1984). For the most part, however, the ethnic bias found in traditional labour history is reflected in the history of female workers, and consideration of female involvement in labour politics has been restricted to the activities of white women.

Rosenthal (1979) challenges the assumption that women were 'unorganizable' and documents a broad range of trade unions, and a more limited number of strikes, in which women played an active role in Vancouver before the First World War. As Rosenthal has argued:

When the nature of women's work and of their lives at this period in time [1900-1915] is looked at, it is not justifiable to assume simply that their own psychology was to blame...The objective difficulties surrounding unionization must have been enormous for them (1979: 54).

Women were often physically isolated from each other in the workplace, working as domestics, as piece workers at home, and in small shops and offices. They lacked places to meet or access to media, and their long hours of work, followed by more hours of work in the home, probably left them mentally and physically exhausted (Rosenthal, 1979: 54-55). Furthermore, women's political activities were hampered by their impermanence in the labour force, their domestic responsibilities, and by attitudes which established 'respectable' women's behaviour and maintained labour politics as a male preserve (see also Frager, 1983). In spite of these difficulties, however, women formed their own unions, took part in other unions, waged strikes, and were generally much more active in labour politics in Vancouver than has generally been assumed. The extent of women's labour militancy suggests, according to Rosenthal (1979:41), "either a large degree of class-consciousness, or a large degree of desperation, or both". Rosenthal does not consider the role that male trade unionists played in subordinating women within the labour movement and within the labour market, but the myth that women did not organize, or were unorganizable, is challenged by her research on working women in British Columbia.

Marie Campbell (1980) has concentrated on the sexist practices of male trade unionists as an explanation for women's lesser involvement in labour politics in British Columbia. Campbell sets out to show:

...how sexism featured in the relations set up and enforced by union practices, and beyond that, how unions used sexist practices as a means, along with racist practices, of differentiating among competitors for privileged positions in

the labour force (1980: 167).

Male trade unions often excluded women from unions, protected male jobs, entrenched male-female wage differences in unions where women were included, defined union objectives around male interests, maintained control over labour knowledge through control of labour media and the definition of issues, turned to middle class women's reform groups when issues regarding women did emerge (for example on issues of minimum-wage legislation and child care provisions), and generally "excluded informed participation by women and maintained policy dominated by men" (Campbell, 1980: 173). Campbell argues that sexist practices in the labour movement were a method of alleviating the threat that cheap female labour posed to higher paid male jobs. Sexist labour practices maintained a sex-segregated labour force, while at the same time providing capital with a pool of cheap labour (1980: 183). Campbell's work is an important contribution to British Columbia labour history, providing a description of sexist labour practices and some consideration of its effect on the continued subordination of female workers. Its explanatory power is limited, however, since there is no consideration of why sexist practices, rather than inclusive labour practices, should result from cheap labour competition, nor any evaluation of whether women were, given a sex-segregated labour market, actually in competition with men for jobs. As we shall see, competition from cheap female labour was less important for sexist labour practices than were patriarchal relations that defined women as male dependents. In contrast to the preoccupation with the threat of cheap Asian labour, only under certain conditions did the

white male labour movement consider men's jobs to be threatened by cheap female labour.

Josie Bannerman, Kathy Chopik and Ann Zurbrigg (1984) have attempted to analyse the history of the struggle for equal pay for women in British Columbia with reference to a theory of patriarchy in which men have institutionalized access to power and women do not. Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg argue that the role of the trade unions in the equal pay struggle has been contradictory:

On the one hand they have supported equal pay for equal work as a means of removing women from competition with men, but, at the same time, they have kept the issue alive by including it in formal settlements of principles and by publicizing the less than living wages which most women paid workers earned (1984: 298).

According to these authors, the trade union movement adopted equal pay principles as a means of excluding women from labour competition with men because patriarchal attitudes about women predominated in the male-dominated labour movement. Women were considered dependents of husbands and fathers, working for supplementary wages. Furthermore, women's labour was considered to be worth less than men's, so equal pay was expected to result in the employment of men rather than women. Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg argue that conflicts between the interests of male and female workers were always resolved in the interests of men due to the relative absence of women from the labour movement. Evidence presented in this study suggests, in contrast, that the British Columbia labour movement typically did not support equal pay for women. When equal pay was endorsed during the two world wars, it was an attempt to maintain high male wages when the war

ended and men, returned to their traditional jobs. Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg do not adequately consider the relationship between patriarchal relations within the home, a sex-segregated labour market, and sexist labour practices. But although the theoretical framework is weak, the linkage between trade union practices and patriarchal relations provides an important starting point for the study of female workers.

In the following study it will be argued that sexism within the labour movement was not simply a product of wage differentials in a gender segregated labour market. Labour strategies in Vancouver were rooted both in the realities of the existing family-household system, with a male breadwinner and a dependent female domestic labourer, and in an ideology that posited this structure as desirable and the domesticity of women as appropriate for their sex. At the same time, economic realities forced many single and married working class women into wage labour. Because of their dependence within the family, women were economically and politically marginal workers, a condition that adversely affected their involvement in labour politics. As we shall see, male strategies within the labour movement were linked to the pursuit of a male 'family wage' with the hope that this would preclude the necessity of women entering wage labour. These strategies reinforced the dependence/subordination of women in the labour market, further hindered their ability to engage in labour politics and, at the same time, entrenched their dependence within the family by maintaining low wages and few job opportunities for women.

Labour research in British Columbia has ignored working women

and non-white workers and assumed that the interests of white male trade unionists were identical to the interests of the working class.' The contradictions involved in labour strategies have been ignored. Yet labour strategies that sought to advance the interests of organized men often proved detrimental to female workers, or advanced the interests of white workers while penalizing Asian workers. If we are to redress the ethnic and gender biases within working class studies we must do more than document the existence and participation of women and Asian workers in the labour movement, we must reconsider the way that the working class is 'made' in a politically divided form.

To uncover the heterogeneity of working class practices that can, at the same time, be class conscious and racist and/or sexist, it is necessary to consider the heterogeneity of working class experiences. Workers are not all white men; women and Asian workers faced, and continue to face, experiences in the workplace and in civil society different from those of white male workers. Thus the perceived 'interests' of white workers, Asian workers, male and female workers, are not necessarily the same, and may in fact be contradictory. Moreover the resources that different groups of workers can draw on in the struggle for better wages and working conditions varies, with the result that white men have historically been in a stronger position to assert their interests than women or Asian workers. As we shall see, the relations between the practices of white men, Asians, and women workers could either reinforce the subordination of the more marginal workers or challenge racism and sexism through unified working class practices.

This dissertation analyses the political practices of white male and female, and Chinese and Japanese male workers, in the Vancouver area before the Second World War. White and Asian men and women played different roles within the Vancouver labour movement. Each faced different conditions in the labour market, in civil society, and varying political and economic resources that could be marshalled in labour conflicts. None of these workers were completely absent from labour politics, but white men dominated the labour movement throughout the period under study. The strategies of the dominant white male labour movement toward women and Asian workers, the repercussions of labour practices on the subordination of those workers, and the participation of women and Asian workers in Vancouver labour politics, are addressed in the following analysis of the 'making' of a politically divided working class in Vancouver.

In the next chapter I outline the theoretical concepts that will be used to analyse the 'making' of an ethnically and gender segregated working class in Vancouver. These include the social history tradition of the 'making' of classes, contributions to theorizing the relationship between class and ethnicity, and contributions to theorizing the relationship between class and gender in capitalist societies. A fuller analysis of working class politics in British Columbia requires an understanding of the historical articulation of patriarchal and ethnic hierarchies of subordination with class relations in Canada. In the third chapter I outline the method used to analyse contradictory practices within the Vancouver working class and explore the 'making' of a politically divided working class.

Chapter four traces the parameters of an ethnically segregated labour market in British Columbia. The constitution of Asian workers as cheap labour and white workers as dear labour in British Columbia, is explained in terms of the history of British colonialism and uneven capitalist development, and emphasizes the role of the Canadian state in according Asians an inferior status within civil society. Chapter five documents the history of the anti-Asian movement within the white working class and the history of labour militancy among Asian workers. The relationship between white labour racism, Asian labour militancy, and the rise of more unified working class practices during the depression of the 1930s is analysed. It is argued that there was a dialectical relationship between white labour racism and relative Asian labour docility, and between socialist ideologies, inclusive working class practices, and Asian labour militancy in Vancouver.

Chapter six traces the parameters of a gender segregated labour market in British Columbia, and analyses the links between women's dependence within the family and their role as cheap wage labourers. Chapter seven documents the pattern of male labour strategies toward female workers in Vancouver, the history of labour militancy among working women, and the relationship between male labour practices and women's labour politics. Labour strategies toward female workers centered on protective legislation, the institution of a male 'family wage', and female organization as an adjunct to male labour strategies. It is argued that there was a dialectical relationship between sexist practices within the male labour movement, the relative docility

of women in labour politics, and their continued dependence/subordination to men in the family-household system. Recognition of women as equal workers and citizens, rather than as dependents of men, was a prerequisite to breaking the cycle of sexism and cheap female labour. This had barely begun to occur, however, before the Second World War.

Finally, chapter eight draws some general conclusions about the articulation of class, ethnicity and gender in Vancouver labour politics. It is argued that ethnic and gender divisions in the labour movement were products of the structures of inequality that defined workers lives. White male workers, white female workers, and Asian male and female workers were treated differently in the labour market and in civil society. The practices of the labour movement generally reproduced the greater subordination of women and Asians within the working class. The definition of Asians as 'non-settlers' by the Canadian state, legitimated white workers' exclusion of a group of 'foreigners' already defined as inferior within civil society. The structure of the family, with women as primary domestic labourers dependent on male breadwinners, generated strategies to maintain women's proper sphere and provide an adequate 'family wage' for male workers. Socialist politics facilitated inclusive practices that helped to break down ethnic divisions in the working class. Socialists did not question the assumption that domesticity was women's appropriate role, however, so female workers were not treated more equitably during upsurges of socialist politics. The centrality of patriarchal relations within the labour movement was challenged, however, as women began to place demands

for female equality on the political agenda.

This study demonstrates the importance of theorizing ethnic and gender relations as constitutive elements of class formation in Canada. The contradictions and conflicts generated by ethnic and gender relations within the working class are essential elements of the structuration of classes. In Vancouver before the Second World War, the heterogeneity of working class experiences resulted in the 'making' of a politically divided working class. Political divisions within the labour movement reflected the salience of ethnicity and gender in defining workers' lives, while at the same time reproducing the subordination of Asians and women within the labour market and in civil society. The economic and political marginality of Asian and women workers in British Columbia affected their involvement in the Vancouver labour movement. Both Asian and women workers participated in labour politics from a position of weakness vis-a-vis white male workers. At the same time, the practices of the predominantly white male labour movement reinforced the marginal position of Asian workers through exclusion, and women workers through the perpetuation of relations of dependence on men. Conditions facilitating solidarity within the working class began to develop during the severity of the economic depression of the 1930s, when socialist politics were strengthened, and when Asian workers and women workers began to place their own issues on the political agenda of the Vancouver labour movement.

Chapter Two

The Articulation of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender: Theoretical Approaches

The making of a working class

A tradition of scholarly and politically engaged enquiry into working class organizations and politics spans the history of industrial capitalism. The vast majority of this work, whether written by academics or political activists, has "tended to identify the 'working class' with 'the labour movement', or even with a specific organization, party and ideology" (see Hobsbawm, 1974:372). The emphasis has been less on the working class than on specific forms of working class political and trade union activities, special events that do not embody the day to day realities of the working class. As Hobsbawm (1974) has argued, this has led to the isolation of labour history from the general history of societies.

Since the Second World War, however, a new form of working class history has emerged that has attempted to overcome the organizational and economistic orientation of labour history. Alternately referred to as new labour history, social history or culturalist history, it represents an attempt to reinsert workers into their social context and examine a broader range of working class practices arising from the many facets of workers' lives. The theme of new labour history is that "the proper study of labor history ought to be the worker, and not only his institutions" (see Brody, 1979:111).

The major contribution of the 'new' history has been to redefine 'labour history' as 'working class history'. Thus,

labour history ceases to be simply a category of political economy, a problem of industrial relations, a canon of saintly working class leaders, a chronicle of union locals or a chronology of militant strike actions. Instead it becomes part of the history of society. Workers are no longer seen as isolated figures engaged only in trade unions, strikes, and radical politics; instead they are studied in a totality that includes their cultural backgrounds and social relations, as well as their institutional membership and economic and political behaviour (Kealey and Warrian, 1976:7-8).

Social history is concerned with the way that classes are 'made' by the workers themselves and rejects the assumption that classes and class struggle are simply the product of economic forces. Although few labour historians would use sociological language, the subject of enquiry is the dialectical relationship between structure and agency, the interplay between social relations that produce the working class and the social relations that the workers produce and reproduce. In essence then, social history is the study of the structuration of classes (see Giddens, 1979).[3]

Working class culture plays a central role in the new labour history. Alternately defined by Raymond Williams as "a whole way of life" (see Williams, 1958), and by E.P. Thompson as a "way of struggle" (see Kaye, 1983:187), working class culture is the medium of adaptation to and struggle against changing conditions in the work place, the political realm, and in civil society.[4] Cultural practices are understood not as specifically ideological phenomena, but as social practices that constitute part of the material relations of social production and reproduction (see Williams, 1979:139). Working class culture includes the institutions, organizations, social practices, and ideas and values that produce and are reproduced through working class

life, and which form the subject of social history.

The development of social history has contributed to the reinsertion of consciousness and human agency into Marxist historiography. Class is understood as an historical process rather than as an objective economic category. Classes are defined as social relations to the means of production historically articulated through the processes of conflict, accommodation, and struggle. In the work of social historians like E.P. Thompson (1963) and Eric Hobsbawm (1964) there is an attempt to develop the method found in Karl Marx's early historical writings; to remember that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please" (see Marx, 1963:15). This is particularly clear in Thompson's work. As Thompson writes, the working class 'makes' itself through day-to-day struggles:

By class I understand a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness. I emphasize that it is a historical phenomenon. I do not see class as a 'structure', nor even as a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships...Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms (1963:10).

Thompson's definition of class represents an important advance over economistic Marxist historiography, but it is weakened by excessive voluntarism. Starting from the premise that classes are historical processes that men (and women) make rather than

structures or categories, Thompson (1978) goes on to deny the importance of the structural determinants of classes. In his rejection of structural determinism, Thompson (1978:69) conflates class with class consciousness and argues that structure and process are "alternative heuristics" that cannot be synthesized.[5] In so doing Thompson weakens the real contribution of social history, viewing classes in terms of people's activities structured by the conditions under which they live (see Kaye, 1983:183).

The dialectical relationship between structure and agency is central to the enterprise of social history. As Adam Przeworski (1977) argues, classes must be viewed as the "effects of struggles" that are not simply derived from their "objective positions" in the economy. At the same time, however, class struggles are "structured by the totality of economic, political, and ideological relations" (Przeworski, 1977:367). In turn, the conditions that structure classes and class struggles are often transformed through those struggles (see Przeworski, 1977; and Abercrombie and Urry, 1983). What emerges is not a unilinear progression of class consciousness but a process in which "classes are continually organized, disorganized, and reorganized" (Przeworski, 1977:372). It is important to recognize, however, that the "economic, political, and ideological relations" that structure classes include relations of patriarchy and ethnicity. Thus the working class 'makes itself' through political struggles in a contradictory fashion, reflecting the heterogeneity of the social practices produced within and in turn producing cleavages within the working class

as well as between classes.

Social history has resulted in a wealth of material, that contextualizes activities, organizations, and events within the world experienced by workers. There continue to be serious weaknesses in the tradition, however, that have prevented the full history of the working class from being explored. There is generally little sense of the contradictions in working class life, of the regressive as well as progressive events that develop from working class 'experience' (see Anderson, 1980:28). The absence of contradiction stems from a tendency to view the working class as relatively homogeneous, varying in terms of skill and levels of class consciousness, but essentially facing the same conditions within the workplace.

There is little consideration of relations of subordination other than class relations, such as gender and ethnicity, which influence the conditions workers face within the workplace and throughout civil society. Both Herbert Gutman (1976) and Alan Dawley (1978) have pointed out, however, that immigration history is not separate from labour history in North America, and that racism and ethnic cleavages are also part of working class history. Women have also been left out of social history. In an attempt to redress this absence many feminist historians have begun to uncover the history of female workers. But as Gerda Lerner points out (1976 and 1979), the effect has generally been to continue to separate women's history from men's, as if the two are not part of a single historical process that has reproduced the subordination of women. She writes that:

...men have defined their experience as history and have left women out. At this time, as during earlier periods of feminist activity, women are urged to fit into the empty spaces, assuming their traditional marginal, 'sub-group' status. But the truth is that history, as written and perceived up to now, is the history of a minority, who may well turn out to be the 'sub-group' (1976: 365).

The development of a "holistic history" must begin by asking questions from the vantage point of women, rather than men, and then working toward a synthesis with traditional male history (see Learner, 1979:180). At the present time, however, social history continues to focus on only half the population.

Canadian social history has not escaped from these and other flaws (see Kealey and Warrian, 1976; Kealey, 1980; 1981; Palmer, 1979; 1983; and Langdon, 1972; 1975;). For example, it has focused almost exclusively on workers in central Canada. The regional nature of this history is not in itself a limitation; it may remain for other researchers to uncover the 'making' of the working class in various parts of the country before a "synthetic" national work can be undertaken (Kealey and Warrian, 1976:11). However, as a factor in the political 'making' of the working class, regionalism has generally been ignored. Regionalism played a role in the perceptions of workers interests that was clearly manifest in conflicts between craft and industrial unions, about the appropriate political role of unions, and about government policies that have been important sources of intra-working class conflict, especially in the western provinces (see Robin, 1968).

Canadian new labour history is also flawed by its failure to incorporate immigrant history within working class history. In an immigrant settler-colony like Canada, the history of the working

class is the history of immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds, and ethnic cleavages have played a role in the political making of the working class. In spite of the ethnic diversity of Canadian workers, labour historians have written primarily about British workers in Canada, and almost exclusively about white workers. Furthermore Canadian social history, like its British and American counterparts, has either ignored women, or, more recently, has examined women in isolation from their male counterparts. New labour history, like the old, is essentially the history of white men. Thus it remains difficult to maintain that new labour history contextualizes the working class within its lived experiences when a majority of the working population are missing from the enquiry.

In spite of the tendency toward an undifferentiated and homogeneous characterization of workers, synonymous with white males, social history can be used to uncover the heterogeneity of working class life, as historians like Eugene Genovese (1972), Herbert Gutman (1976), Gerda Lerner (1976, 1979), and Sheila Rowbotham (1972, 1973) have demonstrated. The social history tradition provides us with a framework that emphasizes the historical structuration of classes and the interconnections between the economy, political practices, and ideological forms. Although many social historians have chosen to ignore the contradictions and conflicts within working class experiences, these should be recognized as essential elements of the 'making' of classes. To address these contradictions, however, requires more than adding other categories of Canadian workers alongside white men, and researching their conditions of life. It requires

rethinking the a priori primacy of class and class relations over other forms of experience. In particular, it requires rethinking the relationship between class and ethnicity, and class and gender, before the structuration of a militant yet politically divided working class in Vancouver can be more fully explored. /

Class and Ethnicity

The articulation of class and ethnicity is central to the formation of the Canadian working class because of the nation-state's history as a colonial-settler society.[6] As H. Clare Pentland (1981) has pointed out, immigrants formed the raw material for a capitalist labour market in Canada. Canadian immigration policies and practices occurred in the context of the labour requirements of capitalist economic development as well as within the British colonial heritage embedded in economic, political, and ideological structures. These two sets of historical processes, capitalism and British colonialism, have formed the focus of two different approaches to the analysis of ethnic stratification in the Canadian class structure.

Writers such as John Porter (1965;1979), Anthony Richmond (1970;1978), and David Hughes and Evelyn Kallen (1974) have focused on the history of British colonialism in their analyses of ethnic inequality. Through political control of the state and the formation of immigration policies, it is argued that the British charter group has institutionalized British racial attitudes into immigration policies. As Hughes and Kallen write:

As the dominant group, English Canadians have, from the beginning, exercised control of immigration policies,

responsible for determining which ethnic groups would be allowed into Canada, where they would settle, what jobs they could assume, and what ranking and social position would be accorded them within the existing system of ethnic stratification (1974:112).

British racism and status group politics form an important element of Canadian immigration policies. It is clear that the experiences of British colonialism in China, for example, profoundly influenced the position that the Canadian state adopted toward Chinese immigrants from the earliest period of their entry into Canada. However, ethnic inequality and racism in Canada are not reducible to the history of British colonialism separated from its economic context. The Canadian state is not only British in origin, it is also capitalist in character. Capitalist social relations form the context of state immigration policies and the class relations into which immigrants are socially organized. As we shall see in chapter four, policies toward Asian immigration were an object of class struggle within British Columbia precisely because there was a direct link between capitalist labour market requirements and state immigration policies.

Alternately, Marxist analyses of state immigration policies focus on capitalist class relations and the processes of accumulation. It has become common in recent years to link Canadian immigration policies with the legitimation of exploitative capitalist practices in the search for profit (see Basran, 1983; Bernier, 1979; Bolaria and Li, 1985; Cappon, 1975; and Li and Bolaria, 1979). Ethnic oppression and racism are viewed as the direct outcome of capitalist attempts to create a 'subproletariat' of menial workers, and at the same time to

divide the mutual interests of the working class and prevent the development of class solidarity through the super-exploitation of migrant and non-European immigrant workers (see also Castles and Kosack, 1972; Gorz, 1970; Leggett, 1968; Oppenheimer, 1974; Reich, 1971, 1981; and Szymanski, 1976).

Marxist writers on class and ethnicity in Canada and elsewhere have tended to adopt an economistic understanding of social relations and an interventionist theory of the state where capital dictates immigration policies and racist ideologies. In consequence, ethnic phenomena are reduced to capitalist epiphenomena. The functional nature of ethnic conflict and racism for capitalist accumulation is, of course, not quite so simple. As Wright (1978:1390) has argued, "capitalism simultaneously undermines and reproduces racism". The processes of accumulation tend to undermine ethnic differences in the reduction of all labour costs, but the capitalist class attempts to reinforce ethnic divisions within the working class in order to reproduce its dominant class position politically. In spite of this theoretical refinement, Wright also treats ethnicity as the direct effect of capitalist employment practices, thus as necessarily secondary to class relations.

While rejecting idealist arguments about the 'primordial ties' of ethnicity, it is important to recognize that ethnic practices are not purely ideological, false consciousness, or in any way epiphenomenal to material social relations within capitalist societies. As Oliver Cox (1959) has pointed out, the salience of racist ideas and practices are rooted within the history of European colonialism and uneven capitalist

development. Through the history of colonialism and uneven capitalist development ethnic relations of inequality have become a constitutive part of capitalist social relations in most societies and as such have real consequences within class politics. In British Columbia, as we shall see, the dominant white male segment of the working class played an active role in the subordination of Asian workers in the workplace and throughout civil society as part of its conflict over wages and working conditions in the province. Racism was not simply the outcome of capitalist practices. To a large extent ethnicity defined the nature of working class lives in the province, and was therefore an element of working class politics.

Theories of split, dual, and segmented labour markets locate ethnic and gender cleavages within the working class in an historical analysis of the development of capitalist labour markets. Dual and segmented labour market theories centre on differences in the nature of the labour process, career ladders, management control, wages, unionization, and the attributes of workers, especially gender and ethnicity, that separate the labour market into at least two separate segments (see Clairmont et al., 1983; Kalleberg and Sorensen, 1979; and Phillips and Phillips, 1983). Edwards (1979), and Gordon, Edwards and Reich (1982), for example, argue that segmented labour markets emerge in the historical context of capitalist development with the formation of separate monopoly and competitive sectors, differential strategies of control in the workplace, changes in productive technology, and, although under-emphasized by these writers, the differential effects of working class struggle

across economic sectors. Although developed to explain the nature of primary and secondary labour markets in post-Second World War capitalist societies, the historical framework is also useful for the analysis of ethnic and gender segregation in the labour market during earlier periods.[7]

In addition to considering the effects of capitalists' employment practices and uneven class struggle across different sectors of the economy, the role of the state should be considered in the creation of ethnic and gender segregation in the labour market. State practices have affected patterns of employment in the labour market through differential immigration policies, the extension of the political franchise and civil rights, and the repercussions of class struggle on state policies. As Burawoy has argued (1976), the marginal status of migrant workers is maintained largely by their relations with the state, since the absence of legal, political, and civil rights distinguishes migrants from citizens. Like contemporary migrant workers, Asian immigrants in pre-Second World War British Columbia were denied the legal and political rights of other citizens and were clearly distinguished as non-settlers by the Canadian state, a condition that maintained the marginal status of Asians within the labour market and was reflected in the latter's exclusion from working class political organization. The subordinate political status of women within Canadian civil society has also affected their role in the labour market and the labour movement.

One of the most fruitful analyses of an ethnically split labour market, which focuses on the different 'price of labour'

rather than the sector of employment, is that developed by Edna Bonacich (1972 and 1980). Bonacich directly challenges the notion that racism within the working class is the creation of the capitalist class, and places labour competition at the centre of the creation of an ethnically split labour market. According to Bonacich, the logic of capitalist accumulation seeks to drive down the price of labour, and an ethnically split labour market results from the differential resources available to dearer and cheaper groups of workers in the struggle to improve wages and working conditions. Although employers do find ethnic cleavages functional for maintaining domination, Bonacich argues that:

...the prejudices of business do not determine the price of labor, darker skinned or culturally different persons being paid less because of them. Rather, business tries to pay as little as possible for labor, regardless of ethnicity, and is held in check by the resources and motives of labor groups. Since these often vary by ethnicity, it is common to find ethnically split labor markets (1972:553).

According to Bonacich, an ethnically split labour market results from intra-class conflict between groups of workers who have unequal economic, political, and cultural resources available to engage in the struggle for better pay and working conditions. Differences in resources are traced back to the conditions of entry into the labour market, in the context of colonialism and uneven capitalist development, and the uneven effects of working class struggle. Bonacich tends to over-emphasize the role of intra-class conflict while under-emphasizing the importance of conflict between capital and labour, but her model is useful because it identifies the importance of differential political and economic resources as a key feature in the development of

ethnic and gender segregation in the labour market and in working class politics.

In summary, the framework adopted in this study begins from the recognition that the working class was formed through immigration in Canada. Immigration policies were structured by capitalist labour requirements and the British colonial heritage embedded within economic, political and ideological structures. Thus ethnic relations of inequality have been a constitutive part of the development of the class structure in Canada. It will be argued that ethnic divisions in working class politics were the product of inter and intra-class conflict, in the context of capitalist employment practices and an ethnically segregated labour market, state immigration policies and racist laws, an ideology of Asian nonassimilability and social inferiority, and differential economic, political and cultural resources available to white and Asian workers in the struggle to improve their lives in Vancouver.

Class and Gender

The failure of conventional and Marxist sociology to account for the subordination of women, the 'intellectual sexism' embedded in theoretical concepts, and the inadequacy of simply adding women into existing analyses, have been addressed by numerous feminist authors in the last decade (see Joan Acker, 1972; Pat and Hugh Armstrong, 1983; Zillah Eisenstein, 1979; and Dorothy Smith, 1975). The concept of patriarchy is central to all feminist theory and can be broadly defined as hierarchical relations of domination and subordination between men and women

(see Delphy, 1984; Eisenstein, 1979; and Hartmann, 1979). While gender subordination is a central concern for all feminists, class has often been a secondary concern. For radical feminists, theories of patriarchy have analytic primacy over theories of capitalism in accounting for relations of power and subordination (see Firestone, 1972; and Millett, 1971). While all women are subordinate to men, however, the conditions of that subordination vary considerably from country to country, from one historical period to another, and from class to class. Thus the a priori assertion of the analytic primacy of either class or gender will tell us little about the relationship between these two forms of subordination in a specific historical context. This study draws on recent attempts to analyse the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism without asserting the analytic primacy of either class or gender.

Zillah Eisenstein (1979) has argued for an approach that theorizes a "capitalist patriarchy", in which the capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structuring, or patriarchy, are now an "integral process". Eisenstein writes that:

In such an analysis, capitalism and patriarchy are neither autonomous systems nor identical: they are, in their present form, mutually dependent. (1979:22).

The problem with Eisenstein's theory of a "capitalist patriarchy" is that it fails to specify the conditions under which, and the mechanisms by which, patriarchal relations have become intertwined with capitalist relations. Thus it is, at best, a descriptive concept with weak analytical power. At the level of

methodology this "dual" approach tends to add a Marxist theory of class relations to a radical feminist theory of patriarchy with little consideration of what might be irreconcilable in the two approaches (see Catherine MacKinnon, 1983). Rather than the assertion of the complete interdependence between capitalism and patriarchy, it is necessary to develop analytic tools for the historical analysis of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy.

Heidi Hartmann (1979) adopts a "dual" approach to the relationship between class and gender subordination that is grounded in an historical analysis of the transformation from feudalism to capitalism. For Hartmann, capitalism and patriarchy are theorized as "two interlocking systems". Historically, patriarchy precedes capitalism. Relations of male control over the labour of women and children were incorporated within capitalist relations through an historical process that involved male attempts to maintain domination over women in a period when wage-labour relations threatened to "eradicate all arbitrary differences of status among laborers" (1979:207). During the transition to capitalism women and children were a primary source of wage-labour which, according to Hartmann, threatened male control over labour within the family. Moreover, women entered wage-labour at a disadvantage to men, with fewer skills that could be monopolized, a pre-existing tradition of lower wages, and weak organization. Men, on the other hand, possessed organizational skills and work skills that could more readily be monopolized. Through their political and trade union organization working class men helped to maintain the inferiority of women in

the labour market and the subordination of women to men in the home. Hartmann writes:

Job segregation by sex, I will argue, is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women, because it enforces lower wages for women in the labor market. Low wages keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry. Married women must perform domestic chores for their husbands. Men benefit, then, from both higher wages and the domestic division of labor. This domestic division of labor, in turn, acts to weaken women's position in the labor market. Thus, the hierarchical domestic division of labor is perpetuated by the labor market, and vice versa. This process is the present outcome of the continuing interaction of two interlocking systems, capitalism and patriarchy. (1979:208).

If we examine the conditions under which early capitalism emerged, according to Hartmann, we see that in the attempt to maintain male domination over women, patriarchal relations became embedded within a sex segregated labour market. Thus the current subordination of women within capitalism is the result of the practices of both male workers and capitalists.

Hartmann's analysis is useful because it points to the active role of workers in the formation of a politically divided working class. However, it is flawed by its failure to specify the contradictions between capitalist and patriarchal oppression. Male workers may benefit from the sex-segregated labour market through the continued subordination of women within the home, but cheap female labour can be used to maintain lower wages for male workers through labour competition. Thus there is a fundamental contradiction between male worker's class subordination and gender domination. The contradictions between class and patriarchal relations are ignored by Hartmann. Moreover, working women are treated as the passive victims of male trade union

strategies; apparently they played no active role in early working class politics. What emerges is a picture of the "mutual accommodation between patriarchy and capitalism" (1979:208), rather than the working out of often contradictory relationships between male and female workers.

For Christine Delphy, in contrast to Eisenstein and Hartmann, the subordination of women within the family is the key to a materialist analysis of gender within capitalism. Delphy (1984) argues that Marxism and feminism cannot simply be added together since Marxist concepts are implicitly conceived in terms of male experience. What should be appropriated from Marxism is its methodology. Delphy sets out to analyse the material basis of women's oppression within the family. She argues that there are two modes of production within contemporary capitalist societies: the industrial mode of capitalist exploitation which Marxist theory analyses, and the domestic mode of patriarchal exploitation (1984: 69). Within the domestic mode of production the husband extracts the unpaid labour of his wife and children, labour that is unpaid because it is done within the family. Delphy poses an analogy between the capitalist and domestic modes of production and argues that women constitute an oppressed social class (1984: 26-71).

While Delphy's attempt to construct a materialist analysis of the oppression of women within the family is welcome, her use of imprecise concepts in analogy with Marxist theory is more confusing than helpful. What, precisely, does it mean to argue that a domestic mode of production exists with distinct class relations alongside, or within, the capitalist mode of

production? In the final analysis what it means for Delphy is that "patriarchal exploitation is the common, specific and main oppression of women" (1984:74). Thus Delphy reverts to the primacy of patriarchy for women's oppression without considering variations in women's oppression by class or historical period. Moreover, Delphy does not consider the relationship between domestic relations and capitalist relations in the economy, contradictions or interdependence between these relations, or its impact on the subordination of women as a whole. The material nature of women's oppression is thereby confined to the family, rather than all aspects of women's lives in contemporary capitalist societies.

A more fruitful attempt to provide a materialist analysis of women's oppression within capitalist societies is pursued by Michele Barrett (1980). Barrett examines the links between women's oppression within the family and a sex-segregated labour market under capitalism. Gardiner (1977) has argued that women have a dual relationship to the capitalist class structure: direct involvement in wage labour, and a mediated class relationship through the family as primary domestic labourers dependent on a male wage. Barrett begins from women's dual relationship to the wage and the class structure, and argues that the oppression of women resides in the contradictions between the roles of wage and domestic labour (1980:134-138). Barrett argues that two principles were essential for the transition from feudal to capitalist production: the separation of home and workplace, and a labour force divided by different skills. However, these two phenomena did not necessitate that it should be women who

fulfill the unskilled reserve army roles within the labour market, or the primary role of domestic labourer within the home.

She writes:

To argue, for instance, that capitalism requires the separation of home and workplace, and that therefore the relegation of women to the home and their exclusion from wage labour is an effect of capitalism is, in fact, precisely to accept the biologicistic assumption that this outcome was inevitable. A more historical approach, however, indicates that this situation developed in a long and uneven process, one element of which was a struggle between male and female workers in which the better-organized male craft unions succeeded in over-riding the interests of women workers, many of whom themselves were responsible for dependants. So although the general tendency towards the separation of home and workplace has proved oppressive to women, this is because the problem is so starkly posed - who was to be primarily responsible for childcare? - was resolved, according to an ideology of gender that pre-dated capitalism, in the interests of men (1980:165).

This pre-existing gender ideology encompassed notions about the natural domesticity of women and the dominant role of men within the household, which, according to Barrett, informed male trade union strategies to exclude women from wage labour.[8] An ideology of 'familialism' informed a labour strategy advocating protectionist legislation for women and children and the institutionalization of a male 'family wage' sufficient to support family dependents. According to Barrett, the formation of the family-household system and the entrenchment of a sex-segregated labour market, emerged through an historical process in which a pre-existing gender ideology that posited men as breadwinners and women's natural connection to domesticity was incorporated into capitalist relations of production.

In contrast to Barrett, Brenner and Ramas (1984:58) have argued that "biological facts of reproduction conditioned the

sexual division of labour" in such a way that "the most logical and indeed only real alternative for resolving the crisis of working-class reproduction was the family-household system". Although biological differences in reproduction cannot be irrelevant to the sexual division of labour (see also Armstrong and Armstrong, 1983 and 1984) we cannot explain male trade union protectionism against all women - single, widowed, or with dependents - without reference to entrenched gender ideologies that defined women as inferior workers, natural child-rearers, and male dependents. To argue otherwise is to adopt biological determinism (see Barrett, 1984). Others have argued that a male 'family wage' was supported by and indeed benefited working class women as well as men, while recognizing the tension between the effect of a 'family wage' system on single and married women (see Humphries, 1982). In any event, male workers' did adopt practices of exclusion against female workers while reinforcing women's dependence within the family, which we cannot accept as the only alternative open to the male labour movement in Britain or in Canada.

Barrett places considerable weight on the role of "gender ideology" in her analysis although she does not adequately analyse the relationship between gender ideology and material conditions in the economy or in the family (see Brenner and Ramas, 1984). The relationship between the realities of a family-household system with a male breadwinner and a dependent female domestic labourer, an ideology that posited this structure as desirable and the domesticity of women as appropriate for her sex, and economic realities that forced many single and married

working class women into the labour market, produced tensions between spouses and male and female workers. The fruitfulness of Barrett's approach is the explicit recognition that the interests of the working class are not identical with male workers, and that struggles within the working class have often entrenched women's oppression within the workplace and within a particular family form.

In summary, the framework adopted in this study begins from the dual relationship of women to the class structure as wage labourers and dependent domestic labourers within the family. Barrett's concepts of 'gender ideology' and 'familialism' provide an important theoretical link between the historical development of women's dependence within the family-household system and sex-segregation within the capitalist labour market. It will be argued that gender divisions in working class politics were the product of inter and intra-class conflict, in the context of capitalist employment practices and a gender segregated labour market, a family-household system with a male breadwinner and a dependent female domestic labourer, a gender ideology that defined women as primary domestic labourers dependent on men, and differential economic, political and ideological resources available to male and female workers in the struggle to improve their lives in Vancouver.

The Articulation of Class, Ethnicity and Gender

The articulation of class, ethnicity, and gender is easiest to understand as three parallel systems of power and subordination that intersect in various ways. However, the use of

parallel theorization entails no consideration of the differences between these three forms of subordination and, more importantly, no way of theorizing the form that the articulation of two or more forms of oppression actually takes. As we have understood these terms within the social sciences, class, gender, and ethnicity are discrete variables. What is often overlooked is that the 'universalistic' definitions developed within the social sciences are already grounded in particular ethnic and gender experiences.

Assumptions about working class consciousness, culture and life experiences have, by and large, been generalized from the experiences of white working class men. For example, surveys developed to tap degrees of working class consciousness ask questions about traditional male trade union politics, and traditional male socialist politics. Yet as Jean Gardiner (1977:159) has pointed out, women's dual relationship to the class structure suggests that "women's consciousness of class will be distinct from men's and their involvement in class struggle will take different forms". Issues of primary interest to working women may revolve more around childcare, shorter hours, and maternity and sick leave than the traditional concerns of wages and seniority. Moreover, relations within the family affect women's participation in working class politics, often preventing them from attending meetings or participating in trade unions and political parties due to the pressures of domestic duties. Thus, as Gardiner (1977:163) argues, gender divisions "shape women's concrete experiences of class". It is therefore, erroneous to assume that class experience is simply added to

gender experience; class experiences are transformed by gender subordination.

Class experiences are also transformed by ethnic subordination. The conditions faced by white and Asian workers in British Columbia were profoundly affected by the relations of white domination and Asian subordination in the society at large. The opportunities for engaging in 'traditional' working class politics were extremely restricted for Asians, and the issues of concern to Asian workers were not necessarily the same as for white workers. For example, the abolition of the contract labour system figured prominently in the demands of Asian workers when they did engage in strike activity. Thus it is important that concepts such as working class culture not be so narrowly defined as to make the class practices of Asian workers and female workers invisible.

Feminist scholarship has explored the sexist biases in 'malestream' social sciences in considerable detail in recent years. What has been less recognized, however, are the ethnic biases that continue to underlie theoretical constructions, including feminist theories. As Hazel Carby writes:

In arguing that most contemporary feminist theory does not begin to adequately account for the experience of black women we also have to acknowledge that it is not simply a question of their absence, consequently the task is not one of rendering their visibility. On the contrary we will have to argue that the process of accounting for their historical and contemporary position does, in itself, challenge the use of some of the central categories and assumptions of recent mainstream feminist thought. We can point to no single source for our oppression. When white feminists emphasize patriarchy alone, we want to redefine the term and make it a more complex concept. Racism ensures that black men do not have the same relations to patriarchal/capitalist hierarchies as white men (1982: 213).

And as Bell Hooks writes:

While there are white women activists who may experience family primarily as an oppressive institution, many black women find the family the least oppressive institution. Despite sexism in the context of family, we may experience dignity, self-worth, and a humanization that is not experienced in the outside world wherein we confront all forms of oppression (1984: 37).

As Angela Davis (1981) has noted, for example, the family structure among American blacks has in many ways been more egalitarian than white feminists have assumed, and has often provided a forum of resistance for black men and women.[9] The experiences of gender subordination are not the same for all classes of women any more than for dominant and subordinate ethnic groups. Racism is not simply added to gender subordination, it transforms it. The intellectual sexism of the social sciences has also meant that research on ethnicity is rooted largely in male experiences. The experiences of women of colour have apparently warranted little investigation, while the use of concepts loaded with ethnic and gender biases would be unlikely to provide an understanding of those experiences. For all of these reasons, the use of parallel theorization is unacceptable. Class, gender, and ethnic subordination are not cumulative realities, rather their articulation transforms the nature of the subordination generally described singly by any one of these concepts. The limitations of these theoretical concepts does not necessarily require the development of a whole new language, which would be well beyond the scope of this study in any event, but it does require rooting discussions of class, gender and ethnicity in concrete historical situations.

All Asians in pre-Second World War British Columbia faced considerable racism. However, working class Asians faced greater racism than merchants did. The history of racist immigration policies and exclusionary laws and taxes affected Asian workers more than any other class of Asians. In fact in many instances the laws were specifically aimed at Asian workers rather than at all people of Asian descent in British Columbia. The nature of the experience of ethnic subordination in the province was altered by one's class position. Wage-labour exploitation was common to all workers in British Columbia, but the ethnicity and gender of the worker characterized the nature of that exploitation. White men monopolized the skilled trades, and received higher wages than other workers in unskilled work. To a large extent ethnic and gender attributes defined not only one's wages, but also tenure in the work force, and the kinds of work available to the worker. Workers were not just units of labour power, they were white or Asian labour, male or female labour. Ethnicity and gender transformed the nature of working class experiences.

That these distinctions were 'real' and not simply theoretical artifacts of social scientists is clear from a survey of the labour newspapers used in this study. Through forty years of labour newspapers the term 'worker' consistently refers to white male members of the working class. In all other cases adjectives are used to modify 'worker'. When the term 'women workers' is used, it is equally clear that this refers to white women. And when the terms 'Oriental', 'Asian', 'Chinese', 'Japanese', 'Hindu', and other more derogatory permutations, are

used, it is clear that this refers to Asian men. This not only reflects the fact that white men were typically the authors of these newspapers, it also reflects the reality of power and domination within the working class. In the reality, as in the language, female Asian workers were the most subordinate and the most invisible among workers, among women, and among Asians in British Columbia.

The major focus of this dissertation is on the relationship between the practices of white and Asian male workers, and white male and female workers in Vancouver before the Second World War. The conditions facing female Asian workers have only been partially illuminated in this study.[10] The purpose of this study is to uncover the political manifestations of ethnic and gender divisions within the Vancouver working class. The theoretical framework discussed in this chapter, with its emphasis on the making of classes in an historical conjuncture where ethnic relations of white domination and patriarchal relations of male domination were constitutive elements of social relations, informs the research presented below. At the same time, the theoretical discourse on the relationship between class and ethnicity, and class and gender, is grounded in a concrete historical study.[11] The working class in Vancouver was a product of capitalist class relations. It 'made' itself in response to the conditions faced in the labour market and in civil society, conditions that were produced not only by capitalist relations, but also by patriarchal relations of male domination and ethnic relations of white domination. In the following chapter I outline the method used to analyse

contradictory class practices in order to explore the 'making' of
a politically divided working class in Vancouver.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Parameters of the Study

Historical sociology draws on historiographic methods while infusing a more theoretical orientation into conventional historical analysis. Contemporary sociology does not have a strong historical tradition. Indeed, the field of historical sociology has only begun to gain popularity through the influence of the developments within social history discussed in chapter two. For the most part, Canadian sociology has been concerned with events in the post-war period with little empirical research on social conditions in the first half of the century or earlier. Historical case studies can, however, provide a basis for grounding contemporary substantive research and theoretical debates, since historical patterns affect contemporary developments. The historical formation of an ethnically and gender segregated working class in British Columbia, for example, continues to affect the nature of working class politics today, with women and minority ethnic groups under-represented within trade unions and the traditional issues of male white workers still dominating labour politics.

Vancouver provides a good case study of the historical articulation of class and ethnicity due to the sharp and visible nature of ethnic divisions throughout the province. From the 1880s through to the Second World War the population was clearly separated into three socially defined ethnic groups, those of European, predominantly British, origin, Asian residents who

constituted separate Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian communities, and the native population in the province. Ethnic conflict was sharpest between white and Asian workers, although conflict between white and native workers also occurred (see Rolf Knight, 1978). Asian men formed a cheap, transient, primarily unskilled pool of wage-labour who were consistently paid less than white men for similar work. They were denied the political franchise, were not considered "real citizens" by the state, and were, therefore, politically as well as economically marginal workers. In this context, anti-Asian agitation played a major role in working class politics in the province from the early 1880s, when Chinese labourers were imported to construct the Canadian Pacific Railway, until the depression of the 1930s when labour began to adopt a more unified working class position. As we shall see in chapter five, anti-Asian agitation among workers in Vancouver can be traced back to the city's origins in 1886.

Vancouver also provides a good case study of the articulation of class and gender. Women were segregated in the labour market in the city and throughout the province, engaged in typically 'women's work' that corresponded to low 'women's wages'. Like Asian workers, white women were politically and economically marginal workers, lacking many of the resources to participate as equals within labour politics. As we shall see in chapter seven, the male labour movement in Vancouver engaged in practices toward white women workers that, while not usually as explicitly exclusionary as those toward Asians, were predicated on and perpetuated the dependence/subordination of women to men. In contrast, the existence of Asian women workers in Vancouver was

simply ignored by the labour movement, probably because they were so few in number and were engaged in the least desirable jobs, as domestics, farm labourers, and fish processors.

Methodologically, the articulation of class, ethnicity, and gender can be addressed through a study of the social practices of different segments of the working class. In order to provide a qualitative analysis of the relations between the predominantly white male labour movement and subordinate ethnic and women workers in the province, this case study focuses on the relations between white, Chinese, and Japanese male workers, and white male and female workers in the greater Vancouver area between 1900 and 1939.

There are six main reasons for limiting the scope of the study in this way. First, given the resource nature of the provincial economy there was an uneven geographical distribution of women workers, most of whom were employed in the service and business sectors of the urban areas. The largest urban centre since the turn of the 20th century has been Vancouver. Second, Vancouver was the centre of the labour movement; all of the labour newspapers consulted in this study were published in Vancouver. Third, there were large Chinese and Japanese communities in Vancouver. Workers from India have been excluded from this study due to their much smaller population in the province. Fourth, the study is limited to ethnic conflict between white and Asian workers because the conflicts were sharper than between white and native workers in the province. The white labour movement never incorporated anti-native positions within its political agenda, although conflicts did take place during

strikes, particularly in the fishing industry (see Jamieson and Gladstone, 1950; and Knight and Koizumi, 1976). Fifth, although female Asian workers are not excluded from this study, the size of their population, the scarcity of material, and the absence of any attention to them within the labour movement, precludes the practices of Asian women forming a central feature of this study. Sixth, the period of the study spans from the turn of the twentieth century until the eve of the Second World War in 1939. This is the period of the formation of the working class in Vancouver, which was founded only in 1886, and also marks a transition in the practices of the white male labour movement toward Asian workers and, to some extent, toward women workers.

Definition of Concepts

The concepts of class relations, ethnic relations and gender relations used in this study are defined in the following manner. Class has been defined following the Marxian tradition as relationships to the means of production articulated through the processes of conflict, accommodation, and struggle (see Thompson, 1963; Przeworski, 1977). At the empirical level, this means looking for relations within the workplace and in civil society which reflect conflicts between workers, or the class that sells its labour for a wage, and capitalists, or the class that owns productive resources. This study addresses class relations only from the perspective of the workers, in the tradition of social history 'from the bottom up'. Sources that might illuminate the views and strategies of employers are outside of the scope of this study. Class practices, therefore, constitute actions and

attitudes of workers, organizations that they form, political platforms that they support, the concerns that they identify for themselves. The emphasis is on the active 'making' of the working class, not simply a description of what workers do, but the way that what they do interacts with and changes the material conditions under which they live.

When we consider that workers are not all of a kind, however, this task becomes more difficult than it first appears. Workers do not produce a single range of 'class' practices. The heterogeneity of the working population in any historical period produces cleavages within the working class, different perceptions of class interests, of appropriate strategies, of the identification of 'us' and 'them'. Class practices are grounded in the material realities of working class life, and working class life is not only about work, about wage labour and surplus value, it is also about participation in civil society. In British Columbia the material realities of working class life included an ethnic hierarchy between whites and Asians and a gender hierarchy between men and women that, to a large extent, defined conditions of work and wages, real or potential wage competition, and the nature of 'citizenship' or political rights within civil society. Thus, methodologically, it is important to recognize that class practices may be fragmented and contradictory.

In particular, we should expect class practices in Vancouver to be fragmented by ethnicity and gender. Ethnicity has been defined as relations of domination and subordination between groups defined socially as sharing a common ancestry based on

perceived biological and/or cultural criteria (Cox, 1959; Bonacich, 1972; and Hughes and Kallen, 1974). These differences are socially defined and constructed. In the context of British Columbia, ethnic differences were demarcated by visible racial and cultural differences between European immigrants, Asian immigrants, and the native population in the province. Ethnic conflicts between European groups, which have a long history in other parts of the country, were of minimal importance in British Columbia, where all Europeans were included in the social category of 'whites'. Likewise, Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian immigrants were attributed the category 'Oriental' by the dominant white society even though the three Asian groups themselves remained separate and distinct.

Ethnic relations in Vancouver can be operationalized as relations of white domination and Asian subordination that, at the empirical level, are manifest in practices of inclusion and exclusion within the working class. Exclusive practices range from active exclusion to benign exclusion. Asian workers might be excluded from trade unions, preferred jobs, political parties, or entry into the country. Even when Asians were not explicitly excluded from spheres of working class activity, however, they might be benignly excluded through lack of encouragement to join an organization, or by omitting the specific concerns of Asian workers from the agenda of activities that they did take part in. Inclusive practices also varied from joint actions between different ethnic groups in pursuit of limited goals, a strike for example, to their inclusion as equal partners in job action or labour organization as defined by their involvement in defining

the political agenda. For both white and Asian workers, ethnicity was a factor in their lives in Vancouver, one that attributed a degree of power to the former and greater subordination to the latter. This does not suggest, however, that Asian workers were merely the passive objects of white labour activities. Asian workers did engage in labour politics in Vancouver, as we shall see in chapter five, but they did so from a position of weakness compared to white male workers.

There are a whole range of ethnic practices not directly considered in this study that impinge on the class practices of Asian workers. The formation of ethnic communities and the processes of social closure against a racist dominant society are beyond the scope of this study, yet have a direct bearing on the nature of Asian workers' involvement in labour conflicts. There has been considerable research on 'ethnic' histories of the Chinese and the Japanese in British Columbia that provide a rich source of information on ethnic practices within these communities (see Adachi, 1976; Chan, 1983; Cheng, 1931; Ward, 1978; Wickberg, 1982; and Young and Reid, 1938). None of these studies address the Asian working class per se, but they do provide information on the cultural milieu within which the practices of working class Asians must be contextualized.

Working class practices in British Columbia were also fragmented by gender relations. As Christine Delphy (1984) has noted the term 'gender' is differentiated from 'sex' by the recognition that male-female roles and relations are in essence socially rather than biologically constructed. The central concept defining gender relations is patriarchy, which has been

defined as hierarchical relations of domination and subordination between men and women (see Delphy, 1984; Eisenstein, 1979; and Hartmann, 1979). The key site of patriarchy is found in family relations, but patriarchal relations have also been incorporated in capitalist relations of production. Thus, at the empirical level, we can identify practices within the working class that reproduce or challenge and alter female subordination within the workplace and within civil society.

Working class practices that reproduce the subordination of women can take the form of exclusive organization in trade unions and political parties, for example the omission of 'women's issues' from the political agenda, or of attempts to deny women access to some things appropriated by men, whether jobs, higher wages, or the vote. Inclusive working class practices can also enhance the equality of women, as citizens and as workers, by placing issues of concern to women on the political agenda and by pressing for the equal treatment of women as workers, rather than as dependents of men. Gender defined the nature of wage labour participation and domestic responsibility for men and women. It should not be surprising, therefore, that gender also played a role in workers' definition of their concerns, interests, and priorities. It is important to recognize that the social practices of male and female workers were products of patriarchal relations, and in turn affected the nature of patriarchal relations shaping their lives.

The practices of working class women who were not in the labour market, that is working class wives labouring in the home, fall outside the scope of this study. Although this study will

not include an analysis of the working class family, many of the 'women's issues' raised and addressed by working class men and women affected all women. Women's roles within the labour market and within the family are closely related. It should be remembered that women's 'dual relationship' to wage labour as wage workers and as dependent domestic workers is entrenched in gender ideologies that confined women to a subordinate position within the family, the labour market, and within working class politics. Although family relations will not be explored, the subordination of women within the family is an important facet of an analysis of sexist and feminist working class practices in Vancouver.

It should be noted that the articulation of ethnicity and gender in British Columbia was such as to delimit 'women's issues' and all discussions about working women within the labour movement to white women. Labour strategies that reproduced the subordination of women, or enhanced the equality of women, affected white women only. On the other hand, practices of exclusion and inclusion toward Asian workers were directed specifically at Asian men. For this reason, and for stylistic brevity, the term working women will always refer to white women unless Asian women are specified. Similarly, the term Asian workers will refer to Asian men, unless Asian women are specified. This reflects the relative scarcity of Asian working women during the period under study, and the relations of domination and subordination within the working class that rendered Asian working class women invisible.

By defining class practices, ethnic practices and gender

practices separately, I do not mean to suggest that the political activities of segments of the working class were defined by only one set of experiences at any given point in time. On the contrary, the articulation of class, ethnicity and gender within the material conditions of working class life generates practices that can, at the same time, express degrees of working class consciousness and racism and/or sexism, feminism and/or anti-racism, by which I mean attitudes and actions that either reaffirm or challenge ethnic and gender subordination. The conditions that facilitated social practices entrenching ethnic and/or gender subordination, or unified actions that challenged that subordination within the working class, constitute the focus of this study of the political 'making' of the Vancouver working class.

Historical Methodology

A major methodological problem involved in the history of all 'non-elite' groups is finding sources written by or about subordinate classes, ethnic groups, and women (see Henretta, 1979). For information on immigration policies, population demography, labour market trends, and descriptive information on labour conflicts, this study draws heavily on government archives. Some qualitative information on working class politics are found in government Royal Commissions where transcripts of the hearings are recorded. For the most part, however, sources recorded by workers are the best sources of information on working class life and politics. Social history, or new labour history, has largely defined itself by its reliance on the word

of workers to uncover history 'from the bottom up', their own perceptions of their lives and activities.

However, most sources written by workers have been left by labour leaders and political activists who do not necessarily represent the rank and file of workers. The analysis of working class practices in this study, and in most social history, of necessity relies heavily on labour newspapers, the minutes of labour councils and trade union locals, and whatever oral histories are available. Considerable oral history has been recorded in British Columbia in the last few decades. Thus I have been able to draw on oral histories of white women workers, Chinese women, and Japanese men to add a richer dimension to my understanding of working class life among subordinate workers. The major source of information on working class social practices, however, is the wealth of labour newspapers produced in Vancouver between 1900 and 1939. These labour newspapers were produced by various groups, from revolutionary socialist parties like the Socialist Party of Canada and the Communist Party of Canada, to the more moderate Vancouver Trades and Labour Council and the British Columbia Federation of Labour. But all of the labour newspapers were written primarily by white men. Thus the representativeness of the views expressed in these newspapers is problematic.

Insofar as a major aim of this study is to ascertain the activities and attitudes of the dominant white male labour movement toward women and Asian workers, these newspapers sources are extremely rich. Both by what is said and what is unsaid, these papers provide an insight into the practices of white male

workers in Vancouver. Because labour activists writing the newspapers might not always reflect the practices of 'typical' white male workers, procedures were followed to assess the representativeness of the sources. First, evidence has been 'interrogated' as to its 'credentials', that is by whom it was recorded and for what purpose, in order to interpret the data within its structural context of origin (see Thompson, 1978). Second, data has been confirmed with adjacent evidence, both for its validity as 'fact', that it is an accurate accounting of events, and for representativeness of ideological orientation, whether the leadership's views reflect those of ordinary workers (see Thompson, 1978). Contrasting the views represented in labour newspapers with the political activities of white male workers, with oral histories, debates in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, and the letters written to the newspapers debating contentious political issues, provides some basis for assessing this representativeness.

Labour newspapers of the period do provide some information on and by working women and, to a lesser extent, Asian workers. Labour newspapers provide considerable information on the practices and attitudes of white male workers toward women workers, and on women's involvement in strike activity. In addition, women's columns were quite common, and there were a small number of active women in the Vancouver labour movement whose views were recorded. Other sources include oral histories by female workers, letters to the editor written by women workers, and the testimony by and about women at the 1914 Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia. Reading

sources for 'silences' is also important for uncovering the relationship between female workers and the dominant white male labour movement (see Campbell, 1979; Fox-Genovese, 1982). What is left unsaid within labour documents, but, indicated by other evidence, can often tell us as much about its authors as what is explicitly stated.

Labour newspapers of the period provide considerable information on what white workers thought of Asians, on the racist practices of white workers, and on ethnic conflict or unity during strikes. However, they contain little material by Asian workers. There are occasional letters to the editor written by Asian men, and after the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers Union joined the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council in 1927 there are reports from the Japanese union. Labour newspapers are a fairly good source of information on the activities of Asians in labour conflicts, but a very poor source for the political perceptions of Asian workers. For some insight into the political perceptions of Chinese and Japanese workers I have relied on oral histories, 'ethnic' histories of the Chinese and Japanese communities in Vancouver, and translations of The Chinese Times. I do not claim that these sources are sufficient to provide a complete analysis of the politics of working class Asian men, and even less so of Asian women. However, the study does illuminate the relationship between the practices of white workers and Asian workers in the creation of a politically divided working class in Vancouver.

What I have focused on in the material left by the working class are the relationships between working class practices and ethnic and gender subordination. As the dominant segment of the

working class, white men played a dominant role in working class politics, to a certain extent defining the possibilities of political involvement by Asian and women workers and reproducing their subordination within the workplace and in civil society. That the primary sources of working class history were left by this dominant group is a limitation for uncovering the history of subordinate workers, a reaffirmation of the dominant role played by white men, and an important source of information about the reproduction of ethnic and gender subordination through the practices of the dominant white male labour movement. When contextualized within our other knowledge of the lives of women and Asian workers in British Columbia, even the 'silences' add a richness to our understanding of the contradictions involved in the 'making' of a politically divided working class in Vancouver.

Chapter Four

Ethnic Segregation in the British Columbia Labour Market

Ethnicity has been a dominant feature of North American class structure formation. Ethnic characteristics have distinguished colonizers from the colonized, masters from slaves, and 'preferred' from non-preferred immigrants. To a large extent, this differentiation occurs most strongly within the working class. The working class has been formed primarily through successive waves of immigration in North America rather than through the transformation of an indigenous peasantry as occurred in Europe. Although both blacks, in the United States, and native North Americans have been sources of cheap wage labour, neither was the primary source of wage labour during the early industrial period. In Canada and in the United States the working class was formed primarily through immigration and, in the process, ethnic relations of inequality became a constitutive part of North American class relations.

The history of the formation of the working class in British Columbia differs somewhat from the central Canadian experience. In central Canada the primary ethnic divisions between wage labourers occurred between different European immigrants, whereas in British Columbia divisions were between Asian immigrants and those of European origin. There are, however, similarities between British Columbia and the western United States. Although the history of slavery in the United States is a central feature of ethnic working class divisions in that country generally, on the west coast of the United States ethnic conflict was between

Asian immigrants and those of European origin.[12] In California, Oregon and Washington, it was Asians rather than blacks or 'non-preferred' European immigrants who formed a pool of cheap wage labour in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Indeed, so long as the border between the two countries was unrestricted Asian and European wage labourers moved up and down the west coast in search of work and gold, and the anti-Asian movement south of the border was watched with great interest by workers in British Columbia.

When British Columbia joined confederation in 1871 there were only 36,000 people in the province, 70% of whom were native Indians. Yet even with this small population and an almost completely undeveloped economy, there were already 1,500 Chinese in the province (see Ward, 1978: 170-171). Most of these Chinese had followed the gold rush from California to the Fraser River and, given the extreme shortage of labour in the province, they remained to labour as domestics, general labourers, and to a limited extent in the mines and forests. The demand for large quantities of cheap wage labour began with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s and lasted, apart from a period of recession following the completion of the railway, through the first decade of the 20th century (see McDonald, 1981). This time period coincides with the rapid industrialization of the province and a four-fold expansion of the labour force between 1891 and 1911 (see Table 4.2). It also coincides with the period of large-scale immigration from China and Japan (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 The Asian Population of British Columbia, 1870-1941

Year	Total Population	Chinese	Japanese	E. Indian & Other Asians	Asians as % of Pop.
1870	36,247	1,548	--	--	4.3
1881	49,459	4,350	--	--	8.8
1891	98,173	8,910	--	--	9.1
1901	178,657	14,885	4,597	84	10.9
1911	392,480	19,568	8,587	2,292	7.8
1921	524,582	23,533	15,006	989	7.5
1931	694,236	27,139	22,205	1,607	7.3
1941	817,861	18,619	22,096	1,757	5.2

Source: W. Peter Ward, 1978: 170-171.

Table 4.2 The British Columbia Labour Force, 1891-1941

Year	Total Labour Force	Male Labour Force
1891	48,029	44,955
1901	81,344	76,582
1911	206,109	189,482
1921	219,578	194,081
1931	306,170	262,431
1941	313,854	258,723

Source: Census of Canada, 1911, Volume VI; 1951, Volume V.

The formation of a working class in British Columbia occurred through immigration because the population in the province was not large enough to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding labour market. Moreover, native Indian labour was not used as extensively as might be expected.[13] While skilled labour had to be imported from industrialized countries, unskilled labour could be imported more cheaply from peasant societies. Throughout most of Canada immigrants from Ireland and southern and central Europe filled the demand for unskilled labour, while skilled labour was drawn from England, Scotland and northern Europe (see Pentland, 1981). In British Columbia, however, the demand for unskilled labour coincided with the ready availability of cheap peasant labour from China, where economic, social and cultural conditions

in the middle of the 19th century made emigration in search of wage labour a viable option for poor male peasants.[14] Similar conditions provided a cheap source of labour from Japan beginning in the 1880s, and from India from around the turn of the 20th century. As elsewhere in Canada, skilled workers came primarily from England, Scotland, the United States and, in addition, from central Canada. Thus the majority of the white working class were English-speaking and of British ethnic origin.

At the turn of the 20th century, the population of Vancouver was over 85 percent English-speaking protestant (see MacDonald, 1981). In 1931, over three-quarters of the population of Vancouver were of British origin, while other Europeans comprised only fourteen percent of the population (see Table 4.3). With Asians constituting nine percent of the population of Vancouver, and thirteen percent of the male population, ethnic cleavages within Vancouver were primarily drawn between those of European and Asian origin, and not between different European groups, as occurred in other parts of the country.

Table 4.3 The Population of Vancouver by Ethnic Origin and Sex, 1931

Ethnic Origin	Both Sexes	%	Males	%	Females	%
British	190,132	77	95,744	73	94,388	82
Other European	33,755	14	18,402	14	15,353	13
Asian	21,868	9	16,927	13	4,941	4
Others	838	0	400	0	438	0
Total Population	246,593	100	131,473	100	115,120	99

Source: Census of Canada, 1931, Volume IV.

When railway construction began in 1881 there were already 4,000 Chinese in British Columbia alongside 19,000 whites and

25,000 native Indians (see Ward, 1978). Between 1881 and 1884 the Canadian Pacific Railway imported 15,000 indentured Chinese labourers to construct the British Columbia section of the railway (see Royal Commission, 1885:v). Over 10,000 Chinese immigrants remained in the province after railway construction ended, the great majority of them labouring in the mines, on farms, on the railway, in sawmills, in salmon canneries, and as domestic servants (see Table 4.4; Royal Commission, 1885:viii;363-365). At the same time, the railway increased immigration from Europe, the United States, and central Canada. In the 18 months between June of 1883 and November of 1884 over 11,000 white immigrants came to British Columbia (see Royal Commission, 1885:xlix). Although it is unknown what proportion of these immigrants were unskilled workers, or even how many remained in the province, this massive pool of manpower, coinciding with the end of railway construction, resulted in considerable unemployment among white and Chinese labourers, competition for jobs, and anti-Chinese agitation by white workers.

The existence of visibly different groups of workers was not enough to cause ethnic conflict within the working class, or to result in an ethnically segregated labour market. All things being equal, employers are concerned about the capabilities and the price of labour power, and not about their skin colour or cultural or linguistic characteristics. All things are seldom equal, however, and in British Columbia the ethnicity of a worker, whether Asian or white, largely defined the kinds of jobs available, the rates of pay, and even the conditions of labour.

A number of factors were involved in defining Asian labour as cheaper than unskilled white labour in British Columbia. The history of British colonialism and uneven capitalist development resulted in different standards of subsistence among Asian and white immigrants and the prevalence of ethnic stereotypes about Asian inferiority. Moreover, since early Asian immigration was almost entirely male, the reproduction costs of Asian labour were not borne in Canada. Lower wages for Asian workers were not, however, simply the product of an historically lower subsistence level in China and ideological prejudices. Canadian immigration policies and other legislation that discriminated against Asian immigrants were instrumental in entrenching lower wages and restricted employment opportunities for Asians. Since Asians were denied the legal and political rights of other citizens, they also lacked the resources that white workers used in their struggle to improve wages and working conditions. In addition, the anti-Asian activities of white workers reinforced the political and economic marginality of Asian immigrants.

The Canadian government never considered Asians suitable settlers for Canada, although it did recognize the short term advantages of plentiful cheap labour to build a sound western economy. As Avery and Neary point out, the Federal government approached Asian immigration differently than it did European and American immigration:

No agents were commissioned, no promotional literature was distributed and no plans were made for the agricultural settlement of Orientals (1977: 24-25).

In a settler colony where all non-British immigrants were

accorded some form of inferior 'entrance status' (see Porter, 1965), Asians shared the unique distinction of a 'non-settler' status accorded by the Canadian government. The non-settler status accorded Asians is clearly expressed in the two Royal Commissions into Asian immigration (1885 and 1902), and in legislation enacted by the federal and provincial governments.

In the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, the Chinese are referred to as "living machines" who had advanced the development of British Columbia by fifty years through their labour on the Canadian Pacific Railway (70-78). While recognizing the economic advantages of Asian immigration, however, Asian immigrants were clearly perceived as undesirable settlers who were socially inferior to Europeans. The Commissioners judged the whole issue of Chinese immigration on the basis of whether their positive economic role had other negative effects within the province.

The question was not, should Chinese immigration be encouraged, but should the coming of the Chinese into the country be prevented. Had it been injurious or not? (1).

The conclusion reached by the commission was that Chinese immigration had not been injurious to the province since claims about their hazard to health and disreputable lifestyle were greatly exaggerated and, most importantly, because the Chinese did not compete with permanent settlers for employment.

The evidence and the Official Returns show that this Chinese competition is not with skilled labor or with agricultural settlers, or persons intending to become permanent residents in the country, but [with] migratory transitory laborers, who may or may not become settlers, dependent upon ulterior circumstances (lxxi-lxxii).

As this quotation indicates, white workers might be considered 'non-settlers' due to "ulterior circumstances", such as individual motivations, but Chinese workers were automatically considered 'non-settlers' simply on the basis of their ethnic origin. Apparently, as long as Chinese workers only competed with white migrants, rather than with permanent settlers little threat was perceived to the development of the white community in the province.

Employers who testified at the 1885 Royal Commission praised Chinese labour for its industriousness, dependability, cheapness, sobriety, and docility. These qualities were contrasted with white labour militancy, union organizing and strikes, and the prevalence of 'blue Mondays' after Sunday drinking bouts. With only one exception, however, employers and managers were opposed to the permanent settlement of Asians or to granting them the political rights of citizenship, in spite of their contribution to the economy.[15] The general consensus was that the immigration of the Chinese should be regulated to ensure that no more came to the province than were necessary for the economy. There was a clear division of opinion, however, between the views of employers and labourers. The working class considered the Chinese a direct threat to their livelihoods due to competition in the labour market and sought the complete exclusion of Asians from the province. Class interests clearly underpinned views on Asian immigration. As one witness testified:

My experience is that the general agitation is from those who are dependent on their labor, but as soon as they get a piece of land and want it improved, or become employers themselves, they then are the first to employ the Chinese (103).

The history of working class organization against Chinese and later other Asian immigrants will be detailed in chapter five. In general, however, white working class opposition was rooted in (at least the fear of) cheap labour competition, the use of Chinese strikebreakers, particularly in Robert Dunsmuir's Vancouver Island coal mines, and assumptions about the social inferiority of Asians. The submission of the Knights of Labour to the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, illustrates the typical view of white workers during this period:

Chinese labor is confessedly of a low, degraded, and servile type, the inevitable result of whose employment in competition with free white labor is to lower and degrade the latter without any appreciable elevation of the former. Their standard of living is reduced to the lowest possible point, and, being without family ties, or any of those institutions which are essential to the existence and progress of our civilization, they are enabled to not only live but to grow rich on wages far below the lowest minimum at which we can possibly exist. They are thus fitted to become all too dangerous competitors in the labor market, while their docile servility, the natural outcome of centuries of grinding poverty and humble submission to a most oppressive system of government, renders them doubly dangerous as the willing tools whereby grasping and tyrannical employers grind down all labor to the lowest living point. It is for this latter reason, chiefly, that we object to the Chinese, not altogether because they accept lower wages (156).

The outcome of the 1885 Royal Commission was the imposition of a \$50 head tax on all Chinese labourers coming to Canada. Chinese students, merchants, and diplomats were excluded from the tax (see Cheng, 1931; and Ward, 1978). This was the first in a series of discriminatory legislative acts aimed at curbing the entry of immigrants of Asian origin to Canada, while continuing to supply enough Asian labour to satisfy the demand for cheap unskilled labour.[16] The low price of the head tax, the abundance

of Chinese willing to pay the price to earn money in Canada, and the opening of emigration from Japan, contributed to a growing Asian population in British Columbia and continued working class agitation for their exclusion. In 1901 the federal government raised the Chinese head tax to \$100 and convened a second royal commission into Asian immigration. The outcome of the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration was the raising of the Chinese head tax to a more prohibitive \$500 in 1904, and the endorsement of Japanese immigration restrictions which were eventually negotiated in 1908 (see Royal Commission, 1902; and Cheng, 1931).

An ethnically segregated labour market was already being formed at the time of the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. Ethnic segregation occurred in three forms: 1) segregation by job function, with skilled labour and the more desirable unskilled jobs monopolized by whites while Asians performed the more menial unskilled labour; 2) segregation within the workplace, with Asians hired as groups under the authority of an Asian labour contractor and separated from white workers excepting those whites with supervisory authority; and 3) an ethnically split wage scale, with Asians consistently paid less than white workers for similar unskilled work. In the mid-1880s skilled white workers earned between \$3.50 and \$4.50 per day, while unskilled white labourers earned between \$2 and \$2.50 per day (Royal Commission, 1885: lxx). Chinese workers, on the other hand, made as little as \$1 per day, and were confined to seasonal unskilled labour in mines, on farms, in sawmills, salmon canneries, on railroad construction, and in domestic service (see

Table 4.4). In the mining industry Chinese labourers earned between \$1 and \$1.25 per day, while white labourers earned \$2 or more (Royal Commission, 1885:xvi). Chinese cannery workers earned between \$25 and \$35 per month, while whites earned between \$30 and \$40 (xxv). Chinese labourers in road construction earned between \$15 and \$20 per month in comparison to the \$40 paid to white labourers (xl). General labourers earned \$1.25 per day if Chinese and between \$2 and \$2.50 if white (lxxi).

Table 4.4 Occupations of the Chinese in British Columbia in 1884.

Occupations	Number Employed	Percentage
Merchants and Professionals	180	2
Tradesmen and Self-Employed	992	9
Miners and Farmers	1,585	15
Workers in Chinese Businesses	563	5
Workers for non-Chinese Businesses	5,932	57
Newly arrived workers	602	6
Family Dependents	617	6
Total	10,471	100%

Source: Wickberg, 1982: 309 (compiled from the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration.)

The contract labour system contributed to the physical segregation of white and Asian workers, to the low standard of living of the Asians, and to their relative docility within the labour market. The Asian labour contractor mediated language barriers, hired and disciplined the workers, provided food and other essentials, all at a profit, and retained a portion of their wages (Royal Commission, 1885:81). Chinese immigrants were indentured to contracting companies for their passage to Canada, and later for head taxes as well. Most employers in British Columbia took advantage of this system of providing cheap well-regulated labour and hired Chinese labourers as a body through

agreement with contracting companies. With the single exception of Robert Dunsmuir, who employed several hundred Chinese manual workers in his Vancouver Island coal mines without the use of a Chinese labour contractor, hiring large numbers of individual Chinese workers appears to have been an uncommon practice in the 1880s (see Royal Commission, 1885: 128-129). As one manager testified at the 1885 Royal Commission:

If you require 1,000 Chinamen to perform a particular work, you do not apply to individual Chinamen, or insert an advertisement in the newspapers in order to attract men from all sections of the country, but you go to one of these Chinese companies, and make arrangements with them. You have to agree to certain terms; you have to make a full agreement with them, and you never see the men until they are sent on by the company to proceed to work. A foreman is sent with them, and to this foreman you have to apply in case any difficulty arises. If you notice any Chinamen who is not doing his duty you go at once to the foreman and he arranges the matter; the individual has nothing to do with it (xxi).

By the turn of the century Chinese immigrants were joined by several thousand Japanese immigrants in the province. There were approximately 16,000 Chinese and 6,000 Japanese in the provincial labour market according to the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration. [17] Wage differentials between Asian and white workers had become firmly entrenched in employment practices; and the areas of Asian employment remained of two kinds, service industries and seasonal unskilled jobs in the extractive sector. The major employment areas for Chinese workers were mining, the lumber industry, salmon canning, market gardening, domestic service, and laundry and tailoring businesses. A small number of Chinese in market gardening, laundry and tailoring were merchants who rented farm land or business premises and employed their countrymen, but the vast

majority were employees in, these industries (see Royal Commission, 1902:1-279; Cheng, 1931:194). With the exception of work in the salmon canning industry where Chinese performed skilled jobs and were considered irreplaceable prior to the introduction of mechanization, Chinese labourers were unskilled, and most were seasonally employed workers. The majority of Japanese in the province were engaged as fishermen. Japanese fishermen at the turn of the century fished under the 'attached system' and were tied to the packing companies owning the boats and equipment used by the fishermen, so they lacked the independence of most white fishermen (see Knight' and Koizumi, 1976). Japanese workers were also employed in semi-skilled jobs in the boat building industry, as unskilled labourers in the lumber industry and, to a lesser extent, in mines and on farms (see Royal Commission, 1902:340-397).

Due to the late entry of the Japanese into the British Columbia labour market the Japanese were in competition with the Chinese for jobs in the lumber industry and, to a lesser extent, in mining and farming, often accepting lower wages than the Chinese in those industries. Nevertheless, ethnic segregation in the labour market was, overall, essentially between Asians and whites. Japanese immigration was also usually financed through contracting companies, and once in the province the Japanese worked in groups under Japanese labour contractors, separated from Chinese as well as white workers. Apart from the fishing industry, in which the Chinese were never involved, areas of Chinese and Japanese employment became more similar the longer the Japanese were in the province, and by the 1920s the Japanese

too were employed heavily in the service industries, market gardening, and in the lumber industry. Outside of boat building, the Japanese were also largely confined to unskilled seasonal wage labour. Moreover, the major difference in wages remained between whites and Asians rather than between Chinese and Japanese workers.

In the sawmills Chinese labour earned between \$1 and \$1.50 per day, the Japanese earned between \$0.90 and \$1.25, and unskilled white wages started at \$2 and went up to \$4.50 per day for skilled white labour (see Royal Commission, 1902:101-124, 360-365). Wages were similar in the logging camps, where Japanese workers averaged \$1 per day, Chinese workers \$1.25, and whites from \$2.25 to \$3.75 (101-124). In the mining industries, Chinese labourers earned between \$1 and \$1.50 per day, unskilled white labour earned between \$2.50 and \$3, while white miners earned between \$3 and \$5 per day (72-96). Few Japanese were employed in mining, but those who were earned between \$0.90 and \$1.25 a day (372-373). White boys received higher or equivalent wages to Asians in the mines, averaging \$1.50 a day as helpers (372).

A major area of Chinese employment was salmon canning, where wages were high but work lasted only six or seven weeks. The Chinese averaged \$25 to \$30 per month but could earn up to \$75, while white men, who served as foremen, earned an average of \$75 to \$80 and sometimes as much as \$100 a month during the canning season. Chinese can makers earned between \$50 and \$60 per month during the height of the fishing season. Chinese workers in the canneries were more directly in competition with native Indian women and boys during this period rather than in competition with

white men. Native women and boys performed the unskilled labour in the canneries, cleaning and washing the fish, while the Chinese performed unskilled as well as skilled labour such as hand butchering, can-making and sealing (see Stacey, 1981). Native women earned 15 to 20 cents an hour while native boys earned 10 to 15 cents an hour (135-164).

Chinese domestic servants earned between \$10 and \$30 per month with private families, and from \$25 to \$45 in hotels. White female servants were still in short supply at the turn of the century, and the white girls who did enter domestic service were not considered as good as male Chinese servants. For this reason white girls earned only \$12 to \$15 per month in homes and do not appear to have been employed as domestics in hotels during this period at all (167-171).

In market gardening, laundry and tailoring businesses Chinese workers were employed in Chinese firms in competition with white-owned businesses employing primarily white workers. By the turn of the century market gardening was dominated by the Chinese, with Chinese labourers on these farms earning \$18 to \$19 per month plus board. On white-owned farms Chinese labourers earned \$20 to \$25 per month (without board), white labourers earned between \$30 and \$40, and Japanese farm labour earned between \$10 and \$15 per month (55-65). The Chinese also dominated the laundry business, with wages between \$8 and \$18 per month plus board in Chinese hand laundries. Automated steam laundries owned by whites competed with Chinese hand laundries, paying their employees between \$10 and \$15 a week for white men, and between \$4 and \$7.50 a week for white women and girls (175).

Chinese tailors earned between \$25 and \$35 a month in Chinese-owned tailor shops, while white tailors earned \$12 per week if men and \$6 per week if women in white-owned tailor shops (177).

The major Japanese employer was the fishing industry, with nearly 4,000 Japanese fishermen in 1901 (355). Fishing was the only area where remuneration was the same for Asian and white workers since the price of fish did not vary between different ethnic groups. This apparent equality was tempered by gear and area restrictions on Japanese fishermen that did not apply to white fishermen (see Knight and Koizumi, 1976), and the contract system of employment. The Japanese did not own the boats and equipment used in fishing, as whites usually did, so the Japanese were tied to an agreement with specific fish packing companies and received only a share of the fish profits. Moreover, while packing companies dealt with white fishermen as individuals, Japanese fishermen were under contract to a Japanese labour contractor, further lowering the wages of individual Japanese workers (340-357). †

The Japanese had also begun to dominate the boat building industry by the turn of the century. In boat building plants owned and run by whites, white labour earned between \$3 and \$4 per day for skilled labour, and from \$1.25 to \$2.50 for boys doing the unskilled labour. The wages of Japanese workers in Japanese-owned boat building operations are unknown, but since the Japanese undersold white boat builders by more than 50 percent (\$60 for a Japanese built boat compared to \$150 for a white built boat), wages must have been comparable with or below

those paid to white boys in the industry (357-359).

Table 4.5 Summary of Male Wages for Selected Industries, by Ethnicity.

	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Japanese</u>	<u>White</u>
<u>1885:</u>			
Mining	\$1-1.25 Day	--	\$2 Day
Canning	\$25-35 Month	--	\$30-40 Month
Road Const.	\$15-20 Month	--	\$40 Month
Gen. labour	\$1.25 Day	--	\$2-2.50 Day
<u>1902:</u>			
Sawmills	\$1-1.50 Day	\$0.90-1.25 Day	\$2-4.50 Day
Logging	\$1.25 Day	\$1 Day	\$2.25-3.75 Day
Mining	\$1-1.50 Day	\$0.90-1.25 Day	\$2.50-5 Day
Canning	\$25-30 Month	--	\$75-80 Month
Farm labour	\$20-25 Month	\$10-15 Month	\$30-40 Month
Laundry	\$8-18 (plus board) Month	--	\$10-15 Week
Tailors	\$25-35 Month	--	\$12 Week

Sources: Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 1885 and Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 1902.

On average then, Asian workers earned from one-half to two-thirds of what unskilled white workers earned in the same industries (see Table 4.5). Furthermore, Chinese and Japanese immigrants were completely excluded from skilled jobs within all but the fishing and canning industries. While white workers were hired as individuals by a firm, Chinese and Japanese workers were hired under ethnic labour contractors usually to perform a limited number of jobs within a sawmill, a logging camp, a mine or a cannery. Testimony presented at the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration indicates that although individual firms often had a combination of white, Chinese and Japanese employees, each performed specific jobs for different rates of pay. Managers and owners of sawmills, shingle mills,

logging camps, mines and canneries often discussed preferences for specific ethnic groups for various jobs, as the following quotations illustrate:

We find white men more adapted for the work in the woods [in the logging camps]. Chinese and Japanese have never been employed in the mills in what you would call skilled labour; except as shingle sawyers and packers. We employ Chinese in packing shingles exclusively (108).

I employ from thirty to forty Chinese and from sixty to seventy white men. The Chinese are employed in carrying and piling lumber, and in the [saw]mill, as well as attending some of the machines. They are all ordinary labourers except one (119).

The Japanese and Chinese pile the lumber, take care of the refuse, cut it up into wood, pile it, etc., and the more skilled generally run the cut-off saws, the lath and picket saw, and in many cases are engaged as assistants on planers. Very few white men are employed in this class of labour (126).

[In the shingle mill] the Chinese are used for pulling bolts from the water surface to the mill, cutting them up in sixteen inch lengths, and piling them on tables convenient to the sawyers. The sawyers are all white men. The packers are usually Chinese (128).

While the Japanese are not engaged to any extent in the shingle mills as the Chinese are, they have crowded out the Chinese, the white men and the Indians to a very large extent as labourers in getting out shingle bolts, mining timber and cordwood; although they are not employed to any large extent in the lumber camps (370).

There is no competition between Chinese and whites in the lines of labour I employ, that is canning, because they are not doing the same thing. The condition does not arise. We employ white men as superintendents. We contract at so much per case with the Chinese firm. It is one of the conditions that they shall not sublet their contract. The business could not be carried out without the Chinese...All the Indian women who come to the cannery are employed. There is a great scarcity and competition for them. I have known them to be paid as high as \$3 a day. Indian boys are largely employed. Wages for women are 15 to 20 cents an hour. Boys, 10 to 15 years old, 10 to 15 cents an hour. They wash the fish apart from the Chinese. We sometimes employ them subject to the Chinese and deduct what we pay them from the Chinese contract. They board themselves; have cabins, tents and houses at the canneries for their accommodation. [We] have

never employed white men and boys for the same purpose. You would have to have better accommodation for white people (152-153).

The 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration was decidedly more hostile towards Asian immigrants than the 1885 Royal Commission had been. 'Nonassimilable' Asians were clearly distinguished from 'actual settlers' or 'permanent citizens' in the province simply on the basis of ethnic origin. It is worth quoting from the conclusions of the 1902 Royal Commission at some length to illustrate the perception of Asian inferiority that was encompassed in the discriminatory immigration laws passed by both federal and provincial governments.

If the end to be sought is the building up of the nation, and not the exploitation of these resources, the one vital interest to be secured above all others is an immigration of settlers of whom we may hope to make Canadians, in the highest and best sense of the word...How far do the Chinese of the labor or coolie class approach this standard? They come from southern China, drawn from the poorer classes, reared in poverty where a few cents a day represent the earnings which must suffice for a family; accustomed to crowd together in small tenements or huts, close, unhealthy and filthy; with customs, habits and modes of life fixed and unalterable, resulting from an ancient and effete civilization, with no desire to conform to western ideas. They form, on their arrival, a community within a community, separate and apart, a foreign substance within, but not of our body politic, with no love for our laws and institutions; a people that will not assimilate or become an integral part of our race and nation. With their habits of overcrowding, and an utter disregard of all sanitary laws, they are a continual menace to health. From a moral and social point of view, living as they do without home life, schools or churches, and so nearly approaching a servile class, their effect upon the rest of the community is bad. They pay no fair proportion of the taxes of the country. They keep out immigrants who would become permanent citizens, and create conditions inimical to labour and dangerous to the industrial peace of the community where they come. They spend little of their earnings in the country and trade chiefly with their own people. They fill the places that ought to be occupied by permanent citizens, many of whom leave the country on their account. They are unfit for full citizenship, and are permitted to take no part in municipal or provincial

government. Upon this point there was entire unanimity. They are not and will not become citizens in any sense of the term as we understand it. They are so nearly allied to a servile class that they are obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state (277-278).

All that has been said in this regard with reference to the Chinese applies with equal, if not greater force, to the Japanese...The consensus of opinion of the people of British Columbia is that they do not and cannot assimilate with white people, and that while in some respects they are less undesirable than the Chinese, in that they adopt more readily our habits of life and spend more of their earnings in the country, yet in all that goes to make for the permanent settlement of the country they are quite as serious a menace as the Chinese and keener competitors against the working man, and as they have more energy, push and independence, more dangerous in this regard than the Chinese (397).

A major distinction between the 1885 and 1902 Royal Commissions on Asian immigration was that by 1902 employers generally agreed that there was already an abundant supply of Asians to fill the need for cheap labour in the province. Thus there was a general consensus that Asian immigration ought to be drastically reduced. The views expressed by the white working class had not changed since 1885, workers testifying before the Royal Commission sought the exclusion of Asian immigrants from the country. As the conclusions from the 1902 Royal Commission indicate, there was general agreement amongst whites of all classes in British Columbia that Asians ought not to become permanent citizens in the country.

It should be noted that restrictive legislation against Asians was specifically aimed at wage labourers, with other classes of immigrants such as merchants, students, and diplomats, exempted from taxes or other restrictions. Furthermore, the serious attempt to restrict Asian immigration that began with the 1902 Royal Commission and culminated in the mid 1920s with the

complete exclusion of the Chinese, coincided with a change in the needs of the labour market. The rapid expansion of the unskilled labour force was beginning to slow down by the turn of the 20th century, and by the 1920s economic growth was stagnant and unemployment a perennial problem.

The Chinese head tax was raised to \$500 in 1904. Such a large tax did not stop Chinese immigration to Canada for long because it created a shortage of Asian labour, and thus a relative increase in Asian wages.[18] In 1923 all Chinese (again excluding merchants, diplomats and students) were excluded from immigration to Canada with the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act. Legislation against Japanese immigrants was more politically sensitive, and an agreement was negotiated with the Japanese government in 1908 to limit the number of Japanese labourers emigrating to Canada to 400 per year.[19] In 1923 the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' was revised and reduced to 150 labourers per year, and in 1928 the picture-bride system of Japanese marriages was abolished, effectively ending the emigration of Japanese women to Canada (see Adachi, 1976, and Cheng, 1931).[20] East Indian immigration, which did not begin until the turn of the century, was ended in 1908 with the passage of legislation requiring potential immigrants to arrive in Canada by continuous journey from their country of origin. Since there were no direct shipping routes between India and Canada, further Indian immigration ceased after a few unsuccessful attempts to circumvent the legislation.[21] In addition to laws restricting Asian immigration, a law was passed in 1910 that required Asian immigrants who were not already subject to the restrictive legislation to possess \$200

in cash before being admitted into the country (see Cheng, 1931 and Ward, 1978).[22]

Asian immigrants were subject to other discriminatory laws besides immigration restrictions. Throughout this period Asians were denied the political franchise, even if they were naturalized Canadians or Canadian born. Only a handful of Japanese veterans from the First World War eventually received the franchise in 1920.[23] Furthermore, the British Columbia government passed a series of restrictive legislative acts limiting the employment of Asians. They could not be hired on any provincially or municipally funded contracts. Asians were barred from working underground in the mines, ostensibly due to the hazard that those not speaking English posed in the mines. Fishing licences to Japanese fishermen were reduced by one-half. And through the criteria of electoral eligibility, Asians were further excluded from practicing professions such as law or pharmacy in the province (see Cheng, 1931; Phillips, 1967b; Roy, 1980b; and Ward, 1978).

As we have seen, patterns of ethnic segregation in the labour market were already well developed by the turn of the 20th century. The boundaries between what was colloquially referred to as 'white man's labour' and 'coolie labour' were never absolute and areas of Asian employment did change over time. Political actions by the federal and provincial governments and agitation by white trade unions, for example, helped to limit some avenues of Asian employment over the next four decades, while facilitating more petite bourgeois Asian enterprises. However, as Table 4.6 indicates, Asian workers continued to be

largely confined to unskilled labour, farming and the lumber industry, to canning and fishing, and to service occupations such as domestics, grocers, launderers and tailors, until the Second World War. In 1931 eighty percent of Chinese men in British Columbia worked in three areas of the labour market: agriculture, service, and unskilled labour. And although Japanese men were slightly less restricted in areas of employment than were the Chinese, with sixty percent engaged in agriculture, fishing, and unskilled labour, in comparison to the total male labour force Asians continued to be concentrated in only a few sectors of the labour market.

Table 4.6 The Employment Distribution of Chinese and Japanese Men in British Columbia, Compared to All Men, 1931

Employment Sector	Chinese		Japanese		% All Men
	Number	%	Number	%	
Agriculture	4,185	18	1,465	20	16
Fishing	19	0	1,464	20	4
Logging	653	3	599	8	5
Mining	391	2	101	1	4
Manufacturing and					
Mechanical	931	4	663	9	12
Construction	37	0	181	3	7
Transportation	470	2	237	3	11
Trade and Finance	1,890	8	388	5	10
Service	5,873	26	506	7	11
• Clerical and					
Professional	189	1	154	2	4
Other Labourers	8,200	36	1,436	20	16
Not Stated	0	0	2	0	0
Total*	22,838	100%	7,196	98%	100%

* These percentages are rounded.

Sources: Young and Reid, 1938: 239-245; Census of Canada, 1931, Volume III; and 1931, Volume V.

Wage differentials between white and Asian workers also continued through the 1930s. In 1921, for example, wages in a Vancouver sawmill ranged from 22 cents to 43 cents an hour for

Asian workers, and from 35 cents to 90 cents an hour for white workers (see Labour Gazette, May 1921:720). During the late 1930s, union contracts in the lumber industry often included wage differentials for white and Asian workers in the wording of the contract. In a pulp mill in Powell River, for example, the minimum rate for 'Oriental' workers was 44 cents per hour and for 'Occidental' workers it was 54 cents (see Labour Gazette, December 1938:1405). A contract at an Ocean Falls pulp mill in 1937 listed jobs and wages according to the ethnicity of the worker. The contract signed in August of 1937 by the International Brotherhood of Papermakers (local 360) and the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers (local 312) read, in part, as follows:

...logging (summer) - boommen 68 cents; sawmill - boommen (Oriental) 53 cents, pickers (Oriental) 44 cents, millwrights 68 and 82 cents, bargemen (Oriental) 44 and 58 cents; groundwood - grindermen (Oriental) 49 cents, screen tenders (Oriental) 49 cents... (Labour Gazette, December 1938:1406).

The segregation of white and Asian workers in different jobs with a split wage scale remained a standard employment practice in British Columbia until after the Second World War.

The British Columbia labour force continued to consist overwhelmingly of workers of British origin throughout the 1930s. As Table 4.7 shows, this pattern was even more marked among female workers than among male workers in the province. Moreover, workers of Chinese origin were the second largest group in the labour market. Chinese and Japanese workers combined accounted for eleven percent of the entire labour force and twelve percent of the male labour force in British Columbia in 1931.

2

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

Table 4.7 The Percentage of the British Columbia Labour Force by Ethnic Origin and Sex, 1931.

Ethnic Origin	Total Labour Force	Male	Female
British	67	64	80
French	2	2	2
Central European	4	5	3
Dutch	1	1	1
Easter European	4	4	3
Italian	2	2	1
Scandinavian	6	6	4
Native Indian	3	3	2
Chinese	8	9	0
Japanese	3	3	2
Total*	100	99	98

* These percentages are rounded.

Source: Census of Canada, 1931, Volume III.

After the First World War a Department of Labour was formed in British Columbia and one of its tasks was to monitor the ratio of Asian to white labour in the province. Although the returns compiled by the provincial Department of Labour are incomplete, based as it was on a voluntary system of employer returns covering only 25 sectors of employment, ethnic segregation can be observed in the pattern of Asian employment, and in the government's concern with documenting reductions in the percentage of Asians employed within the labour force.[24] The reduction in the percentage of Asian workers in the British Columbia labour force between 1920 and 1939, documented in Table 4.8, was of considerable political significance to the provincial government, which took credit for limiting Asian employment during this period.[25]

Table 4.8 The Ethnic Origin of the Labour Force in Industries
Surveyed by the British Columbia Department of Labour,
by percentage, 1920-1939

Year	English Speaking	Other European	Asian	Unstated
1920	69	13	16	2
1921	70	12	14	4
1922	70	14	14	2
1923	71	15	13	1
1924	74	14	11	1
1925	71	16	11	2
1926	71	16	11	2
1927	73	15	10	2
1928	73	17	9	1
1929	70	19	10	1
1930	72	16	9	3
1931	74	15	7	4
1932	75	15	8	2
1933	76	15	8	1
1934	73	15	8	4
1935	77	14	7	2
1936	75	15	8	2
1937	77	15	7	1
1938	77	15	7	1
1939	77	15	7	1

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1920-1939.

The reduction in Asian labour as a percentage of the British Columbia labour force, from 16% in 1920 to 7% in 1939, corresponds to a real reduction in the number of Asians employed outside of the Asian-owned service sector, and not simply to an increase in the white population. In 1920 the Annual Report of the Department of Labour lists 9,574 Asian men in the 25 industries surveyed. By 1939 this number had decreased to 7,971. Moreover, when we break down the employment of Asians by industry, we find a narrowing of the industries where Asians are employed during the inter-war period, and a reduction of their numbers in industries where they continue to find employment. Most notable are the production of building materials, coal

mining, the explosives and chemical industry, garment manufacturing, oil-refining, lumber, pulp and paper, and the manufacture of other wood products. These patterns of Asian employment between 1920 and 1939 are documented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Male Asians as a Percentage of all Male Employees, by Industrial Sector, 1920-1939

	1920	1925	1930	1935	1939
Coal-mining	19	10	9	4	4
Metal Mining	2	2	3	1	1
Smelting	3	2	1	1	1
Lumber	32	21	18	15	13
Pulp & Paper	27	26	17	23	17
Wood Manuf.	26	11	6	5	3
Building	29	23	14	0	0
Materials					
Explosives	27	32	8	12	2
Food Products	16	18	25	16	23
Garments	11	16	9	0	7
Laundries	10	11	6	6	8
Oil-Refining	28	0	11	1	2
Publishing	3	3	5	2	3
Shipping	7	6	8	6	4
Ship-building	0	0	3	3	3
Breweries	0	0	6	0	0
Cigar Making	0	0	0	0	0
Contracting	3	1	0	0	0
Furniture	0	0	0	1	1
Jewelry	0	1	0	0	0
Leather/Fur	1	2	1	1	1
Metal Trades	3	0	1	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	5	3	5	1
Paint Manuf.	0	0	0	0	0
Utilities	0	1	0	0	0

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935 and 1939.

The most significant reduction in Asian employment is found in the various parts of the forestry industry, with a reduction from 32% to 13% in lumber, 27% to 17% in pulp and paper, and 26%

to 37. in other wood manufacturing between 1920 and 1939. These figures represent not only a proportional reduction of Asian employees in the forestry industry, but also an absolute reduction in their numbers following the implementation of male minimum wage legislation in that industry in 1926. The number of Asian males employed in the forestry sector decreased from 7,010 in 1920 to 4,280 in 1939. The loss of employment opportunities in the forestry industry was significant for Asian workers, since it had been a major sector of employment for all Asians until the mid-1920s. One-fifth of all Chinese wage labourers, one-third of all Japanese wage labourers, and nine-tenths of the East Indian labour in the province were employed in the forestry sector in the mid-1920s (see Cheng, 1931).

Male minimum wage legislation was first implemented in the lumber industry in 1926, setting a minimum wage of 40 cents per hour. This legislation was passed in order to stabilize labour and to lower the proportion of Asian workers employed in the industry.

The [Minimum Wage] Board states that there was common testimony that the greater efficiency of the white worker entitled him to a rate of pay one-fourth higher than the wages of the Oriental. It therefore seemed reasonable to expect that 'if an employer found himself obliged to pay his oriental workers 40 cents an hour, he would be willing to pay his white workers more, or, alternatively, that a large additional number of white workers would be introduced into the industry' (Labour Gazette, September 1927:929).

Two years later the male minimum wage legislation was declared invalid by the Supreme Court of Canada. A new Male Minimum Wage Act was passed in 1929 but the legislation was virtually unused during the depression years of the 1930s, although minimum wages

were set again in the lumber industry in 1934 (see Labour Gazette, September, 1933:915; and May, 1934:419). However, the minimum wage had the desired effect of reducing Asian employment in the lumber industry from 45 percent to 31 percent between 1925 and 1927 (see Labour Gazette, September 1928:971).

The provincial government did not collect labour force data in the service sector. The Annual Reports of the Department of Labour tell us little about the employment of Asians within the service sector of the economy, especially within small businesses owned by members of the Chinese and Japanese communities. Yet after the First World War a significant minority of both Chinese and Japanese residents in British Columbia began to move into petite bourgeois enterprises, and more and more working class Asians came to labour on farms and in businesses owned by other members of their ethnic communities. More Chinese became involved in truck farming and in small restaurants, laundries, and grocery stores than before the war. Many Japanese moved into fruit and berry farming in the Okanagan and the Fraser Valley while others became retail merchants in the urban areas (see Adachi, 1976; Cheng, 1931; and Roy, 1980).

This movement into commerce was directly related to successful white working class agitation and government legislation to limit Japanese involvement in the fishing industry, where the federal government halved the number of Japanese fishing licenses in the early 1920s, and attempts to limit Asian employment in mining, railways, public works projects, and the lumber industry (see Roy, 1976 and 1980b). With a growing number of Chinese and Japanese workers labouring

on farms and in businesses owned by other members of their ethnic communities, the labour market became even more firmly segregated by ethnicity. Moreover, the work that Asians performed for their fellow countrymen was also largely unskilled and low paying: farm labour, grocery store clerks, cooks and waiters, tailors, and laundry workers. The expansion of some Chinese and Japanese into commerce was a move upward for the small number of Asians owning farms and businesses, but it did not alter the reality of low-paying wage labour for the majority of Asians in the province, nor the fact that Chinese and Japanese workers continued to earn significantly less than white workers employed in similar unskilled labour.

To summarize, the structure of the labour market between 1880 and 1939 was marked by ethnic segregation between white and Asian workers. There was differentiation between the appropriate wages for white and Asian labour, differentiation regarding appropriate jobs for whites and Asians in the province, different hiring practices, through contractors or as individual employees, and the physical segregation of different ethnic groups within the workplace. Employment practices took place within a social context that already defined whites as superior and Asians as inferior members of Canadian society. Immigration policies and other laws that denied Asian immigrants full citizenship rights in British Columbia not only set the context for the development of an ethnically segregated labour market, it also set the context for the development of a politically divided working class.

The effect of restrictive immigration and other

discriminatory laws against Asians in British Columbia was to create a second-class group of immigrants. Some immigrants of European origin were less 'preferred' than others, but no European groups were taxed, excluded, denied the franchise, or legally limited in areas of employment. The Chinese and the Japanese (as well as East Indians) were accorded an inferior 'non-settler' status within Canadian civil society. Immigration policies toward Asians, like discriminatory employment practices in the province, were initially premised on the conditions created by uneven capitalist development and British colonialism. Asians were considered inferior by the British, and their historically lower subsistence levels and cheap wage labour in British Columbia legitimated racist colonial ideologies. Moreover, the maintenance of the marginal economic position of Asians in British Columbia was premised on their second-class immigration status and their lack of political rights. Asian workers were placed in a position of economic and political inferiority vis-a-vis white workers such that the resources utilized by white workers organizing for better wages, working conditions, job security, socialist politics, and restrictive immigration laws, were largely absent for Asian workers.

Peter Li (1979:324) has argued that the non-citizen status of the Chinese (and by analogy the Japanese and East Indians) was a solution to capital's problem of maintaining "the marginal status of a group whose labour was necessary for economic expansion". Although there is no doubt that maintaining economic marginality was an effect of the subordinate political status of Asian workers, we should not accept a functionalist explanation for a

complex historical process. Immigration policies, like all state policies, are defined within the context of capitalist social relations, and in this case specifically within the context of the requirements of the labour market. However, the progressively more stringent taxes and restrictions on Asian immigration, and restrictions on the sectors of the economy where Asians could work, occurred as a result of pressure from those who felt threatened by Asian labour, the working class and small businessmen in the province. In spite of the fact that these political restrictions might have been in the long term interests of capital, testimony at the 1885 and 1902 Royal Commissions indicates that these restrictions were not implemented at the behest of Canadian capitalists. [26]

As we have seen, political divisions over the issue of Asian immigration in British Columbia were clearly drawn on the basis of class since the early 1880s. There was, however, considerable agreement amongst all whites in the province that Asians were socially inferior and thus undesirable as permanent settlers. Assumptions about Asian inferiority were used to legitimate claims about their nonassimilability. As Chan (1983) has argued, the absence of women and children from the Chinese and (pre-1908) Japanese communities was considered proof that Asians had no intention to settle in the country permanently. The denial of political rights was premised on the 'non-settler' status of Asians, which was in turn premised on assumptions about their social inferiority and nonassimilability. Even when the Japanese did begin to bring wives into the country and to raise families, after the 1908 immigration agreement, political rights continued

to be denied Asian residents, even those who were born in Canada. Whether permanent settlers or not, Asians were second-class members of Canadian society.

W. Peter Ward (1978:4-14) has argued that racist stereotypes about the Chinese were the product of European, particularly British, concepts about the 'Chinese character' and 'Sinophobia' brought from California to British Columbia by miners following the Fraser River gold rush in the 1860s. Ward does not, however, root the salience of these stereotypes within the context of European colonialism in China, and the role of Asian labourers providing a cheap, unskilled, male labour force in the development of North America. Assumptions about the social inferiority of Asians that emerged during the colonial period were reaffirmed in British Columbia by the allocation of Asians to the bottom of the class structure, in economic and social ghettos that generated and legitimated racist stereotypes.

The social organization of Asians into the lowest ranks of the provincial working class was the product of two factors. One, the relative cheapness of Asian labour, which was premised on the historically lower subsistence level of Asian peasants in comparison to Europeans, the contract system of labour, reproduction costs borne in Asia rather than in Canada, the political inferiority accorded to Asians by the Canadian state, and white working class organization to exclude Asian labour. Secondly, racist ideologies about Asian inferiority and nonassimilability, which were formed under conditions of British colonialism and uneven capitalist development, facilitated the formation of cohesive ethnic communities rather than the

assimilation of Asian immigrants throughout the society. Ethnic communities closed ranks against a racist dominant society and provided economic links, mutual aid, and a social and cultural haven for Asian immigrants in British Columbia. The formation of separate Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian communities also strengthened their social ghettoization and further legitimated assumptions about Asian nonassimilability.

Within the context of the economic and political marginality of Asian workers, the white working class marshalled its superior economic and political resources in the labour market and the political arena for protection against Asian wage labour competition. The anti-Asian agitation of the white working class was part of the conflict between capital and labour in British Columbia. Ethnic conflict did not, however, result automatically from wage differentials in an ethnically split labour market. On the contrary, exclusive rather than inclusive labour organization emerged in the context of the inferior political status of the cheaper labour group within civil society. The denial of citizenship and other civil rights by the Canadian state made the possibilities of successful labour militancy much less likely for Asian than for white workers, and legitimated the white workers' exclusion of a group already defined as inferior by the state.

Racist attitudes about the inferiority of Asians were certainly not irrelevant to anti-Asian labour organization in British Columbia, but the salience of these racist attitudes and practices should be understood within the context of productive social relations in the province that ghettoized Asians economically, politically, and socially. State policies that

defined Asians as second class residents in Canada contributed to the development of an ethnically segregated labour market and a politically divided working class. At the same time, the anti-Asian activities of the white labour movement helped to entrench the second class political status of Asians and their economic marginality within the labour market. The working class was not simply the product of economic relations in the province; its own actions helped to form and transform those relations.

The formation of an ethnically divided working class took place within the context of labour market practices, state policies, and racist ideologies. In the following chapter we will explore the political 'making' of the Vancouver working class from the turn of the century until the Second World War, and discuss the role that ethnic segregation played in defining working class politics and labour organization in the province, and the role that working class politics played in the marginalization of Asian workers in the labour market and within civil society.

Chapter Five

Ethnic Divisions in Working Class Politics in Vancouver,
1886-1939

By the late 19th century an ethnically segregated labour market had emerged in British Columbia that relegated Chinese, Japanese and East Indian workers to unskilled jobs in the primary industries and the service sector where they often laboured for longer hours and always received considerably lower pay than unskilled white labour. The economic marginality of Asians was linked to their political marginality, with the denial of citizenship rights and discriminatory immigration laws. The economic and political subordination of Asians in the province meant that Asian and white workers did not possess equal resources as workers engaged in conflicts with employers in the province.

Differential economic and political resources for white and Asian workers affected the nature of the labour movement in Vancouver. A politically divided working class developed in which the ethnicity of the worker, whether white or Asian, played a major role in defining both involvement in the labour market and the nature of involvement in labour conflicts in Vancouver.[27] The working class in Vancouver was not simply the passive object of oppressive capitalist practices. Workers often struggled to improve their lives in the province through agitation for laws and employment practices more beneficial to themselves. In this sense, Vancouver workers 'made' themselves as a class acting in its own interests, interests that were perceived to be in opposition to the interests of their employers. The development

of class consciousness is never uniform, however. Not all workers supported labour reform or socialist political candidates, took an active part in the labour movement, or recognized an inherent contradiction between the interests of capital and labour. Among those workers whom we could consider conscious of their interests as a class there was, moreover, considerable variation in the intensity of that consciousness. Those workers who supported labour reformism as an end in itself reflected a lesser degree of class consciousness than those who adopted some form of socialist ideology. Thus the working class did not 'make' itself politically in a homogeneous way. Capitalist relations in British Columbia incorporated ethnic relations of domination and subordination that had a considerable effect on the way that different groups of workers perceived their interests.

The role of Asian workers as cheap wage labourers provided a source of ethnic conflict throughout the early history of the white labour movement in British Columbia. The issue of Asian immigration dominated working class politics, especially during periods of high immigration and high unemployment, and it was an issue on which, at least in the long run, workers were successful in pressuring the state to act. Of course the movement to exclude Asians from British Columbia was not confined to the working class. As more Chinese and Japanese moved into commerce and farming after the First World War, small businessmen joined in the movement to exclude Asian competitors from the province (see Roy, 1976 and 1980b). [28] Opposition to Asian immigration, and other anti-Asian activities pursued by the white labour movement, entrenched the marginal economic and political position of Asian

workers, and thus their value to employers as cheap labourers. The efficacy of anti-Asian activity within the white labour movement was, at best, short-sighted and, at worst, counter-productive. While discriminatory legislation barring further Asian immigration, restricting Asian employment in some industries, and preventing Asians from becoming full members of the labour movement, might have 'protected' some white male jobs, in the long run it fostered an Asian labour force that had few alternatives but to accept low wages and generally to acquiesce with little resistance to capitalist employment practices in the province.

The anti-Asian content of white labour activity was not an automatic outcome of wage differentials in an ethnically segregated labour market. It occurred in the context of the inferior political status of cheaper Asian workers within civil society, with Asians denied political rights and citizen or settler immigration status. The marginal political position of Asian workers made the possibilities of successful labour militancy much less likely for Asian workers than for white workers, and legitimated white workers' exclusion of a group already defined as inferior by the state. As we shall see, however, the more radical socialist segment of the working class in Vancouver rejected exclusive practices toward Asians. Socialists argued that state policies and capitalist employment practices never benefit the working class because capitalism is premised on the exploitation of wage labour, white and Asian alike. The historical periods of capitalist economic crisis that generated greater adherence to socialist politics, centering on

the contradiction between capital and labour, occurred at the end of the First World War and during the depression of the 1930s. These two periods also witnessed a decrease in anti-Asian activity and the greater inclusion of Asian workers within the labour movement in Vancouver.

The participation of Asian workers in labour conflicts was hampered by their marginal economic and political position before the Second World War. In addition, the social ghettoization of Asians fostered close ethnic community ties that further hampered the development of working class consciousness. Asians were a poor, cheap, unskilled, abundant labour force, and, in addition, were considered socially inferior to white workers. The white labour press often stressed the frequent use of Asian workers as strikebreakers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially in the mines and fisheries. Yet there was another side to Asian involvement in labour conflicts that was less often discussed by white workers, the active involvement of Asian workers in strikes. Indeed, sometimes the incidents of Asian workers acting as strikebreakers occurred in situations where they were actively involved in the early stages of a strike but were unable to resist the pressures to return to work as long as white workers. The failure of white labour unions to organize Asian workers into their ranks contributed to this problem. In any event, in spite of the impediments to Asian labour militancy, Asian workers were involved in strikes as early as the 1860s.[29] In comparison to white workers, Asian workers were relatively docile in the workplace; in the context of their economic and political marginality, however, the extent of Asian labour

militancy is impressive.

In the Vancouver area alone, Chinese, Japanese and East Indian workers took part in no less than fifty separate strikes between 1900 and 1939 (see Appendix A).[30] Nearly three-quarters (70%) of these strikes involved the joint actions of Asian and white strikers. Over half (56%) of the strikes occurred in the sawmills and shingle mills in Vancouver and New Westminster. Strikes in the lumber industry and the fisheries account for nearly three-quarters (74%) of all strikes involving Asian workers in the Vancouver area during this period.

The nature of ethnic segregation in the labour market defined the areas where Asian workers were most likely to attempt to change conditions in the workplace. Few strikes occurred within the Chinese or Japanese business sector or against the practices of the contract bosses.[31] Most strikes involving Chinese or Japanese workers were attempts to resist wage reductions or to win wage increases, better working conditions, shorter hours, or union recognition from white employers. Since the major employment of Asian workers outside of the Asian business sector was in the lumber industry, and for Japanese in the fisheries, it is not surprising that most labour conflicts involving Asians also occurred in these industries. Other strikes took place in canneries, in factories, and on farms, but much less frequently than in the lumber mills and the fisheries. Moreover, the periods conducive to Asian labour militancy were restricted by the marginal economic and political status of Asian workers. Although the period under study spans 40 years, two-thirds (64%) of all strikes involving Asian workers in the

Vancouver area were concentrated within two short periods, at the end of the First World War and in the early years of the depression of the 1930s. These periods of high levels of Asian labour militancy coincide with periods of economic crisis and with the growth of socialism, radical labour activity, and greater solidarity between white and Asian workers.

The Early Years: 1886 to 1914

The founding of Vancouver in 1886 coincided with a campaign by white workers to drive Chinese workers from the new Terminal City.

Vancouver, from its very beginning it may be stated, has always been thoroughly anti-Chinese in its sentiments, and it may truthfully be said that had our worthy pioneer working-men in a crisis that was then pending, been allowed a free hand by the powers that be there would not be at the present day a Mongol cheap worker in this city (British Columbia Federationist, November 18, 1911:4).

Organized under the leadership of the Knights of Labour, a boycott of all businesses employing Chinese labour, selling goods to Chinese, "or patronizing them in any way", was launched in November of 1886. Black Xs were painted in front of businesses not observing the boycott, public meetings were held to demand the exclusion of the Chinese, and citizens were encouraged to refrain from voting for municipal candidates who did not endorse Chinese exclusion. Nevertheless, Chinese workers continued to migrate to the growing city. A meeting held on February 24th, 1887 to protest the arrival of more Chinese labourers ended with approximately 300 white workers attacking the Chinese camp at False Creek. The camp was burned to the ground and the Chinese

were ordered to leave the city. Although the police intervened to avoid bloodshed and arrested three of the rioters, the False Creek camp was temporarily abandoned, and its inhabitants moved to New Westminster where a larger Chinese community provided greater protection. The provincial legislature defused the crisis by declaring Martial law and revoking Vancouver's charter for a brief period of time. As Vancouver continued to grow throughout 1887, so too did its Chinese population, and attempts to drive them from the city soon died down (see British Columbia Federationist November 18, 1911:4; December 9, 1911:8; January 6, 1912:3; and January 20, 1912:3; and Phillips, 1967b:14). It was the failure of the movement to drive the Chinese from Vancouver that is referred to, with regret, in the above quotation written 24 years later in an article on the history of the labour movement in the city.

The 1887 anti-Chinese riot was not repeated for two decades, but the issue of Chinese, and soon Japanese and East Indian, labour remained in the forefront of labour politics in Vancouver. Throughout the 1890s the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (hereafter the VTLC) advocated boycotts of goods and services produced by Chinese labour and the exclusion of Chinese immigration. During the early history of the VTLC, "the Chinese question was then constantly before the Council and many motions were made on the various phases of the question" (The B.C. Trades Unionist, September 1908:1). During the year of 1890, for example, the VTLC applauded the agreement between the Municipal Council and Rogers Sugar Refinery disallowing the employment of Chinese in the refinery in return for tax concessions (VTLC

Minutes, February 14, 1890). A boycott on Chinese laundries and enforcement of Sunday closing bylaws in Chinese businesses were endorsed by the VTLC (VTLC Minutes, September 30, 1890). Delegates from the VTLC presented their views on the dangers of Chinese labour at the Trades and Labour convention in Ottawa. A delegation met with the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, to press for an increase in the Chinese head tax from \$50 to \$500 (VTLC Minutes, October 30, 1890). The British Columbia Federated Trades Congress adopted a platform seeking greater restrictions on Asian immigration, and the VTLC formed a committee to investigate and compile statistics on Chinese labour to be used in its agitation for stricter immigration laws (VTLC Minutes, November 6, 1890; November 14, 1890). In 1891, the VTLC adopted a resolution calling for the total prohibition of the immigration of Chinese labour to Canada (VTLC Minutes, April 24, 1891). In addition, individual unions within the VTLC regularly complained of Chinese competition and sought the support of other trade unionists in the patronage of goods and services produced by white labour.

The anti-Chinese activities of the white labour movement in Vancouver at the end of the 19th century were not atypical for the province. Anti-Chinese labour activity had emerged in the 1870s on Vancouver Island, particularly in the coal mines owned by Robert Dunsmuir. Anti-Chinese activities in the coal mines revolved around safety issues, as workers claimed that the Chinese inability to understand English caused accidents, and, more importantly, around the use of Chinese strikebreakers in the mines (see Phillips, 1967b:8-15; Morton, 1974:107; and Ward,

1978:44-46). The issue of Chinese exclusion formed a major part of the success of the Knights of Labour in the 1880s, not only in Vancouver but throughout the province. Testifying at the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1884, the delegates from the Knights of Labour expressed the view of many white workers that Chinese labour was a danger to their standard of living and that Chinese immigration ought to be stopped.[32]

As the largest urban centre, Victoria was also a locus of anti-Chinese activity. The Workingmen's Protective Association was formed in Victoria in 1878 with the intention of protecting workers from Chinese labour as much as from the excesses of capitalist employers. Open to "all persons (except Chinamen) male or female, without respect to nationality, creed or color", the organization adopted an explicitly racist constitution:

The objects of this Society shall be the mutual protection of the working classes of British Columbia against the great influx of Chinese; to use all legitimate means for the suppression of their immigration; to assist each other in the obtaining of employment; and to devise means for the amelioration of the condition of working classes of this Province in general...[Further] every member of this Society shall use all legitimate means to prevent the patronising of Chinamen (Constitution of the Workingmen's Protective Association, 1878).

Anti-Asian racism, and the exclusion of Asians as a solution to cheap labour competition, was a feature of much of the white labour activity in Vancouver, and the province generally, throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Exclusionary practices included attempts to end Asian immigration, to deny Asians entry into labour organizations, to encourage the replacement of Asian labour by white labour, as well as campaigns encouraging white workers to patronize white labour and, often

secondarily, union produced goods and services. At the same time that white labour criticised cheap Asian labour for undermining union labour, Asian workers were explicitly excluded from belonging to any trade unions or labour councils. White workers often equated non-union labour with Asian labour, even though only a minority of white workers, male or female, were unionized. The following advertisement by the United Garment Workers of America, for example, appeared in The B.C. Trades Unionist in 1908:

The evils of Asiatic and sweat-shop labor is being exposed by a federal commission sitting in Vancouver at this time. Chinese slave owners are not the only employers of Asiatic labor in the clothing business in Vancouver. There is absolutely only one way to avoid the purchase of Asiatic or sweat-shop clothing products, and that is to demand the Union Label...Why send your money to the Flowery Kingdom or Eastern sweat-shops when you can get well-made, union-made clothing at the same price, quality considered. It is a social crime for Union Men to purchase the products of disease-breeding Asiatic dens and sweatshops (The B.C. Trades Unionist, June 1908:8).

Critiques of the capitalist oppression of workers were commonly linked to demands to hire 'citizens' of one's 'own race'. In 1908 a petition was circulated among upper class women to repeal the \$500 Chinese head tax due to the lack of servants in the city, and the VTLC responded with the following resolution:

Thus we urge the present Government to disregard the petition of those ladies of British Columbia, who want Chinese servants. The women of the working class do their own work and when they need help, they employ their own race. Let these ladies who now waste their time ...[in] useless functions emulate the example of their poorer sisters and do a little of their own domestic work. If, however, they claim immunity from work, let them pay the price, or modify the conditions of service in such a manner as will secure for them girls of their own race. It is, we think, absurd that

the working class of Canada should run the risk of having its standard of living degraded to the level of a Chinese coolie, merely to gratify the whim of an aristocratic lady for a Chinese servant (VTLC Minutes, March 21, 1907).

Concern with cheap Asian labour competition was pressed most strongly by unions faced with direct Asian competition, tailors, garment workers, laundry workers and restaurant workers. The skilled craft unions were not in direct competition with Asian workers, although all unions during this period perceived potential Asian competition in their industries as a threat to their livelihoods. For the unskilled unions, Asian labour competition was often a preoccupation. The minutes of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, for example, record persistent denunciations of union men patronizing 'unfair' restaurants. 'Unfair' generally refers to restaurants and hotels employing Chinese cooks, waiters or bus boys rather than non-union establishments employing whites. Chinese waiters and cooks were identified as the major impediment to more successful union organizing in the culinary industry. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union joined the Asiatic Exclusion League and tried repeatedly to persuade City Hall to link licenses to white only hiring clauses, and to disallow the employment of white women in Chinese restaurants. The union lobbied hotels and restaurants to replace Chinese employees with whites in return for union patronage of their establishments. Not until 1938 did the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union seek the inclusion of Chinese restaurant workers as a solution to cheap labour competition (see Hotel, Restaurant and Culinary Employees' Union, local 28, Minutes, 1910-1939).[33]

The critique of Asian labour as both a problem of non-white labour and a problem of non-union labour occurred in spite of the small proportion of the labour force that was unionized. In 1916 only 6.3% of the non-agricultural labour force in British Columbia was unionized, rising to 9.1% in 1921, to 9.2% in 1931, and to 14.7% by 1940 (see Phillips, 1967a: 388). The proportion of the non-agricultural male labour force belonging to labour unions was only slightly higher.[34] Moreover, recognition that unionization was a solution to cheap labour competition among white workers seldom resulted in strategies to help organize Asian workers.

In a single meeting of the VTLC on June 4, 1908, three different unions discussed union made goods and cheap Asian competition as a single phenomenon. The Tailors union reported "Trade dull; Chinese competition displacing membership. Delegates urged the demand for their label, the only guarantee that their clothes were made outside Asiatic sweat-shops and non-union premises". The Cooks and Waiters' Union reported "Asiatic competition was a continual menace to their organization. Complaint that white cooks could not be secured was due to higher wages demanded... Many members out of employment; trade very dull". The Typographical Union reported on the existence of Chinese and Japanese print shops "doing work for 'patriotic' local businessmen" that were putting union members out of work. In addition, a motion directed at the Provincial Attorney-General was passed to find out "why the Asiatic population is not compelled to comply with the civic Health by-laws the same as others..[and] urged that prompt measures be taken to see that the

Chinese disease-breeding sweat-shops be at least cleaned up and made to comply with the law". Finally, at the same meeting, the VTLC executive was directed to enquire into the granting of liquor licences to Japanese establishments (see VTLC Minutes June 4, 1908).

The preoccupation with Asian labour competition varied according to the level of unemployment and the level of immigration occurring at the time. The years 1907 and 1908 were periods of particularly high anti-Asian feeling amongst workers, due to fairly high rates of Asian immigration and considerable unemployment, and coincided with the second and last 'Oriental riot' in the city of Vancouver.

In response to particularly large numbers of Japanese and East Indian immigrants arriving in Vancouver during 1907, a branch of the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed in the city. A mass meeting of the League on September 7, 1907 drew an estimated 5,000 people who paraded to City Hall. Part of the crowd rampaged through Chinatown, "leaving no windows unbroken", and then moved on to the Japanese district:

Forewarned, the Japanese armed themselves with knives and bars, extinguished all lights, and waited. As the mob surged down Powell Street, rocks and pieces of wood were thrown down from the roofs of buildings by the Japanese defenders. Discouraged by this resistance, the mob returned to Chinatown by 11 p.m. By then city police and firemen were able to prevent further violence (Wickberg, 1982:85).

Considerable damage was done to homes and businesses in the Chinese and Japanese districts, but there was no loss of life. The Federal government convened two Royal Commissions to assess the damage sustained, and awarded \$26,000 in damages to Chinese.

claimants and \$9,000 to Japanese claimants' (see Royal Commissions, 1907/8, Sessional Papers, Numbers 74f and 74g). The Asiatic Exclusion League had a fairly broad range of support among white workers and small businessmen in Vancouver, the mayor of the city and the president of the VTLC were both members. While it is impossible to tell who was actually involved in the riot, white workers were certainly included among the rioters. In any event there was a general condemnation of the violence, 24 rioters were charged, and the movement to exclude Asian immigrants was thereafter confined to legitimate channels of opposition (see Ward, 1978:53-76; and Wickberg, 1982:84-87).

There was never a consensus among the white working class that exclusion was the solution to the 'problem' of cheap Asian labour competition, although it was the dominant view expressed by organized white workers. All trade unions excluded Asian members during this period, and boycotts of Asian produced goods and services were frequently called by individual unions, the VTLC, and various labour newspapers. Anti-Asian activities however, were by no means uniformly endorsed by white workers. Throughout the early 20th century parts of the white working class were critical of exclusionary practices and questioned the claims of Asian racial 'inferiority', which was a standard part of British Columbian civil society. These disagreements followed political lines, with socialists stressing class cleavages over ethnic conflicts, and the more conservative labour reformists supporting the exclusion of Asians.[35] That anti-Asian exclusion was generally the dominant trend in Vancouver labour politics reflects the relative strength of labour reformist over socialist

politics. Similarly, the periods of greater cooperation between white and Asian workers can be linked to the growth of socialist politics at specific points in time.

The first socialist organization, the Socialist Labour Party, was formed in British Columbia in 1898 (see Loosmore, 1954:109). Although the party was short-lived, there was a continuing socialist presence in British Columbia labour politics thereafter. Socialist opposition to the practices of excluding Asians was by no means uniform. In 1900 the United Socialist Labour Party drew up a party program that did not include any anti-Asian demands, and became the first labour party in British Columbia to make no reference to the 'problem' of cheap Asian labour (see Loosmore, 1954:116). In the first decade of the twentieth century the Socialist Party of Canada was the dominant socialist organization in the province, and although the S.P.C. adopted a much more progressive response to Asian workers than did the trade union movement, its strategy toward Asian workers was not without contradictions.

The Western Clarion, the Vancouver organ of the Socialist Party of Canada, often printed articles critical of the Asian-exclusion movement and pointing out the contradictions involved in such a strategy:

Organized workers are even now making loud complaints against what they term the 'Sikh invasion'. They are calling upon the powers that be to put a stop to it. They overlook the fact that the powers to whom they appeal, and the property interests which profit by the influx of this cheap and docile labor are identical. Their appeal thus of necessity must fall upon deaf ears. If the workers of this or any other country desire the exclusion of people from other lands they must first take possession of the reins of government in order to effect their purpose and enforce their will (Western Clarion,

September 1, 1906:1).

For Socialists, the only solution to the problems facing the working class was the overthrow of capitalism. The presence of cheaper Asian labour was only an instance of the general exploitation of all workers. There was often a contradiction, however, between the Socialists' analysis of world-wide capitalist exploitation, and their failure to accept the solutions of internationalism and solidarity between workers at home. In a speech following the 'Oriental riots' in October of 1907, Socialist M.L.A. J.H. Hawthornwaite stated that he was in agreement with trade unionists calling for the absolute exclusion of Asians, but cautioned that this would not solve the labour problem. While recognizing the international context of capitalist exploitation, Hawthornwaite endorsed a strategy to end Asian immigration as part of the solution for workers in Canada:

To the sentimental Socialists who said the world was his home, he replied that it would never be their home while capitalism existed ... 'Human brotherhood is all right, but as I said before, there is not enough hash to go around. It is a question of the stomach. I am well aware that you can't solve the question by hitting a Jap on the head with a broken bottle. I admit that, but to protect our homes from this terrible competition it is our duty to solve our own problem first and theirs afterwards' (Western Clarion, October 19, 1907:1).

In other speeches, Hawthornwaite argued that Asians would prefer to stay in their own countries, as Canadians prefer to stay in theirs, and that once capitalist competition was abolished there would be no need for labour to migrate in order to survive (Western Clarion, March 2, 1912:4). This view was expressed often in the pages of the Western Clarion. In so far as the Socialists endorsed the end of Asian immigration, they also endorsed the end

of European immigration: "Far better that the workers of every country remain at home and fight it out with their own ruffians and rulers" (Western Clarion, February 8, 1908:2).

This race question is being agitated by the master class in order to delude the workers into participating in a trade war for their masters' benefit. The longer that the hope of betterment by emigration is before the workers, the longer they will be in discovering that their one common hope of betterment lies in the overthrow of the wage system (Western Clarion, September 12, 1908:2).

During the early part of the century Socialists argued for the exclusion of Asian immigration not on the basis of racial prejudice, which they attributed to the labour movement generally, but through an analysis of capitalism as a world system. It was argued that Asian labourers in Canada posed the "least formidable" aspect of Asian competition with white workers; what should be feared more was the competition posed by the production of cheaper commodities within Asia (see Western Clarion, November 20, 1909:2). From the Socialist perspective, then, capitalist competition was a real threat to all workers, in all lands, and concern with issues of race would only divert workers from the real issue of ending capitalism. By the beginning of the First World War, the Socialist position was becoming even more clearly defined within the context of international solidarity between workers:

What does it greatly matter who our masters import or exclude? We are slaves here. We are slaves in China or Japan; so our condition can be changed but slightly while the capitalist system lasts. We are not of any nationality; we are not white or black; but one thing suffices to make us all common; we are forced to sell labor power to another class in order to live (Western Clarion, May 24, 1913:4).

Socialist views such as those expressed in The Western

Clarion newspaper represent the most progressive and least racist of the responses by organized white workers to cheaper Asian labour in British Columbia prior to the First World War. Racism was not entirely absent from socialist politics during this period, however. Socialists elected to the legislature, J.H. Hawthornwaite and Parker Williams, supported legislation that discriminated against Asians in the workplace and restricted Asian immigration (see Western Clarion, 1903-1914; and Phillips 1967a:129-131). Anti-Asian politics were apparently still popular among the Socialist Party's working class constituency.[36]

Socialist views on Asian exclusion appeared as minority positions in debates within the mainstream labour movement, in the VTLC meetings, the B.C. Federation of Labour conventions, and in the pages of other labour newspapers in the early 20th century. The B.C. Trades Unionist, and The Western Wage Earner which succeeded it, were published by the VTLC, and reflected the labour reform position advocating the exclusion of Asian immigration and other anti-Asian activities. Articles calling on workers to use their power at the ballot box to end Asian labour competition through exclusion, reporting on the problem of Asian labour competition in specific industries such as tailoring, garment making, laundering, lumbering, and the culinary trades, as well as articles urging white workers to patronize white labour, were all common. At the same time, however, articles that recognized that Asians were also victims of capitalist exploitation appeared occasionally. For example, an article on the usefulness of "cheap non-voting" Asian labour to capitalists

recognized that "even where there are no Asians, back east, the same problem confronts labour - the more wealth we produce the less of it we can buy back" (The B.C. Trades Unionist, February 1908:8). Recognition of the common situation of white and Asian labour was more clearly stated in an article in The Western Wage Earner in July of 1909. Reporting on a strike of Japanese firemen on a steamship, the writer condemned the white 'scabs' who broke the strike. Noting that this was the first time that such an incident had occurred, the article advocated what was at that time an unusual position, the organization of Asians:

Capital knows no creed, flag, nationality, religion or color and until the workers adopt the same code of ethics and stand shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy there is small chance of any material improvement in our conditions... The Japanese have, with the consent and assistance of the employers, captured several industries in this Province although a continual fight has been made by the white workers for their exclusion; if their presence is desirable to the employer, their organization becomes absolutely necessary and cannot be undertaken too soon by the workers (The Western Wage Earner, July 1909:12-13)..

Such views were the exception rather than the rule in the pages of VTLC publications, which were dominated by labour reform politics.

The general argument for the exclusion of Asians made within the white labour movement was explicitly racist. Asians were not simply cheap non-union labour, they were inferior social beings, "Japs", "Chinks", "Coolies", "Hindoos", "insidious Orientals", nonassimilable foreigners who were undermining the standard of living of white Canadian workers. White workers shared the racist attitudes of other whites in the province. An article published in The B.C. Trades Unionist in 1908 states this position clearly

by distinguishing between the problems of the quantity and the quality of immigrants:

The demand for Asiatic Exclusion can not be answered by a counter-demand for the exclusion of all immigration, upon the ground of equal treatment to the peoples of all nations. Admitting that European immigration, as it has recently developed, constitutes a problem demanding immediate attention, it is after all a problem of quantity, whereas Asiatic immigration is distinctly a problem of quality (The B.C. Trades Unionist, April 1908:6).

The adoption of racist attitudes about the social inferiority of Asian workers was legitimated by the social organization of Asians as cheap wage labour at the bottom of the class structure. White workers did not simply reflect the views of the dominant society. Racism also emerged out of the conditions of workers' lives in British Columbia where at least potential competition between white and Asian workers was a product of an ethnically segregated labour market.

It has been proved, time and time again, that when the Oriental once gets a foothold in a certain line, the standard of wage in that field at once drops because of his basing his wage demands according to his standard of living. It is not a case of possibly raising the Oriental to the white standard, it is a case of the certain lowering of the standard of the whites. (British Columbia Federationist, March 24, 1916:1).

Articles detailing the Asian 'domination' of industries from lumbering, fishing and market gardening, to tailoring, laundering and domestic service, and linking white unemployment to the presence of Asian workers in British Columbia, were staples of the labour reform newspapers (see The B.C. Trades Unionist, 1908-1909; The Western Wage Earner, 1909-1911; and The British Columbia Federationist, 1911-1918). The socialist analysis of Asian immigration in the context of international capitalism was

missing from the labour reform view. The issues of race and class were understood only in a national context, the superiority of white workers over Asians was assumed, and ethnic conflicts were often considered more pertinent than class conflict. As an article in The British Columbia Federationist argued:

'Unless something drastic is done within a very short time, Orientals will predominate in practically every industry in British Columbia' said a prominent businessman to the Federationist yesterday afternoon... True, the employers were primarily to blame for the influx of Orientals in the first place. But now that practically all white men are agreed that the Oriental should be eliminated, there seems to be no reason why some definite measures should not be taken - before it is altogether too late (see March 31, 1916:1).

Within the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council resolutions continued to be passed seeking the "abolition of Oriental labor in mines, lumbering, fishing and railways" as well as the legislation of 'white labour clauses' on public works projects and for the renewal of hotel and restaurant licenses (VTLC Minutes, April 21, 1910; April 20, 1911; and April 15, 1915). In 1914 the VTLC, concerned with the growth of the Asian populations in the Vancouver area, even proposed legally enforced residential segregation:

...this Council [should] request the city council to consider the question of adopting segregated areas for Asiatics already here, or of specifying what districts they shall not reside in; and that every effort be put forward to secure the absolute exclusion of Asiatics (VTLC Minutes, June 18, 1914).

The minority socialist position was heard within the mainstream labour movement, however. By the First World War, calls to educate and organize Asian workers as a solution to cheap labour competition were occasionally advocated in the major labour newspaper in the province, The British Columbia

Federationist (see August 8, 1913:2; and February 6, 1914:15-16).

At the fourth annual convention of the British Columbia Federation of Labour in 1914, the usual motion to exclude Asian immigrants was tabled. More than a dozen delegates spoke against the resolution to exclude Asian immigration, using various socialist arguments including the recognition that all races are equal; the few who spoke for exclusion spoke of the immediate need to end labour competition in order to preserve the white standard of living. In spite of the weight of speakers against exclusion the motion was passed without difficulty. At the same time, another resolution calling for a \$4 a day minimum wage for all workers, including Asians, was passed (see The British Columbia Federationist, February 6, 1914:15-16). However, as we have already seen with the legislation of a male minimum wage in the lumber industry in 1926, support for a uniform minimum wage was often simply an attempt to exclude cheaper workers from the labour market, rather than an attempt to treat them equally.

In spite of the difficulties facing Asian workers in their attempts to organize in the workplace, not the least of which were the anti-Asian activities of the white labour movement, Asian workers were involved in labour struggles throughout this period. The characterization of Asian workers as docile employees is a serious exaggeration, and assumptions that their major role in labour conflicts was as strikebreakers is simply incorrect. There is a thread of labour militancy that runs throughout the history of Asian workers in British Columbia. It was the differential economic and political resources commanded by white and Asian workers respectively that defined the greater

militancy of the former, and their exclusion of the latter, throughout much of British Columbia's early labour history. Moreover, because the militancy of the white workers included anti-Asian demands, white labour action is directly related to the relatively lower level of labour militancy amongst Asians. As we shall see, when anti-Asian activity receded within the white labour movement and greater attempts were made to include Asians within the labour movement, Asian workers expressed their dissatisfaction with existing conditions through increased labour organization and strike activity.

Prior to the First World War the only industry in which Asians were consistently involved in labour struggles was the fisheries. Japanese fishermen were involved in a series of strikes involving as many as 8,000 fishermen at a time on the lower Fraser River in 1893, 1900, 1901, 1903, and 1913. Labour conflict in the fishing industry centered on price fluctuations for fish and the growing competition between fishermen (see Gladstone and Jamieson, 1950). Each of these strikes was unsuccessful, with canners able to take advantage of the lack of unity among the three ethnic groups, and the real differences in resources between white, Indian and Japanese fishermen to withstand a long strike. In 1893 white fishermen organized the Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association, native fishermen were linked through band organizations, and the Japanese were unorganized. The failure of white fishermen to accept the Japanese within their ranks is shown in the events of the strike of 1893:

Of particular interest in this strike was the position of the Japanese which illustrated the weakness of the labour movement's anti-oriental stance. The Japanese fishermen were asked by the association to support the strike. They asked to join the association but were turned down. They then offered \$500 to the association to help them set up a separate Japanese union, but this too was rejected (see Phillips, 1967b:23).

The Japanese fishermen were in a weaker bargaining position than either native or white fishermen, and in 1900, 1901, and 1903 were the first to return to fishing. As a result they were branded as strikebreakers by the other fishermen. In 1901 Japanese fishermen formed the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society under the auspices of the Japanese Consul as a defensive measure against organized white fishermen (see Gladstone and Jamieson, 1950). By 1913 the Japanese were numerically the largest ethnic group fishing on the Fraser River and, at that time, the best organized. In a reversal of the previous strikes, the 1913 strike was led by the organized Japanese:

The Japanese were reported 'completely organized, with union hall and officers'. The whites, 'being of all nationalities besides English-speaking', lacked organization, as did the Indians. Fishermen of both the latter groups were reported to favour a compromise with the canners, but the organized Japanese, who had called the strike, kept them in line for two days...There were several reports of the use of violence, intimidation, and property damage by Japanese unionists against white and Indian strike-breakers, reminiscent of the tactics employed by whites and Indians against Japanese strike-breakers in 1900 and 1901 (Gladstone and Jamieson, 1950:158).

In spite of the militancy of the Japanese during this strike, it collapsed after two days when the organized Japanese were unable to keep unorganized workers, including many Japanese fishermen, from fishing (see PAC, RG. 27, Volume 302, Strike 110). The patterns of ethnic conflict established in the fisheries during

this period continued to divide white, native and Japanese fishermen, with the former groups united in opposition to the latter, and weakened attempts to gain stable prices and a more secure livelihood for fishermen on the coast of British Columbia.

Japanese fishermen were not the only Asian workers to organize and strike in the Vancouver area before the First World War. In the summer of 1906 Chinese laundry workers in New Westminster met to coordinate demands for a wage increase and a six day work week. Although a formal union was not organized, the laundry workers staged a successful one day strike in November, winning an increase from \$15 to \$25 per month (see Labour Gazette, June 1906 and December 1906). Chinese cannery workers were involved in unsuccessful strikes in Fraser River canneries in 1881 and 1889 (see Knight and Koizumi, 1976:105). In 1901 Chinese workers in a cannery in New Westminster struck to force the dismissal of white workers and uphold the conditions of the Chinese labour contract (see Labour Gazette, September 1901). In 1907 Chinese cooks in New Westminster formed an association and established a uniform wage scale that would entail a 40% wage increase. Whether Chinese cooks were successful in their endeavor is not known, but the fact that further labour activity was not recorded among this group suggests that the association did not last long (see Labour Gazette, May 1907). In 1908, fifty Japanese servants held a meeting in Vancouver to organize a Japanese Servants' Organization to secure a uniform wage scale and wage increases. Again, there is no record of further labour activity among this group (see The B.C. Trades Unionist, May 1908:19). These early attempts to organize are probably related

to the brief period of Asian labour shortage after the introduction of the \$500 Chinese head tax in 1904.

Asian workers were involved in a number of strikes that occurred in the sawmills around Vancouver. In January of 1903, one hundred Japanese and fifty white sawmill workers successfully struck to resist proposed changes in the foreman system; in January 1905 Japanese sawmill workers successfully resisted a reduction in wages; and in May 1916 Japanese and white sawmill workers won a wage increase (see Labour Gazette, February 1903 and February 1905; The British Columbia Federationist, May 19, 1916). In June of 1903, 147 workers in five wood factories in Vancouver, two-thirds of whom were Asian, waged an unsuccessful strike for a nine hour day at ten hours pay (see Labour Gazette, July 1903). Other strikes were the result of conflicts with the ethnic 'bosses' rather than the employer per se. In May 1903, Japanese sawmill workers struck to protest overcharging for supplies by the Japanese boss and won reforms; and in February of 1909, one hundred East Indian sawmill workers engaged in a successful strike over the failure of the Indian 'boss' to pay the men's wages regularly (see Labour Gazette, June 1903 and March 1909; PAC, RG 27, Volume 296, Strike 3113).

These early strikes by Asian workers were usually responses to employer initiated changes in the workplace. Strikes were launched to resist wage reductions, reductions in fish prices, to resist changes to the foreman system, or overcharging and withholding of pay by ethnic labour 'bosses'. Asian strikes were seldom for higher wages or shorter hours, that is, to improve working conditions rather than resist their erosion. Given the

marginal economic and political position of Asian workers, it is not surprising that they were most likely to engage in labour action when their existing standard of living was threatened. Only when Asian workers were in an unusually strong economic position or when they engaged in joint strike action with white workers, were Asian workers likely to achieve improvements through labour action. Under other circumstances striking Asians could easily be replaced by other Asian workers. In addition, it was not unknown for employers to hire white strikebreakers, at a higher rate of pay, rather than concede to the demands of Asian strikers. White strikebreakers were hired, for example, during a strike of Japanese firemen on a steamship in 1909, and during a strike of Chinese stokers at a Nanaimo mine in the summer of 1912 (see The Western Wage Earner, July 1909:12-13; and The British Columbia Federationist, July 20, 1912). Although Asian and white workers did cooperate in strikes in Vancouver during this period, on no occasion were Asians incorporated within white labour organizations.[37]

Anti-Asian activity within the white labour movement in Vancouver, and in British Columbia generally, gained renewed impetus with the pre-war depression in 1913 and 1914. Unemployment was a major concern of the VTLC and its affiliated trade unions, and the replacement of Asian labour by white labour was its general strategy. However, war mobilization created a labour shortage, interrupted incoming immigration, which had been perceived as a cause of unemployment, and removed tens of thousands of young men from the labour market. The resulting shortage of labour created a favourable climate for labour gains

among those still in the labour market in British Columbia, and the high rates of inflation provided an impetus for labour militancy. These conditions strengthened the economic position of all workers and their ability to organize and to demand increased wages and improved working conditions. For Asian workers, the advantageous economic situation provided a context where militant labour activity became a realistic strategy, even though they continued to suffer from lack of political and citizenship rights. Moreover, the growth of socialism in the province at this time increased the willingness of white workers to unite with Asian workers in common struggles.

An Interlude: Labour Militancy and the First World War

The First World War marked a watershed in white anti-Asian activity, brief though it was to be. The percentage of the non-agricultural labour force in the province belonging to trade unions rose from 6.3% in 1916 to 14.8% in 1918, and reached a high point of 21.8% in 1919 (see Phillips, 1967a:388). In absolute numbers, union membership increased from 11,600 to 40,070 during the same time period. In Vancouver alone, there were over 15,000 reported union members in 1918 (see Phillips, 1967a:387-389). Increased trade union activity coincided with increased labour conflict and the strengthening of socialist over labour reform politics. Increased labour activity was not confined to the white working class. This was a period of increasing labour activity among Chinese and Japanese workers as well. Increased participation in strikes, the formation of Chinese and Japanese trade unions, and, for the first time, the

inclusion of Asians within white labour unions, affiliated with the One Big Union, occurred during this period.

The growing support for socialist as opposed to labour reform politics during the immediate post-war period occurred not only in British Columbia or in Canada as a whole, but also throughout Europe. With the success of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the insurgencies in Germany, Hungary and Italy, the formation of the Third Communist International in 1919 and the national Communist Parties that followed, support for revolutionary forms of socialism grew throughout the industrial world.[38] The wartime full employment, inflation, and the post-war depression created, for a short period of time, working class radicalism that was unparalleled in British Columbia's often tumultuous labour history. The most important phenomenon to emerge from this period of labour radicalism in British Columbia, both for the future of unity within the white labour movement and for its relations with Asian workers, was the formation and rapid growth of the One Big Union.

The One Big Union emerged as part of a revolt against the established union structure. The O.B.U. was organized according to large industrial sectors rather than individual craft unions. With roots in anarcho-syndicalism the O.B.U. attracted many who were dissatisfied with labour reformism and embraced a revolutionary socialist ideology (see Bercuson, 1978; and Phillips, 1967a:165-197).[39] Formed in 1919 after the Winnipeg General Strike and the support strikes in Vancouver and New Westminster, the O.B.U. grew most rapidly in the, until then largely unorganized, lumber industry. By the end of 1919 the

O.B.U. had 29 locals in British Columbia and a membership of over 19,000. In early 1920 the O.B.U. claimed 40,000 members (22% of the non-agricultural labour force), 12,000 of whom were members of the Lumber Workers Union (see Phillips, 1967a:183-195; and Bercuson, 1978:165). As the brief period conducive to increased labour militancy subsided with the deepening of the post-war depression in 1921, the O.B.U. disintegrated as rapidly as it had expanded. By the end of 1920 the union was reduced to little more than a shell, and in January of 1921 the bulk of its members were lost with the withdrawal of the Lumber Workers Union. The period of labour radicalism ended as the post-war depression deepened and labour was again on the defensive.

During the immediate post-war period, anti-Asian activities among the white working class receded considerably. The British Columbia Federationist, which reached a circulation of 25,000 in 1919 (see Phillips, 1967a:173), became a major supporter of the O.B.U. in opposition to the craft unions, and adopted a socialist position on the issue of Asian labour. The British Columbia Federationist frequently published articles about the organization of Asian workers within the ranks of O.B.U. unions, especially in the lumber industry, about the success of solidarity labour tactics between white and Asian workers during strikes, and about the need to organize Asians within the labour movement. The greater solidarity between white and Asian workers is illustrated in the following quotations:

In various outlying districts this craft and color prejudice seems to have been overcome, for joint committees, composed of one representative for each class of work, and a representative for each of the alien races, are already

working on a joint wage scale for mill workers (British Columbia Federationist, February 27, 1920:8).

Yes, fellow workers, Asiatic workers should be encouraged as joining [sic] white unions for it is a class problem, and not a race problem that confronts the white mill-worker of B.C. (British Columbia Federationist, September 17, 1920:7).

It is time that all workers in Canada realised that the 'Chink' is as much a part of this country as the Scotchman [sic]; that the 'Bohunk' is as necessary as the Englishman; that all of us are exploited by a master-class who care not what nationality we are so long as we remain willing slaves ...Common sense dictates that the support of the Chinese or Austrian in our midst is better than their opposition; or even their neutrality (British Columbia Federationist, September 10, 1920:4).

In the five years between 1917 and 1921, Chinese and Japanese workers in Vancouver were involved in at least twelve separate strikes, a frequency of strike activity that was three times higher than during the pre-war period (see Appendix A). Over half of these conflicts occurred in the sawmills and shingle mills in the Vancouver area. The lumber industry witnessed intensive organization under the O.B.U. during the immediate post-war period that included white and Asian workers.[40] The increased militancy of Asian workers was facilitated by practices of inclusion rather than exclusion by white workers. At the same time, the greater militancy of Asian workers during this period fostered their acceptance by parts of the white labour movement.

The first major confrontation in which Asian workers played a dominant role was the shingle weavers' strike in the summer of 1917. Approximately 800 men, three-quarters of whom were Chinese, struck in 52 shingle mills in Vancouver and New Westminster for an eight hour day with ten hours pay. White workers were organized under the Shingle Weavers' Union, and Chinese workers were organized under the Chinese Canadian Labour Union, formed in

1916. According to The Chinese Times, the white union distributed leaflets in Chinese, urging the Chinese to organize for shorter hours (July 18 and 24, 1917). Once the strike began, however, Chinese workers were the main motivating force. As The British Columbia Federationist commented:

Officials of the Shingle Weavers' Union assert that if they were as sure of some of the married white workers as they are of the Chinese, there would be no difficulty in enforcing union conditions throughout the jurisdiction...Chinese employees are asking for two cents more per thousand than the whites. However, it is possible that the whites may be able to get the Chinese to come to a more 'reasonable' frame of mind. But at that, it's a sight for the gods (July 27, 1917:1).

The strike was not a success, only four mills conceded to the strikers' demand for an eight hour day. For others the strike dragged on for four months. Many mills replaced strikers, sometimes with white girls, and others took the men back without any changes in working conditions (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 306, Strike 43; The British Columbia Federationist, July 27, 1917; and The Chinese Times, July 18 and 24, 1917). Although unsuccessful, this strike marked the beginning of large-scale organization among Asian workers in the lumber industry.

In April of the following year, Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian sawmill workers staged a more successful strike for an eight hour day with ten hours pay in a New Westminster sawmill. After two days, their demands were conceded to (The Chinese Times, April, 1918). In March of 1919 Asian shingle weavers again launched a major strike in the industry. Approximately 1,200 Asian workers, three-quarters of whom were Chinese, struck fifty shingle mills in the lower mainland and on the coast in

response to a 10% wage reduction. The strike lasted one month, with the old wage scale restored in April. In May, the Chinese Shingle Workers' Association, formed during the strike, demanded and won a further wage increase. Employers conceded to the strikers' demands rather than face further losses in another strike (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 310, Strike 27; and The Chinese Times, March 7, 1919; April 9, 1919; and May 27, 1919).

This period of labour militancy in Vancouver, and in western Canada as a whole, was marked most clearly by the events of the Winnipeg General Strikes in the summer of 1919 and the sympathy strikes it elicited in British Columbia. The sympathy strikes also marked the greater participation of Asian workers within the provincial labour movement at this time. Chinese and Japanese workers, especially those in the lumber mills, actively participated in the sympathy strikes in Vancouver and in New Westminster (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 314, Strike 190; and Volume 315, Strike 221). According to The Chinese Times, the white labour movement solicited Chinese support in the general strike with promises of greater solidarity in the future:

The Canadian Labour Union headquarters in Vancouver [probably the VTLC] announced on June 7 that they needed the support of the Chinese workers in every field to support the general strike. The union promised to treat the Chinese workers well after the strike was over; and it would help the Chinese to fight against discriminatory laws. The white labourer had now wanted [a] good relationship with the Chinese. They also asserted that negroes and the Japanese had co-operated with the union (The Chinese Times, June 10, 1919).

The solidarity of Vancouver area workers in the sympathy strikes of 1919 reflected the growth of a broader working class consciousness among large segments of the working class. This was

also reflected in the popularity of the O.B.U., and the inclusion of Asian workers within the O.B.U. during 1919 and 1920. The Lumber Workers Industrial Union, an affiliate of the O.B.U., was engaged in numerous strikes throughout the province over the struggle for the eight hour day in 1919 and 1920. Asian workers played an active role in many of these strikes. In April of 1920, Chinese workers, at least some of whom were members of the O.B.U., struck a shingle mill in New Westminster when a wage increase was refused. White workers quit work in solidarity with the Chinese, and a joint committee was formed that successfully negotiated a wage increase. The British Columbia Federationist commented that such incidents should help to educate white mill workers who mistakenly believed that "the reason they are so poorly paid is because they have to compete with Oriental labour". In this and other cases, the "splendid solidarity evidenced in the way in which the white workers, Japs and Chinese stood together" was stressed as an important factor in the labour gains in the lumber industry during the post-war period (see The British Columbia Federationist, April 16, 1920:1,8; and May 21, 1920:1).

In September of 1921, up to 2,000 white and Asian shingle mill workers, 70% of whom were Chinese, struck at fifteen shingle mills in the lower mainland to resist a wage reduction.[41] The strike, involving the Chinese Shingle Weavers' Union and the O.B.U., lasted ten days and ended with the restoration of the old wage scale (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 327, Strike 188). Not all strikes in the lumber industry were as successful, however. In October 1919 Chinese and Japanese workers in a Vancouver shingle

mill struck unsuccessfully for a wage increase. And in April of 1921, a strike of 81 Japanese sawmill workers in Vancouver, organized under the Japanese Workers' Union and the O.B.U., failed to resist a wage reduction and ended with the hiring of white strikebreakers (PAC, RG 27, Volume 318, Strike 405; and Volume 324, Strike 31).

Although most Asian labour militancy at the end of the war occurred in the lumber industry and was often organized with, although not necessary under, the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union (O.B.U.), strikes also occurred among factory workers, vegetable hawkers and seamen. The most notable strike that occurred outside of the lumber industry was the seamen's strike in May of 1920. Japanese firemen and Chinese cooks, who were not unionized, joined in the strike of 450 sailors and stewards from the British Columbia Stewards' Union and the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. The strikers won a wage increase and one day off in seven, although they failed to win union recognition. During the strike, some non-union white workers acted as strikebreakers, but the Chinese and Japanese refused to work (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 320, Strike 154).

The post-war period of labour militancy among Asian workers in Vancouver, and in British Columbia generally, had a long term effect on labour organizing in the province. It resulted in the formation of the first Chinese and Japanese unions outside of the fishing industry. The Chinese formed the Chinese Canadian Labour Union, later called the Chinese Workers' Union, in 1916. This union was open to all Chinese workers in the province, and although its main goals were educational it was active in the

strikes in the lumber industry at the end of the war. In 1919 the Chinese Shingle Workers' Union emerged out of the conflicts in that industry. Claiming a membership of 700 Chinese workers in 1921, the union was concerned with organizing to improve wages and working conditions for Chinese workers in the shingle mills (see The Chinese Times, 1917-1921). The Japanese organized the Japanese Labour Union, later called the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union, after a lumber strike in 1920. The union, with an estimated 1,600 members in the early 1920s, was open to all Japanese workers but was particularly active in the lumber industry. From its inception the Japanese Labour Union sought affiliation with the white labour movement, which was finally granted in 1927. The Japanese Labour Union also published the first Japanese labour newspaper in Canada, a Vancouver newspaper called The Daily People, and for a time ran a food co-operative for its members (see Knight and Koizumi, 1976:38-57).

By 1921 the post-war recession was generating wage reductions throughout the province, and many of the strikes in the latter part of 1920 and 1921 were attempts to resist the erosion of living standards rather than to win new gains as the strikes at the end of the war had been. The power of the O.B.U. had passed its peak, and labour militancy among the working class in the province came to a virtual standstill. At the same time, the anti-Asian exclusion movement once again grew within the white labour movement. With unemployment high, economic circumstances were no longer advantageous for union organizing. For Asian workers any attempts to improve conditions were made even more difficult by their inferior political status and the

anti-Asian agitation of large sections of the white working class and small businessmen in the province throughout the 1920s.

The Return to Protectionism: The 1920s

The One Big Union had split the labour movement in the province. The British Columbia Federation of Labour was dissolved at the annual convention in March 1920 by delegates who thought a provincial labour body was redundant now that the One Big Union existed (see Phillips, 1967a:196-197). The craft unions withdrew from the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, which was controlled by O.B.U. supporters, and formed another VTLC (International) in August of 1919. For a short time there were two separate labour councils in Vancouver, but the O.B.U. continued to decline, and by the 1920s the craft dominated VTLC (International) represented labour. In 1920 the VTLC (International) had a reported 6,000 members, a number that would not substantially increase until the late 1920s (see Phillips, 1967a:196,389).[42] In July of 1921 the VTLC launched a new labour reform newspaper, The British Columbia Labor News. The British Columbia Federationist continued to endorse socialist politics, but its circulation dropped to 10,000 by the middle of 1922, and in the summer of 1925 it ceased publication (see British Columbia Federationist, May 19, 1922:1). Most importantly, the VTLC returned to the anti-Asian exclusion activities that had marked the pre-war period.

With high unemployment due to the post-war depression, returned veterans seeking work, and the resumption of immigration that had ceased during the war, labour reform politics once more

became protectionist and Asian workers once again bore the brunt of the attack. The VTLC lobbied to replace Asian workers with returned veterans. In a letter circulated among Vancouver unions, the VTLC suggested:

...that the time has arrived when the citizens must draw the line more closely between our own nationals, and the aliens from other countries and particularly those from Asiatic countries with a lower standard of living, by replacing these men [with] returned men and citizens generally, with special regard for those who are suffering from handicaps incurred in the war (VTLC Minutes, May 5, 1921).

The VTLC and The British Columbia Labor News launched a renewed campaign to exclude Asians from the province. In May of 1921, the VTLC launched a "Made in B.C. by citizens of Canada campaign" to facilitate white as opposed to Asian employment, and struck an "Asiatic Committee" to gather data on Asian labour (see VTLC Minutes, May 5, 1921; May 19, 1921). In July the Asiatic Committee reported as follows:

Whereas the continued immigration of the Oriental into this Province constitutes the most serious social menace facing the citizens of B.C. this meeting of delegates from various organizations of this city demand that the Federal authorities absolutely shut out the immigration referred to (VTLC Minutes, July 21, 1921).

In August of 1921, the Asiatic Committee disbanded with the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League of Canada. The Asiatic Exclusion League was launched at a meeting at Labour Hall that included five veterans' organizations, the Retail Merchants' Association, seven trade unions, and the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (see British Columbia Labor News, August 19, 1921:1). The objective of the new organization was to create a "White Canada" through education and political organization. The

program of the Asiatic Exclusion League read as follows:

1. To educate the white population to the terrible menace of the Oriental emigration.
2. To pledge every candidate who is running for Dominion offices at the next election to give a stated policy for the exclusion of Orientals.
3. To press for immediate registration of all Orientals in British Columbia under auspices of the government (see British Columbia Labor News, August 19, 1921:1).

By the middle of September the Asiatic Exclusion League claimed 5,000 members in Vancouver alone, and the The British Columbia Labor News published weekly reports on its meetings to keep its readers informed of the League's progress (see British Columbia Labor News, September 16, 1921:1). In addition, articles on the 'perils' of Asian labour taking over the natural resources of the province, and thereby causing high white unemployment, were a staple of the VTLC's newspaper. During this period the white labour movement, for the first time, expressed concern over the presence of Asian women in the province. The influx of Japanese women into the province, and the high birth rate among the growing number of Japanese families, were added to the list of fears about "Asiatics crowding out [the] white race in [the] province" (see British Columbia Labor News, September 30, 1921:1).

Although there was considerable support among the organized white working class for excluding Asian immigrants from the country, there was also continuing opposition to that position.

In response to the growth of the Asiatic Exclusion League, a meeting of about 500 workers was held in September of 1921 to protest against the exclusion movement. Members of the Federated Labour Party, representatives from the Japanese Workers' Union,

the Chinese Workers' Union, and the Socialist Party of Canada, all addressed the meeting.[43] The following resolution was adopted:

Whereas, we, the workers realize that we have no enemies except the capitalist class of all countries, therefore, be it resolved that this meeting of organized workers of Vancouver, go on record as being opposed to any legislation or action that will tend to exclude any workers from Canada (The British Columbia Federationist, September 16, 1921:1).

Cooperative actions between white and Asian workers, and socialist views stressing working class solidarity over ethnic conflicts, did not disappear after the immediate post-war militancy had died down. It remained, however, a minority position within the organized white working class until the depression of the 1930s.

The split in the white Vancouver labour movement lessened as the influence of the O.B.U. declined and in June of 1922 the VTLC absorbed most of what was left of the old O.B.U. locals in Vancouver, the two newspapers amalgamated, and The British Columbia Federationist again became the organ of the VTLC (see British Columbia Federationist, June 1922 - August 1922). The split between labour reform and socialist politics was not bridged, however. The VTLC continued to engage in considerable anti-Asian activity, while The British Columbia Federationist continued to publish articles criticizing the exclusion movement. In the Spring of 1924 the VTLC again published its own newspaper, The Labor Statesman, claiming that The British Columbia Federationist did not represent the views of the bulk of the trade union movement (see The Labor Statesman, May 9, 1924 and Phillips, 1967a:240). The Labor Statesman was the major labour

✓ newspaper in Vancouver throughout the 1920s, and continued to endorse practices of exclusion toward Asian workers.

By the mid-1920s the VTLC's practices of Asian exclusion became more contradictory. The issue of Asian immigration had only been partially resolved with the cessation of Chinese immigration and the restriction of Japanese male labourers to 150 per year in 1923. Unemployment was high throughout the 1920s, and for many white workers only the total exclusion of all Asians, including the end of the Japanese "picture bride" system of bringing in wives from Japan, would resolve the 'problem' (see The Labor Statesman, January 23, 1925:7; February 13, 1925:6). Throughout the 1920s articles blaming white unemployment on cheaper Asian labour, and detailing instances of Asian workers taking the jobs of whites, continued to appear in the labour newspapers. The general tenor of the labour movement during this period was protectionist and racist.

For the most part the interests of white labour and union labour continued to be viewed as if they were one and the same. But at the same time, the exclusion of Asians from trade unions did begin to break down. The first Japanese trade union was admitted into the VTLC in August of 1927. Although the Japanese Workers' Union had been denied affiliation by the VTLC in 1921, the reconstituted Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union was granted affiliation in 1927 (see VTLC Minutes August 4, 1921; August 2, 1927). In a referendum on the Japanese union affiliation, only five of the 25 unions responding objected to the inclusion of the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union into the VTLC (see VTLC Minutes, July 19, 1927). The Tailors' Union

began to see the unionization of Chinese tailors as a solution to their problems as well. Discussing the competition between white and Chinese tailors in Vancouver, the Tailors' Union announced:

Efforts have been made to get these men into the union, but this has been in vain. The union is willing to take these men into the union if they will work for the same wages and conditions as stipulated by the union, but the employers will not stand for it (see The Labor Statesman, February 18, 1927:1).

Some organized labour in Vancouver was beginning to recognize that including Asian workers in trade unions could solve the problem of cheap labour competition. The marginal economic and political position of Asian workers, however, made their organization extremely difficult, especially when attempts to include Asians were at best half-hearted.

Moreover, the inclusion of the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union into the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council did not end the Council's practices of exclusion toward Asians. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, the Bakers' Union, the Domestic Workers' Union and the Shingle Weavers' Union undertook campaigns to replace Asian labour with white labour (see The Labor Statesman, 1926 - 1929). When the Canadian Labor Party endorsed the enfranchisement of Asians on the same grounds as other persons as part of its political platform in the spring of 1928, it created an uproar within the Vancouver labour movement.[44]

We notice that Japanese are affiliated with the Trades Council, but we realize that it is quite necessary to organize them to help raise their standard of living, thereby making their competition less keen. That is simply a matter of self-preservation, but to demand a vote for these people is entirely different, and to enfranchise them would

only aid in having them concentrate their voting strength upon those who objected to their low-wage competition (The Labor Statesman, March 16, 1928:4).

Divisions between the socialist view that Asians are exploited workers, no different than other exploited workers, and therefore deserve the same rights and privileges, and a labour reform view that continued to express racist attitudes about Asian nonassimilability, erupted into a debate over the enfranchisement of Asians in the province. A referendum was held by the VTLC and of the 36 union locals that responded, 32 were opposed to granting the franchise to Asians, and the VTLC withdrew its affiliation from the Canadian Labour Party (see The Labor Statesman, April 6, 1928; May 4, 1928; June 8, 1928). Although anti-Asian activity had receded from the level it reached during the early 1920s, the bulk of the Vancouver labour movement was not yet ready to embrace Asian workers as political equals. On the whole the labour movement continued to be racist in its attitudes toward Asian workers. The solutions to ethnic segregation in the labour market continued to focus on excluding Asians from jobs in preference to whites, only occasionally advocating organizing Asian workers into labour unions, and refusing to accept Asians as political equals.

During this period of union decline and labour protectionism from 1922 to 1930, Asian workers were involved in only six strikes (see Appendix A). The only successful strikes were three that occurred in cooperation with whites in the fisheries. Japanese fishermen were involved in a strike against a reduction of fish prices by salmon fishermen on the lower Fraser River in the spring of 1925. A compromise price was negotiated. In the

fall of the same year, salmon fishermen won a price increase. In September of 1927, salmon fishermen struck against a price reduction, and again negotiated a compromise price for fish (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 334, Strike 41; Volume 335, Strike 80; and Volume 339, Strike 54). In June of 1925, 35 Chinese seamen staged an unsuccessful strike for a wage increase. In July of the following year 175 women, one-third of whom were Japanese, struck a Vancouver fruit and vegetable cannery for a wage increase (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 334, Strike 39; and Volume 337, Strike 51). Although unsuccessful, this is the first known strike involving Asian women working in British Columbia. Finally, in October of 1929, 42 Chinese workers in a New Westminster shingle mill struck against an increase in rents for company houses (in effect a wage decrease). The strikers were replaced by "white women and girls and also a few Japanese women". A strike in the same mill several years earlier ended with Chinese replacing white strikers; now the Chinese were replaced by even cheaper labour (see The Labor Statesman, October 25, 1929:1; and PAC, RG 27, Volume 334, Strike 103).

The emergence of new unions among both Chinese and East Indian workers was the only unusual feature of Asian labour activity during this period. The Chinese Canadian Labour Union, the Chinese Shingle Workers' Union, and the Japanese Labour Union, which was changed to the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union in 1927, continued. In February of 1925 East Indian workers in the lumber camps attempted to form a protective association "with union principles". A similar organization had been formed eighteen months earlier, but dissolved when the leaders returned

to India. The second attempt does not appear to have been any more successful, but it does demonstrate that some Asian workers who had become active after the war tried to maintain their involvement in the labour movement (see The Labor Statesman, February 13, 1925:1). Chinese workers in the restaurant industry also formed labour organizations in the mid-1920s. In 1925 the Chinese Cooks' Union was formed, and in March of 1926 it was reformed into the Chinese Western Food Cooks' Union. In January of 1926 the Chinese Restaurant Workers' Union was formed. Both unions held meetings and elected executive officers until the early 1930s, but there is no evidence of any involvement in negotiations or conflicts over conditions of labour (see The Chinese Times, 1925-1930). It is quite possible that the organization of Chinese workers in restaurants was an attempt to protect themselves from the organized opposition of the white Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, which actively sought the exclusion of Chinese workers from restaurants and hotels during this period.

Labour Militancy and Increasing Ethnic Solidarity: The 1930s

As unemployment increased in the early 1930s and a systemic analysis of capitalism as the cause of unemployment gained renewed credibility, socialist politics and solidarity between white and Asian workers again became a major feature of working class politics in Vancouver. The depression also shifted the locus of working class militancy from the employed in trade unions to the emerging organizations of the unemployed. By June of 1931 unemployment in British Columbia had reached 27.5% of the

labour force, the highest unemployment rate in Canada across all employment categories (see Phillips, 1967a:270). The organized labour movement continued to pursue strategies to increase the security and standard of living for its employed members and remained separate from the organized unemployed. Yet by the end of 1930 there were more unemployed in Vancouver than there were union members (see Phillips, 1967a:271-274). The separation of trade union and organized unemployed activity during this period was linked to the continuing divisions between the labour reformism embodied in the existing trade unions and the VTLC, and socialism, this time embodied within the Communist Party of Canada, its trade union arm the Workers' Unity League, and in the organizations of the unemployed.

Both the organizations of the unemployed and the the unions of the Workers' Unity League embraced Asian workers. For the first time labour organizations made very concerted attempts to organize Asians and include them in their ranks.[45] In a radical departure from previous labour demands that Asian workers be replaced by unemployed white men, the Communist-led National Unemployed Workers' Association called for solidarity between all unemployed workers:

The unemployed do not recognize any difference of race or color...among the many thousands of unemployed workers organized in the NUWA [National Unemployed Workers' Association] there are many Oriental workers who are among the most highly respected in the organization (The Unemployed Worker, September 26, 1931:5).

In contrast, the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council continued to call for the replacement of Asian workers by unemployed "Canadian boys". Along with general calls to patronize white labour and

union labour, strategies to encourage employers to hire white men were also discussed by the Council:

The Shingle Weavers' Union finds that the shingle and lumber industry is so infested with Oriental labor that it is imperative to take some drastic action to offset the orientation. The union suggests that before unemployment relief finances are supplied to cities or municipalities that those bodies should be required not to purchase materials from firms employing Oriental labor. The union also suggests that the Provincial Government should also require that goods or materials needed for public works should not be purchased from firms employing Oriental labor (see The Labor Statesman, June 1932:1).

The VTLC was concerned with the issue of unemployment; in fact unemployment often dominated VTLC politics. Petitions demanding more adequate and humane forms of relief, detailing the conditions of unemployment faced by white single women in the city and, of course, the employment of Asians rather than whites, were sent to City Hall and to Victoria. But the Labour Council was not involved in the mass actions of the National Unemployed Workers' Association, and it continued to demand the exclusion of Asian workers as a solution to unemployment until the late 1930s. Moreover, applications by the Workers' Unity League unions and the National Unemployed Workers' Association to address the VTLC, and proposals to engage in joint actions, were repeatedly turned down (see VTLC Minutes 1930-1936). The political cleavages between labour reform and socialist politics, and the VTLC's rejection of the 'dual unions' organized by the Communists in the Workers' Unity League, prevented joint action. Although the Workers' Unity League sought a united front throughout the early 1930s, it was not until the Workers' Unity League merged into the international (A.F.L. affiliated) trade unions in the late 1930s

that closer relations between communists and labour reformists in the labour movement became possible.[46]

Throughout the 1930s the organization of the unemployed occurred primarily under the leadership of The Communist Party and, by the mid-1930s, also the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.[47] The organization of unorganized workers also occurred under Communist Party leadership within the Workers' Unity League, especially in the lumber industry, in the canneries, and among farm workers. Relations between the organized unemployed and Workers' Unity League unions were, as a result, very close. Unemployed workers from the National Unemployed Workers' Association occupied picket lines during strikes, and employed workers participated in the Hunger Marches and contributed to the coffers of the unemployed when starvation loomed. Ethnic divisions were absent from all of these activities. White, Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian men and women organized together to address problems that were clearly seen as the product of capitalism and not as the result of immigration or racial inferiority.

The main organizing network among the unemployed was the National Unemployed Workers' Association, affiliated with the Workers' Unity League, and the Unemployed Council which included a coalition of progressive labour groups. Since the problems facing the unemployed were not uniform, different organizations emerged to deal with problems faced by specific groups of workers. Married men at first received relief in the form of food rations (known as the 'gunny sack parade') but after successfully demonstrating for work and wages, they received relief through

relief work projects. The Relief Workers' Union was formed to deal with the problems of relief for married men on the relief projects. Single unemployed men were not eligible for municipal work, and received meal and room tickets in a more sporadic fashion. The Single Unemployed Protective Association was formed to deal with the specific problems faced by unemployed single men. In an attempt to weaken the organized strength of the unemployed, which was centred in Vancouver, relief camps were established in remote areas of the province. In order to acquire relief, single men were forced into relief camps. The Workers' Unity League established the Relief Camp Workers' Union within the camps. The Relief Camp Workers' Union organized various strikes in the relief camps, the strike of all relief camps in April of 1935, and the On-to-Ottawa Trek in June, which eventually led to the dissolution of the camps. A black list of union organizers within the camps resulted in several hundred single unemployed men being excluded from the camps, and unable to get relief they moved back to Vancouver. These men continued to work within the Single Unemployed Protective Association. In 1938 S.U.P.A. led unemployed single men in the occupations of the Post Office and the Vancouver Art Gallery (see The Unemployed Worker, 1931-1934; The B.C. Workers' News, 1935-1937; and The People's Advocate, 1937-1939).

Single Asian men were not sent to the camps, and had more difficulty than white men in obtaining any kind of relief. The conditions facing single unemployed Chinese men was a major concern among the unemployed. Chinese men received relief with meal tickets redeemable only at a mission soup kitchen run for

the Chinese. Inadequate food resulted in the starvation and deaths of hundreds of single Chinese men. The Chinese Unemployed Workers' Protective Association was formed in an attempt to attain adequate relief, with the active support of the Single Unemployed Protective Association. The problems of unemployed Japanese focused more around families than single men.[48] Japanese men and women were integrated into the Neighbourhood Councils and Block committees formed under the National Unemployed Workers' Association. These organizations addressed issues of family relief, evictions, utility cut-offs, and the problem of adequate food for pregnant women and children among Asian and white working class families (see The Unemployed Worker, 1931-1934; The B.C. Workers' News, 1935-1937; and The People's Advocate, 1937-1939).

The conditions facing unemployed single white women also led to the formation of specific organizations. Single women were forced to take domestic work for room and board, wherever available, before relief was administered. Moreover, the relief that could be attained necessitated living in one of a few boarding houses for single unemployed women. The Women and Girls' Club, the Women's Labour League, and the Single Unemployed Women's Protective Association organized single unemployed women workers. Married women were organized in the the Women's Labour League, the Block Committees and Neighbourhood Councils. In spite of the variation in conditions of relief for different groups of workers, and the number of organizations that emerged, there was general coordination between these groups through the National Unemployed Workers' Association and the Unemployed Council.

Unemployed workers and their families engaged in mass actions throughout the 1930s which frequently won, although often only temporarily, various demands for relief for married, single, white and Asian men and women (see The Unemployed Worker, 1931-1934; The B.C. Workers' News, 1935-1937; and The People's Advocate, 1937-1939).

The organized unemployed were particularly active in Vancouver in the early 1930s, and their political activities involved Chinese and Japanese workers and families as equal members of the movement. Asians were not organized simply as an adjunct to white workers, around issues of unemployment pertaining to whites. In both the unemployed organizations and in the Workers' Unity League, Asian workers placed issues of concern to themselves on the political agenda. White and Asian workers marched together in demonstrations for relief and against police brutality, in Hunger Marches and May Day parades, and were represented at unemployment conferences and anti-fascist demonstrations. Incidents cited below are illustrative of the way that Chinese and Japanese workers, and the problems facing them under conditions of unemployment, were integrated into the politics of the organized unemployed. Discussion of the involvement of women in unemployed politics will be addressed in chapter seven.

Many Japanese families were active members of the Block Committees and Neighbourhood Councils. The Unemployed Worker commented that "waterfront Japanese are rapidly becoming organized into an N.C.[Neighbourhood Council]", and cases of successfully winning relief or better relief for Japanese and, on

at least one occasion, Chinese families were reported (for example see The Unemployed Worker, December 12, 1931:2; April 19, 1933:6; and November 8, 1933:10). The city of Vancouver adopted a policy of lower relief rates for Asian than for white families "commensurate with what they themselves would expend in comparison with a white man" (see VCA, Vancouver City Records, Social Services Files 106 A6). When the relief rates for Japanese families in Vancouver were cut by 20%, The Relief Workers' Union, urging "the unity of white and Japanese workers in struggle", attempted to win equal relief for all unemployed families (see B.C. Workers' News, February 15, 1935:1).

Two white men, members of the Single Unemployed Protective Association, volunteered to give blood for an unemployed Chinese man in need of a transfusion. In reporting the incident, The B.C. Workers' News commented:

The incident shows that strong internationalism and comradeship among the Vancouver workers of different races that has developed from their joint struggles against slave camps, soup kitchens and the degrading conditions faced by the working class (see February 14th 1936:3).

The problem of inadequate relief and starvation among unemployed Chinese men was frequently addressed by joint white and Chinese action. In 1933, when many unemployed single Chinese men were denied relief in Vancouver, hundreds of white and Chinese men marched to the relief offices to demand action. The Chinese were granted relief through a mission soup-kitchen. The Chinese Unemployed Workers' Protective Association, in conjunction with groups from the National Unemployed Workers' Association, lobbied city hall for direct relief (see The Unemployed Worker, November

15, 1933:3; and B.C. Workers' News, January 25, 1935:3). Between 1932 and 1935, 135 Chinese men died of starvation in Vancouver. The newspapers of the organized unemployed carried on a campaign exposing the conditions under which the Chinese were forced to live and demanding equal treatment for all unemployed (see B.C. Workers' News, February 1, 1935:1; February 15, 1935:1; February 8, 1935:1; and February 22, 1935:3). When 200 Chinese men were cut off relief in the summer of 1935, demonstrations demanding reinstatement again occurred under the coordination of the Chinese Unemployed Workers' Protective Association and the Single Unemployed Protective Association (see B.C. Workers' News, June 14, 1935:1; June 21, 1935:1; and June 28, 1935:3). Given the history of anti-Asian racism in Vancouver, unemployed Asians were particular targets of city relief cut-backs. In 1937 a provincial program to 'repatriate' unemployed Chinese on assistance was supported by the city. Open only to Chinese already on relief, passage to China and \$30 in cash was offered on condition that the individual never return to Canada (see VCA, Vancouver City Records, Social Services Files 106 A6).

When the Japanese invaded China in 1937 a movement to boycott Japanese goods and raise money to aid the Chinese in their resistance was actively supported by white workers. White workers participated in demonstrations with the Chinese and helped raise thousands of dollars for the resistance (see The People's Advocate, September 3, 1937:3). At the same time, socialists were anxious to point out that "the boycott was aimed to defeat Japanese imperialism, not the Japanese people" (see The People's Advocate, January 21, 1938:1). The Japanese invasion of

China generated renewed anti-Japanese sentiments in the daily newspapers, and socialists were quick to point out that class conflict and not racial conflict was the real issue. In Asia as in Canada, The People's Advocate argued, workers must unite to overthrow capitalism:

They [the proponents of a 'white British Columbia'] will not concede that Big Business, which brought the oriental to this province in the first instance precisely because his living standards were lower, which, by means of discrimination, helps to maintain those low standards, is responsible. They will not concede that it is not a question of the oriental lowering white living standards but of raising oriental standards, which can be achieved only by winning the oriental workers over to the struggle for a better life (February 18, 1938:2).

It is evident that the severity of the depression of the 1930s strengthened support for socialist politics and solidarity between white and Asian workers. This was reflected in the politics of unemployment as well as in the renewed period of labour militancy in the early 1930s. Increased labour militancy occurred among white and Asian workers, especially in the lumber industry under the leadership of the Workers' Unity League. At the end of the First World War it was the labour shortage that was instrumental in the radicalization of Asian workers and increased the likelihood of success through labour action. A labour market advantageous to labour militancy was clearly lacking during the depression of the 1930s, but the early years of the depression witnessed unparalleled militancy in the lumber industry. The key feature facilitating labour militancy during this period was the depth of the economic crisis. Adherence to revolutionary forms of socialism again gained ascendancy over labour reformism, and the organization of workers occurred under

the socialist ideology of the Communist Party of Canada and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. The inclusive organization of white and Asian workers was the official policy of the Workers' Unity League. In the W.U.L. unions organizing in the lumber industry, among farm labour and in the canneries, Asian workers were not only accepted, as they had been in the O.B.U., they were actively solicited as political equals. The inclusion of Asian workers as political equals in the Workers' Unity League was demonstrated by the inclusion of Asian workers' demands during strikes. This strengthened the position of both white and Asian workers in labour conflicts of the 1930s.

Between 1931 and 1939 Asian workers were involved in no less than twenty separate strikes in the Vancouver area, three-quarters of which were in sawmills and shingle mills in the lower mainland (see Appendix A). Nearly half of the strikes took place in a single year. In 1932 Chinese and Japanese workers struck eight times in lumber mills in Vancouver and New Westminster. The majority of these strikes were coordinated by the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union affiliated with the Workers' Unity League.

In September of 1931, 600 white, Chinese, Japanese and East Indian workers struck a New Westminster sawmill over a reduction in wages. Organized under the W.U.L., the strikers demanded a 10% wage increase, "equal pay for equal work", union recognition, the "abolition of the contract labor system for Oriental workers", and the immediate dismissal of the Japanese labour contractor (see The Unemployed Worker, September 19, 1931; September 26, 1931; and October 3, 1931). The demands in this strike illustrate

the extent to which Asian workers were integrated as full members of the union and the strike committee. Most noticeable is the demand for equal pay for equal work. The strike lasted for two months, with picket support from the National Unemployed Workers' Association, and relief support from other W.U.L. unions. The strike finally ended with a compromise (see Labour Gazette, October 1931; December 1931), and was considered a success by the union. At the same time a strike of 195 white and Asian workers was taking place at another New Westminster sawmill. Workers struck against a 20% wage reduction, the fourth decrease in as many months. This strike was less successful, however, and ended with the indefinite closure of the mill in November (see The Unemployed Worker, September 26, 1931; and Labour Gazette, October 1931; and December 1931).

There were five separate strikes in lumber mills in the Vancouver area in the summer of 1932. In July fifty white, Chinese and Japanese workers struck at a Vancouver shingle mill against a wage reduction and successfully reinstated the former wage scale (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 352, Strike 93). Also in July Chinese and white workers at a New Westminster shingle mill struck in opposition to a reduction in wages. After three weeks the company conceded to the strikers' demands. A second strike occurred in August when the employer refused to hire back some of the Chinese sawyers and packers involved in the first strike. The company again conceded to the strikers' demands (see The Lumber Worker, September 1932:10-11). In August 94 Chinese and six white workers staged a successful one day strike for a wage increase at a Vancouver sawmill (see The Lumber Worker, September 1932:11).

And again in August of 1932, fifty white and Japanese workers struck at a Vancouver sawmill for a 10% wage increase and the reinstatement of workers discharged for union organizing, most of whom were Japanese. According to The Lumber Worker, this was the first strike in which white workers went out in order to protect the jobs of Asian workers. Although the strike was successful, winning a wage increase and reinstatement of the workers, the mill closed a few months later (see The Lumber Worker, September 1932:10; and PAC, RG 27, Volume 353, Strike 140). All of these strikes in the lumber industry in the summer of 1932 involved the Workers' Unity League.

In September of 1932 two more strikes occurred. Approximately one hundred white, Japanese and East Indian workers struck a New Westminster shingle mill for a 10% wage increase, following a 30% reduction a few months previously. In this instance an East Indian worker was the spokesman for the strikers. The company brought in strikebreakers and police protection, and threatened the Japanese living on company property with eviction. The strike was unsuccessful (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 352, Strike 126; and The Lumber Worker, October 1932:12-13). Another strike of 37 mainly Chinese workers occurred at a Vancouver shingle mill. Workers were unsuccessful in their attempt to force the dismissal of a night foreman (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 352, Strike 127). In November 1932, 190 white, Japanese and East Indian sawmill workers in New Westminster struck unsuccessfully for a wage increase. The existing wage rates cited in this conflict included different rates for white and Asian workers, and for married and single white men. Married white men earned 18 cents an hour,

single white men 16 cents, and Asian men 15 cents an hour. This was the only lumber mill strike involving Asians in 1932 that did not involve the Workers' Unity League (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 353, Strike 162; and The Lumber Worker, December, 1932).

After 1932 Asian strikes in the lumber industry around Vancouver became less frequent. In August of 1933, fifty white and Asian shingle mill workers in New Westminster struck successfully for the institution of a union wage scale (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 356, Strike 92; and The Unemployed Worker, August 30, 1933:7). In February 1935, white and Chinese shingle mill workers in Vancouver struck to resist a wage reduction. Members of the Single Unemployed Workers' Protective Association helped with the picketing. The strike was successful (see The B.C. Workers' News, February 8, 1935:1). In August of 1935 white sawyers and Chinese packers at a New Westminster shingle mill struck successfully for a wage increase (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 371, Strike 130; and The B.C. Workers' News August 16, 1935:1). Another major confrontation in the lumber industry occurred in May of 1936. Approximately 2,000 white and Asian workers in logging camps, sawmills, and shingle mills in the lower mainland and throughout the coast struck for a wage increase and union recognition of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers' Union, formerly the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union and now affiliated with the (A.F.L.) United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. The strike lasted for twelve days, with many workers winning wage increases but none winning union recognition (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 376, Strike 44; and The B.C. Workers' News, May 8, 1936 - June 5, 1936). And lastly, Chinese workers in a New Westminster shingle

mill struck in December of 1933 to oppose a wage reduction, but were unsuccessful (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 394, Strike 378).

Asian workers outside of the lumber industry were also involved in strikes during the 1930s. The most important occurred among hop pickers in 1933 and 1935. In September 1933, 1,200 white and Japanese men and women struck a Fraser Valley farm demanding a wage increase and better living conditions, especially improvements in the Japanese living quarters. The strike committee included Japanese and white representatives, with the Japanese initially demanded higher wages than the white strikers. The strike was successful (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 356, Strike 102; The Unemployed Worker, September 13, 1933:7; and VTLC Minutes, September 19, 1933). In September of 1935, 1,500 white and Japanese men and women struck a Fraser Valley farm for higher wages and better living conditions, and again demands centred on improvements in the Japanese living quarters. This time the police were called in to evict the strikers and the demands were unsuccessful (see The B.C. Workers' News, September 18 and 27, 1935). Both strikes were organized under the Workers' Unity League. In addition, Japanese pin boys struck under the Workers' Unity League in March of 1932 against a reduction in wages, for the abolition of the Japanese 'boss' system, and for union recognition. The strikers were replaced with white boys (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 350, Strike 41). Japanese fishermen participated in strikes in June of 1935 for a price increase, and in June of 1936 in sympathy with fishermen striking on the upper Fraser River (see Gladstone and Jamieson, 1950; Labour Gazette, June 1935; and PAC, RG 27, Volume 376, Strike 56).

The most notable feature of Asian labour militancy during the 1930s was the degree to which Asian workers were included as equal members of the labour movement in comparison to previous periods. Issues relating specifically to conditions faced by Asian workers, such as equal pay for equal work and the contract labour system, were included in labour demands. Moreover, the W.U.L. strike committees were intentionally composed of workers representing different ethnic groups. At the end of the 1930s, after the W.U.L. unions had merged into the international (A.F.L.) labour movement, some of the most vocal anti-Asian unions even began to include Asian workers within their ranks. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, for example, hired a Chinese labour organizer to help unionize Chinese cooks in 1938 (see Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees' Union, local 28, March 23, 1938 - July 17, 1938). Asian workers were by no means fully integrated into the Vancouver labour movement during the 1930s. But in both the W.U.L. trade unions and among the organized unemployed, Asians were more fully integrated than in any previous period. The gradual abandonment of practices of exclusion within the international trade unions, and the active inclusion of Asians as political equals by the socialist labour movement, made the development of a politically unified working class possible for the first time.

It is evident that through the severity of the depression in the 1930s larger numbers of workers in Vancouver, and in British Columbia generally, adopted a socialist analysis of capitalist exploitation and unemployment that generated political solidarity between white and Asian workers. The organization of workers by

The Communist Party, through the organized unemployed and the Workers' Unity League, and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in the 1930s occurred without reference to ethnic differences. Both The Communist Party and the C.C.F. advocated the franchise for Asians on the same basis as other Canadians in the 1930s (see Phillips, 1967b:109; The People's Advocate, March 4, 1938:2; and UBCSC, The Angus MacInnes Memorial Collection, Box 41 and 53B). The popularity of the two socialist parties does not seem to have suffered from their inclusion of Asians, and white workers did not leave their ranks because of Asian enfranchisement as many had left the Canadian Labor Party a decade earlier.[49] The shift toward the acceptance of Asians as equal workers and citizens was well underway within sections of the organized white working class during the depression of the 1930s. The events of the Second World War demonstrate, however, that equality was not yet accomplished within the working class or within civil society as a whole. Ethnic solidarity was most pronounced in British Columbia during periods of intense class conflict. As the depression ended with the Second World War, Japanese Canadians were again defined as the enemy, not only by the Canadian state, but also by the white labour movement in the province.[50]

The Articulation of Class and Ethnicity in Vancouver

The relationship between white working class politics and Asian labour politics in Vancouver was complex. All working class political activity took place within the context of capitalist relations in the province. In one sense, capitalist practices

affected all workers in a similar way. The hours of labour, the conditions of work, the remuneration for one's services, were all set by the employer so as to maximize profit. The workers' poverty, ill-health or physical exhaustion, were of little concern to the employer so long as the work was performed. As Marx has argued, capitalists' concern with the well-being of the labour force begins and ends with the continued reproduction of the working class, the basic survival of the working population, and not their quality of life.[51] At this level, the only way that any group of workers improves the conditions of work and life is through collective action. Yet although all workers are subject to exploitation within the workplace, not all workers are equally exploited.

Capitalist practices in British Columbia varied according to the ethnicity and the gender of the worker. An ethnic hierarchy of white domination and Asian subordination was a constitutive element of capitalist relations. As we have seen, workers were not just units of labour power; labour power was white, Asian, male, or female. White and Asian workers were subject to different hiring practices, were generally considered appropriate for different kinds of labouring, and received differential rates of pay simply on the basis of ethnic origin. Asian men faced greater exploitation in the British Columbia economy than did white male labourers.[52]

This higher level of economic exploitation was also reflected in the greater subordination of Asians within civil society. In a capitalist society political power is rooted in class relations. Unless extremely well organized and class

conscious, the working class is weak politically. But at the same time that the political, legal and economic structures represented class interests, white ethnic domination was also entrenched. White workers were part of an exploited working class at the same time that they were part of the dominant ethnic group within civil society. The contradiction between their position as workers and their membership in the dominant ethnic group in a racist society, was manifest in Asian exclusion within the white labour movement. Similarly, the conjuncture of economic and political subordination within British Columbia hampered the development of working class organization among Asian workers.

To a certain extent, the greatest problem facing any oppressed group is to correctly identify the cause of its problems and, following from that, appropriate strategies for change. The problems identified by the working class in Vancouver were those facing all industrial wage-labourers -- poor wages, long hours, dangerous working conditions, unemployment, and lack of control over the wealth they produced. There was no agreement on the cause of these problems however. Those adopting a socialist perspective understood these problems as inherent in a capitalist economy, and therefore sought the abolition of capitalism. Labour reformists, on the other hand, saw these problems as "excesses" of capitalism that could be modified to improve the quality of life for the working class. Questions about where the working class can most effectively intervene to bring about reform are central to labour reform politics. Given the pivotal role of immigration policies in the creation of labour market surpluses in Canada, state immigration policies

became an important area of working class political intervention in British Columbia.

The failure of white workers to define Asians as part of the bonafide working class was a reflection of the real position of Asians within British Columbian civil society. Asian immigrants were not considered potential 'Canadians' within British Columbian civil society or in immigration practices and other laws. The non-settler status of Asians was central to the emergence of a racist labour movement in Vancouver and throughout British Columbia. If the working class for whom reforms were to be waged did not include 'foreign' Asian labourers, then a strategy based on Asian exclusion was one way of improving conditions for the bonafide working class in the province. The exclusion of Asians became part of white labour strategy precisely because of the ethnic hierarchy embedded within capitalist relations: Asians were, by definition, cheap non-citizen wage labour. As cheap wage labour, Asians were used by employers to try to maintain a labour market favourable to capital, with low wages, weak unions, and a large labour surplus. Thus the target of much white labour strategy was the visible symptom of capitalist labour practices, cheap Asian labour perceived as undermining the living standards of 'real' Canadian workers in Vancouver.

The white labour movement did not, however, uniformly engage in practices to exclude Asian workers. The degree of anti-Asian agitation within the white labour movement varied with the state of the economy. The worse the labour market and the higher the unemployment, the more preoccupied the white labour movement

became with Asian labour competition. A direct relationship between the economy and anti-Asian activity should have produced a high point of anti-Asian exclusion during the depression of the 1930s. On the contrary, however, the relations between white and Asian workers had never been more cooperative. The link between high unemployment and anti-Asian activity was modified by the degree of working class consciousness among white workers. The worse the economic crisis, the greater the growth of socialist politics, and the clearer it became to many workers that the problems facing workers were the product of a capitalist economy, and not cheaper immigrant labour. The two periods of considerable cooperation between white and Asian workers, between 1917 and 1921 and during the depression of the 1930s, were marked by economic crises and the growth of socialist politics.

Immigration trends also affected anti-Asian activity. During periods of low Asian immigration, during the First World War and the 1930s, a greater proportion of the white labour movement was apparently willing to organize with Asian workers to improve conditions in the workplace. During periods of high levels of Asian immigration, in contrast, attempts to influence state immigration policies were an important part of white working class political intervention in British Columbia. After the cessation of Chinese and East Indian immigration, the abolition of the Japanese 'picture-bride' system, and the reduction of Japanese male immigration to 150 workers per year by the late 1920s, Asian immigration was no longer an issue. Thus even though unemployment was high during the 1930s, strategies to exclude Asian immigrants were no longer as pertinent.

The willingness of white workers to act with Asians rather than against them was also influenced by the level of Asian involvement in labour conflicts. The more Asian workers engaged in struggles for better pay and living conditions, the more likely white workers were to consider Asians a bonafide part of the working class. At the same time, the greater the cooperation of white workers, the more likely that Asian workers could successfully organize. Thus there was a dialectical relationship between Asian labour militancy and inclusive activity within the white labour movement.

The relatively weak economic and political position of Asian workers in British Columbia was such that without the cooperation and support of the white labour movement, and indeed as a constant target of exclusionary practices by white workers, Asians were unlikely to be successful in labour organizing even when they recognized its advantages. There was also a dialectical relationship between white anti-Asian activity and the relative docility of Asian workers in the labour market. Practices of exclusion by white workers reinforced the marginal economic and political position of Asian workers, which in turn reinforced their relative docility in the labour market, and the white workers' view that Asians were not a bonafide part of the working class.

The structuration of working class politics in Vancouver generated a cycle of white anti-Asian activity and relative Asian labour docility. The more white workers marginalized 'foreign' Asian workers the more Asian workers were confined to cheap labour competition, the greater the threat Asian competition

posed for white workers, and the more preoccupied the white labour movement became with excluding them. This reflected a fundamental contradiction between white workers subordinate position within a capitalist labour market, and their dominant position as members of the white community. Asians were accorded a second-class non-citizen political status on their entry into Canada. The political inferiority of Asians legitimated white workers' exclusion of Asian workers from the working class, just as the state had excluded them from real citizenship, and the practices of white workers entrenched the marginal political status of Asians. In order for the white labour movement to embrace Asian workers as part of the working class, and as a necessary element of the labour movement, the rights of Asian citizenship and political equality had first to be recognized. This was a difficult task under conditions where ethnic relations of white domination and Asian subordination were embedded in the economy, in state practices, and throughout civil society.

The development of a broader working class consciousness that embraced Asian workers involved two factors. First, and most importantly, the growth of forms of socialist politics facilitated solidarity between white and Asian workers. The internationalism of socialist ideology, with its focus on the commonality of all workers and the fundamental contradiction between the interests of capital and labour, fostered active attempts to include Asians and other unorganized workers into the labour movement. Socialism was always an element of political activity in Vancouver. For this reason, a minority position opposing practices of Asian exclusion and encouraging the

organization and education of Asian workers was always present in the white labour movement. Socialist politics only became a major force within the Vancouver labour movement, however, after the First World War and again during the depression of the 1930s. The second factor contributing to the development of a broader working class consciousness was the increased labour militancy of Asians. Greater labour militancy among Asian workers and the examples of solidarity between Asian and white workers during labour conflicts, contributed to the greater acceptance of Asians as a bonafide part of the working class by white workers. Periods of increased labour militancy among workers in general, and among Asian workers in particular, coincided with the strengthening of socialist politics at the end of the First World War and during the depression of the 1930s. During these periods, and especially during the 1930s, many more white workers began to define Asian workers a part of the solution rather than as part of the problem facing workers in Vancouver.

The conjuncture of class oppression and ethnic subordination constrained Asian workers' abilities to wage successful struggles for a better life; as well as the development of working class consciousness among Asians. An important aspect of ethnic relations of white domination and Asian subordination was the complete ghettoization of Asians, in the economy and throughout civil society. Separate Chinese, Japanese and East Indian communities emerged that reproduced the salience of ethnic consciousness. Asian immigrants turned largely to ethnic community organization to handle the conditions of ethnic segregation in the labour market and their political

subordination in civil society. For Asian workers in British Columbia, their ethnic communities were important social and economic resources.[53] The formation of ethnic communities occurred as acts of inclusion for mutual aid, social recreation, and economic links, in the context of the contract labour system and the growth of ethnic businesses, and as acts of exclusion for self defense against a generally hostile dominant society. Ethnic community formation was more than simply the automatic outcome of traditional social and cultural practices in China, Japan, or India. The salience of maintaining and fostering close ethnic ties was linked to the structural position of Asians in British Columbia, since they were without the political resources of citizen status and were often the targets of white racist activities.

Analysis of the dynamics of Chinese and Japanese ethnic communities is beyond the scope of this study (see Adachi, 1976; Chan, 1983; Cheng, 1931; Wickberg, 1982; and Young and Reid, 1938). It is important to note, however, that Asian workers lived and worked within the context of their ethnic communities. Ethnic consciousness was as much a part of Asian workers' identification of their situation and problems in British Columbia, as it was for the dominant white working class. To be an Asian in Vancouver before the Second World War was at least as important in defining one's life's chances as being a worker. The lives of Asian workers and Asian merchants were not the same; but especially during periods of high levels of anti-Asian activity, the similarities in the lives of Asians from different classes were at least as important as their dissimilarities and conflicts

based on class. For Asian workers, as for white workers, the political allegiances generated by their class oppression and their ethnic subordination created tensions in the struggle to improve their lives in British Columbia.

Ethnic relations affected the involvement of Asian workers in the Vancouver labour movement. On the one hand Asian workers were always in a weaker bargaining position compared to white workers because of their lack of political and citizenship rights, their lack of economic resources (due to lower wages, weaker job security, the abundance of cheap Asian labour during most periods, and obligations to send money to kin in Asia), the absence of well developed trade union and socialist traditions and, for many, a perception of transience in Canada.[54] In addition, Asian workers were the object of practices of exclusion by white workers. Thus there was often little motivation for Asians to define their interests in class terms alongside white workers, rather than as part of an ethnic community in conflict with a dominant white society. Moreover, when Asian workers did take part in labour conflicts, white workers gave little consideration to the weaker economic and political position of Asian workers. In the fisheries, for example, the areas where Japanese fishermen could fish were restricted, whereas white and native fishermen could fish throughout the coast. As a Japanese fisherman remembered, this had a profound effect on labour conflicts in the fishing industry. Japanese fishermen could not strike for long because if they lost the season in their area, they could not go elsewhere and make it up as other fishermen could. This made the Japanese fishermen "the weak link in the

chain" in spite of their commitment to improving fish prices. When the Japanese were forced back to work as a result of economic necessity white and native fishermen simply branded the Japanese as strikebreakers, even though white fishermen were instrumental in enforcing regulations against Japanese fishermen in the first place (see PABC, Reynoldson Research Project, Oral History Tape 1462).

In contrast, ethnic community organizations like the Chinese Benevolent Association and the Canadian Japanese Association led the struggles against racial discrimination and were the major social welfare bodies within the Chinese and Japanese communities (see Adachi, 1971; Cheng, 1931; Lai, 1972; Sien, 1971; and Wickberg, 1982). At the same time, however, the leaders of the Chinese and Japanese communities were merchants and labour contractors employing Asian workers. As one Japanese worker stated, the leadership of the Japanese community were "some of the worst exploiters of his own people, even worse than the average Canadian employer" (see PABC, Reynoldson Research Project, Oral History Tape 1462).

The articulation of class and ethnic subordination was also manifest in the opposition of ethnic community leaders to the involvement of Asian workers in the labour movement. When the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union joined the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council in 1927, for example, Japanese businessmen mounted a campaign to weaken the organization. Japanese employers began to fire employees who belonged to the union. Merchants withdrew all advertising from the union's newspaper, The Daily People, objecting to the paper's appeal to Japanese

workers to unite against their employers. In response, the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers' Union organized a food co-operative to supply their own needs and refused to patronize Japanese businesses. This strategy had some success, and active opposition to the union by the Japanese merchants died down (see V.T.L.C. Minutes, February 1929 to April 1929; and Knight and Koizumi, 1976:38-57).

Asian workers faced the hostility of white workers and the disapproval of ethnic community leaders if they attempted to join the white labour movement. Moreover, as Ryuichi Yoshida, a founding member of the Japanese Labour Union, has pointed out, the structure of separate ethnic unions was the only form of labour organization possible throughout most of this period because white unions would not admit Asians. Yet separate ethnic unions were doomed to fail as a vehicle for working class gains:

The practical problem was that the Labour Union didn't increase in membership. It was not possible to strengthen the Labour Union because we could not achieve any gains in wages and conditions. Our union, consisting of just some Japanese workers, was too small to achieve any improvements in work conditions and pay. We were too scattered. Without the cooperation of the white unions we could achieve nothing. The white unions were organized by occupations but they did not accept Japanese members usually. Because of that the Labour Union included Japanese workers of all occupations. But our activity was not related to everyday work questions. The fishermen had their own organizations and they did not join the Labour Union, except as individuals. Those who had socialist views or who supported the labour movement from moral reasons were our only continuous supporters (Knight and Koizumi, 1976:54-55).

The possibilities of successful Asian involvement in the labour movement were limited to periods of labour shortage, which strengthened the economic position of Asian workers, and to periods when white workers adopted inclusive rather than

exclusive labour strategies. The two periods of greater solidarity between white and Asian workers and greater support for socialist politics, at the end of the First World War and during the depression of the 1930s, greatly enhanced the militancy of Asian workers. According to some Japanese workers, however, the fact that inclusive labour organization occurred under explicitly socialist groups, the O.B.U., the W.U.L, and the Communist Party, tended to mitigate against the involvement of larger numbers of Japanese workers. As one Japanese worker argued, this was because Japanese workers recognized that the Communist movement was illegitimate within the dominant society, and was even less acceptable to the leaders of the ethnic community than the mainstream labour movement (see PABC, Reynoldson Research Project, Oral History Tapes 1462 and 1465). This suggests that Asian labour militancy would have been considerably enhanced had the international trade unions adopted inclusive strategies.

Political divisions within the working class were a product both of the structures of inequality which defined workers' lives, and the strategies adopted by different groups of workers to transform those structures. The capitalist employment practices against which Vancouver workers agitated were embedded in a racist hierarchy that treated workers differently on the basis of their ethnic characteristics. It is no wonder that the realities of class position and ethnic location generated contradictory political actions and that workers often failed to identify with other workers during labour conflicts. As white workers excluded Asians from the labour movement and made Asian

workers the target of strategies to improve working conditions for whites, they also entrenched the economic and political marginality of the excluded group. In so doing, Asian workers had few alternatives but to acquiesce to poor wages and dangerous working conditions. Ostracized by the white labour movement, many found the only forum for effective political intervention against racism in Canada in their ethnic community organizations. These organizations played a further conservative role in the development of working class consciousness among Asian workers. When Asian workers did engage in labour organizing and strikes, they faced the disapproval of leaders of their ethnic communities and, except during the two periods of heightened labour radicalism, had little or no support from white workers. Yet without the cooperation of the white labour movement Asian workers were too weak to achieve improvements in the workplace. Asian workers, therefore, had few incentives to try to address their problems through labour action rather than through ethnic community politics.

Nevertheless, the history of Asian involvement in labour conflicts in Vancouver demonstrates that many Asian workers were conscious of their class position, and desired to improve their lives in the province through labour action. Successful labour organization, however, was often mitigated by the politics of exclusion among white workers. It took social and economic crises of such proportions that the legitimacy of the entire social structure was questioned by large numbers of workers to begin to break the cycle of ethnic political divisions and open the possibilities for the incorporation of Asian workers as equal

members of the working class. The salience of ethnic divisions among white and Asian workers could only be broken when the labour movement as a whole recognized the centrality of the conflict between workers and capitalists, and adopted strategies of working class unity to fight for immediate reforms or the creation of a socialist society.

Chapter Six

Gender Segregation in the British Columbia Labour Market

A central feature of the labour market in British Columbia, and indeed in all contemporary societies, is the distinction between women's work and men's work. Gender segregation is reflected in different kinds of jobs for male and female workers, different patterns of employment, and in lower rates of pay for female labour. In this regard the position of women workers might be considered similar to the position of male Asian labour in the province. In addition to segregation within the labour market, however, women also face segregation within the home. Men and women not only do different kinds of jobs for pay, but domestic labour is also defined as women's work. The role of women's labour within the family-household system is closely related to gender segregation within the labour market.

The prevalence of gender segregation in capitalist labour markets cannot be understood as simply a function of women's biology. That women bear children in no way determines how often or under what conditions pregnancies will occur, or that women must rear children, do the housework, refrain from political activities, or be denied citizenship rights (see Armstrong, and Armstrong, 1983; Barrett, 1980). The link between these aspects of women's lives is found less in their biology than in the social construction of women as dependents of men. Similarly, the determination of women as cheap wage labourers and men as dearer wage labourers is based largely on women's relationship of dependence/subordination to men.

The relationship between women's dependence within the family and their position in the labour market is a complex one. A pre-existing gender ideology, involving male control over female labour within the household, was incorporated within early capitalist social relations (see Barrett, 1980). Men became defined as the primary breadwinner and head of household, while the appropriate role for women was defined in terms of domesticity. The economic dependence of women within the family was buttressed by legal dependence, through marriage, family and property laws, and denial of the political rights granted to men. Women were second-class citizens in early 20th century British Columbia, a condition that did not change substantially even after the First World War when women were granted the franchise. Patriarchal family relations defined women as dependent/subordinate to male breadwinners within the family-household system. The economic realities of working class life, however, also forced women into wage labour. In the context of the subordination of women throughout civil society, women formed a pool of cheap wage labour which in turn reinforced their economic dependence on men within the family-household system.

A gender ideology stressing women's domesticity as natural and appropriate, and the contradictions between the existing family-household system and women's wage labour, affected women's position within the labour market. The kind of work women were paid to do, the level of remuneration, the type of women who were employed, the employment histories of women, and the strategies adopted to improve women's working conditions were all conditioned by the social construction of women as dependents in

the home. Women's wage labour was most often directly related to skills used in domestic labour, and was considered unskilled. Women's wages were low, due to their socially defined dependence on men and the limited areas of potential employment. The majority of women in the labour market were single, and wage labour was usually terminated upon marriage. Strategies adopted to improve women's unhealthy working conditions, abysmal wages and long hours were also rooted in a gender ideology of female domesticity. Strategies centred on protective legislation for the 'weaker' sex rather than equality between male and female workers, and the institution of a male 'family wage' that would preclude the necessity of women entering the labour force, end low wage competition from women, and strengthen male domination within the family. Women's experiences within the labour market cannot be separated from their dependence/subordination to men throughout society.

Women were only a small part of the paid labour force in British Columbia before the Second World War. The participation of women in wage labour was constrained by their role as primary domestic workers and child-rearers within the home, and the limited number of jobs available to women during this period. In 1891 only 3,000 women were engaged in wage labour in British Columbia, constituting six percent of the provincial labour force (see Table 6.1). By 1941 women had increased to eighteen percent of the labour force, a total of 55,000 women were working for wages. A similar pattern of low but increasing female labour force participation rates is found in the percentage of the adult population engaged in wage labour (see Table 6.1). While 83

percent of adult men were part of the labour force in 1891, decreasing to 73 percent in 1941, only twelve percent of adult women were part of the labour force in 1891, rising to eighteen percent in 1941. Women were a small but growing minority in the labour force during this period. Women would not constitute a significant part of the labour force until after the Second World War.

Table 6.1 The Labour Force in British Columbia, by Gender, 1891 - 1941.

Year	Labour Force		As Percentage of Adult Population*		Percentage of Women in Total Labour Force
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1891**	44,955	3,074	83.5	11.7	6
1901	76,582	4,762	82.8	10.8	6
1911	189,482	16,627	91.2	16.9	8
1921	194,081	25,497	87.3	15.8	12
1931	262,431	43,739	86.1	19.0	14
1941	258,723	55,131	73.3	18.2	18

* The labour force as a percentage of the population 14 years of age and over.

** In 1891 the percentage of the adult population was calculated for those 10 years of age and over.

Source: Census of Canada, 1911, Volume VI; 1951, Volume V.

Although women were not a large part of the overall labour force in the province, the concentration of women in a limited number of jobs made them an important source of labour for a few industries (see Table 6.2). In 1901, 86 percent of working women in British Columbia were employed in manufacturing and service industries. The service sector alone employed 66 percent of all female workers in 1901, 55 percent in 1911, 50 percent in 1921, 53 percent in 1931, and 54 percent in 1941. The increase in women's labour force participation in the first four decades of this century corresponds to a shift in employment opportunities

for women. Throughout this period, however, at least half of the

Table 6.2 Occupational Distribution of the British Columbia Labour Force, by Gender, 1901 - 1941.

<u>Male Labour Force</u>					
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
	----	----	----	----	----
Agriculture	13	13	18	16	15
Fishing and					
Trapping	3	2	2	4	4
Logging	3	6	6	5	5
Mining and					
Quarrying	18	8	6	4	4
Manufacture and					
Mechanical &	21	10	11	12	17
Construction		10	7	7	8
Transport. &	15	8	9	11	11
Trade and		9	10	10	10
Finance					
Service	14	9	12	11	12
Clerical	3	4	5	4	5
Labourers	8	21	13	16	10
	----	----	----	----	----
Total*	98%	100%	99%	100%	101%

<u>Female Labour Force</u>					
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
	----	----	----	----	----
Agriculture	2	2	3	3	3
Fishing and					
Trapping	0	0	0	0	0
Logging	0	0	0	0	0
Mining and					
Quarrying	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacture and					
Mechanical &	20	19	8	7	7
Construction		0	0	0	0
Transport. &	5	2	5	4	3
Trade and		8	12	12	13
Finance					
Service	66	55	50	53	54
Clerical	7	13	22	20	20
Labourers	0	0	0	0	0
	----	----	----	----	----
Total*	100%	99%	100%	99%	100%

* Percentage totals are rounded.

Source: Census of Canada, 1951, Volume V.

entire female labour force worked in the service sector. Female employment in manufacturing declined as it increased in the

clerical, and trade and finance sectors. Female employment in manufacturing fell from twenty percent in 1901 to seven percent in 1941. During the same period female employment in trade and finance rose from less than five percent to thirteen percent, and from seven percent to twenty percent in the clerical sector. In 1941, 86 percent of all working women were employed in only three sectors of the economy: service, clerical, and trade and finance. When we add women employed in manufacturing, 94 percent of women were employed in four sectors of the labour market.

Table 6.2 shows a shift in women's employment, between 1901 and 1941, away from manufacturing and into employment in the clerical and trade and finance sectors. At all times, however, the majority of women worked in the service sector, and women's work was concentrated in a few areas of the labour market. In comparison, male workers were more evenly distributed across the labour market.

The narrow range of women's employment opportunities can be seen more clearly in the detailed breakdown of the occupational distributions in the 1911 and 1931 Census. Table 6.3 documents the occupational distribution of the labour force in Vancouver, where nearly 40 percent of all women in British Columbia were employed, for 1911. In 1911, 96 percent of all working women in Vancouver were employed in four areas: domestic and personal service, manufacturing, trade and finance, and professional. The full nature of sex-segregation within the labour market is revealed through an analysis of female employment within each of these sectors. Eighty-one percent of all women classified as 'professionals' worked as teachers, nurses and stenographers.

Seventy-eight percent of women employed in trade and finance were office employees and saleswomen. Seventy-five percent of women employed in manufacturing worked in the clothing industry. And 45 percent of those in domestic and personal service were servants; the remainder worked as laundresses, waitresses, nursemaids, cooks, housekeepers, and hospital and hotel employees (see Census of Canada, 1911, Volume VI:286-296). Out of nearly 200 occupations within eleven industrial sectors listed in the 1911 Census records, the vast majority of women working in Vancouver were engaged in seventeen jobs listed within four sectors of the labour market.

Table 6.3 Occupational Distribution of the Male and Female Labour Force in Vancouver, 1911

Occupation	Male	%	Female	%
-----	-----	---	-----	---
Agriculture	536	1	8	0
Building Trades	8,906	20	10	0
Domestic and Personal Service	3,951	9	2,720	42
Civil and Municipal Government	3,651	8	39	1
Fishing, and Hunting	148	0	1	0
Forestry	821	2	1	0
Manufacturing and Mechanical	8,498	19	904	14
Mining	470	1	0	0
Professional	2,487	6	1,484	23
Trade and Finance	9,959	23	1,075	17
Transportation	4,749	11	210	3
-----	-----	---	-----	---
All Occupations	44,176	100	6,452	100

Source: Census of Canada, 1911, Volume VI.

The labour force distribution of women in Vancouver changed little between 1911 and 1931 (see Table 6.4). Female employment in the service, manufacturing and professional sectors declined slightly, while employment in transportation and trade and finance increased. On the whole, however, female employment

remained concentrated in the same jobs. Eighty-one percent of all women were employed in domestic and personal service, professions, and trade and finance. When female employment in manufacturing and transportation are added, these five sectors account for 96 percent of female employment in Vancouver. Concentration within each sector also persisted. Ninety-four percent of all women employed in domestic and personal service were domestic servants (44 percent), hotel, restaurant, and boarding house employees (31 percent), and tailoresses, laundresses, and hairdressers (19 percent). Not only did the service sector continue to employ the largest number of women in Vancouver, but domestic servants were the largest single

Table 6.4 Occupational Distribution of the Male and Female Labour Force in Vancouver, 1931

Occupation	Male	%	Female	%
Agriculture	2,074	2	21	0
Building Trades	10,910	12	79	0
Domestic and Personal Service	10,811	12	8,060	37
Civil and Municipal Government	4,234	5	388	2
Fishing and Hunting	859	1	1	0
Forestry	3,475	4	24	0
Manufacturing and Mechanical	16,149	18	1,854	8
Mining	1,112	1	24	0
Professional	3,889	4	4,169	19
Trade and Finance	18,621	20	5,569	25
Transportation	12,550	14	1,598	7
Unstated	6,564	7	136	1
All Occupations	91,230	100%	21,927	99%

Source: Census of Canada, 1931, Volume III.

occupational group in the city, absorbing sixteen percent of all women in the labour market in 1931. Eighty-five percent of all professional women were nurses, teachers, or working in law, probably as legal secretaries. Sixty-nine percent of women in

manufacturing worked in food processing, textiles, and bookbinding. Seventy-two percent of women in transportation were telephone operators. Eighty-eight percent of women employed in trade and finance worked as saleswomen in retail trades, or as office clerks in banks and insurance companies (see Census of Canada, 1931, Volume III:756-763).[55]

Women in Vancouver, as elsewhere, were limited to a small number of employment opportunities. The nature of women's paid employment was directly related to their role as primary domestic workers, both in terms of the skills involved and the opportunities for paid work. Most women worked for pay in the same jobs that they did without pay in the home: domestic servants, launderers, cooks, waitresses, housekeepers, food processors, tailloresses, nurses and teachers. As professionals women were limited to the 'caring' professions, mostly teaching and nursing. Even the expansion of the clerical field was related to women's domesticity; female clerical work is structured around supportive and subservient relations with male bosses (see Kessler-Harris, 1982:148-149). Women were increasingly employed as office workers and stenographers, a trend that would accelerate after the Second World War. The low level of remuneration for women's work and the difficulty of monopolizing skills to raise wages, was at least partly related to the fact that women's paid labour often involved skills related to domestic labour. The most important link between women's domestic and paid labour, however, was the impact that marriage had on women's employment.

Wage labour was virtually restricted to single women during

the period under study. Domestic responsibilities for married women were onerous, and paid employment simply resulted in a 'double shift' for working class wives. Women did not expect to remain in the labour force after marriage unless unforeseen circumstances, like high male unemployment or the death or desertion of a spouse, made employment necessary. Tables 6.5 and 6.6 show the age distribution and marital status of the British Columbia labour force in 1931. Different patterns in the age distribution of employed men and women reflect the continuous nature of employment throughout men's lives and the concentration of female employment before marriage. Half of all working women in Vancouver were under the age of 25, compared to only eighteen percent of male workers (see Table 6.5). Seventy-six percent of

Table 6.5 The Age Distribution of the Labour Force in British Columbia and Vancouver, by Gender, 1931.

Age	Male Labour Force		Female Labour Force	
	Provincial	Vancouver	Provincial	Vancouver
10-17	3	3	6	6
18-19	4	4	13	13
20-24	10	11	29	31
25-34	21	21	22	25
35-44	23	25	13	13
45-54	23	24	10	8
55-64	12	10	5	3
over 65	5	3	2	1
Total*	101%	101%	100%	100%

* Percentage totals are rounded.

Source: Census of Canada, 1931, Volume III and Volume V.

all working women were single, compared to 37 percent for men. Only fourteen percent of all working women in the province were married in 1931 (see Table 6.6). The importance of marital status for female employment can clearly be seen when we consider

the population of employed women in the province over age 25. Nearly eighty percent of all working women between the ages of 25 and 34 were single; in comparison, only 46 percent of men in the same age group were single. Seventy-five percent of male workers between 35 and 44 years of age were married, compared to only 29 percent of female workers. Moreover, as women workers aged, widowed and divorced women out-numbered both single and married women in the labour force (see Table 6.6). For most working women, marriage ended further paid employment. Women remained in the labour force for the same reasons that men did, economic

Table 6.6 Age and Marital Status of the Labour Force in British Columbia, by Gender, in Percentages, 1931.

Age	Male Labour Force			Female Labour Force		
	Single	Married	Wid/Div	Single	Married	Wid/Div
All Ages	37	60	3	76	14	10
10-17	100	0	0	100	0	0
18-19	99	1	0	99	1	0
20-24	85	15	0	95	4	1
25-34	46	53	1	79	17	4
35-44	23	75	2	52	29	19
45-54	18	78	4	39	30	31
55-64	18	74	8	35	23	42
over 65	21	64	15	28	14	58

Source: Census of Canada, 1931, Volume V.

necessity. For women, economic necessity was linked to marital status. With the absence of support services, such as child care, married women returned to the labour market only when they had no choice, when husbands were unemployed, absent or dead, or if the absence of children made paid labour a possibility. Low employment rates among married women reflected both the realities of women's domestic responsibilities, and the attitudes that defined a woman's place in the home.

3

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

As we have seen, most women in the British Columbia labour force before the Second World War were single, under 25 years of age, and employed in domestic and personal service, clerical work, sales, sewing, food processing, telephone operating, nursing or teaching. Most working women were also white. Asian women did work in the British Columbia labour force during this period, but due to the much smaller number of Asian women in the province and in the labour market, little has been recorded about the work they did. In 1931, out of a population of 27,000 Chinese in British Columbia, only 1,000 were females over fifteen years of age. Of the 22,000 Japanese in the province only 4,500 were females over 15 years of age (see Young and Reid, 1938: 207). Asian women were only a small part of the population in the province. In the city of Vancouver, Asians constituted only four percent of the entire female population, less than five thousand Asian women and girls lived in the city in 1931 (see Table 4.3). Eighty percent of all women in the British Columbia labour force in 1931 were of British origin; in contrast, Japanese women constituted only two percent of the female labour force, and Chinese women represented less than half of one percent of women working in the province (see Table 4.7).

Although the British Columbia government was extremely concerned with the presence of Asian labour in the province, this concern was confined to male Asian labourers. The 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration noted that there were only 154 Chinese women in the province, compared to 10,000 Chinese men. Of the 154 Chinese women, 70 were defined as prostitutes and the remainder were wives of Chinese merchants (see Royal Commission,

1885: lix). Chinese women in British Columbia were only a political issue around questions of immorality, or Chinese prostitution, and the evasion of the head tax through claims of married status by Chinese women who were in fact indentured labourers or 'slave girls' (see Adilman, 1984; and Chan, 1983). In the 1920s the reproduction of the Asian populations in British Columbia became a focal point of debate when all wives were excluded as part of the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act (see Adilman, 1984), and the Japanese picture-bride system was abolished in an attempt to curtail the further growth of the Japanese population (see Cheng, 1931). Asian women in British Columbia were not considered in the same way that Asian men were, in terms of labour competition. Asian women were treated in the context of their domestic role within the family-household system, as child-bearers and child-rearers.

Nevertheless, Chinese and Japanese women did engage in wage labour in British Columbia before the Second World War. Because female Asian labour was not a political issue in British Columbia, the Royal Commissions on Asians did not document the employment of Asian women during this period. The British Columbia Department of Labour did collect information on the ethnic origin of female as well as male workers after the First World War. Table 6.7 records the number of Chinese and Japanese women reported in the Annual Reports of the Department of Labour from 1920 to 1939. Only a handful of Chinese women are reported in the labour market in any one year, with a peak of 57 women recorded in 1930. Japanese women are reported in much larger numbers throughout most of this period, with a high of 803 women

recorded in the labour force in 1939.

Table 6.7 The number of Chinese and Japanese Women reported in the British Columbia Department of Labour Annual Reports, 1920-1939.

Year	Chinese Women	Japanese Women
-----	-----	-----
1920	0	86
1921	0	70
1922	0	74
1923	9	119
1924	20	77
1925	7	131
1926	24	237
1927	6	238
1928	17	295
1929	0	394
1930	57	571
1931	14	30*
1932	15	291
1933	26	465
1934	11	443
1935	7	411
1936	21	501
1937	23	548
1938	52	734
1939	46	803

* The figure for the Japanese in 1931 is most likely a recording error. The figure recorded for the Japanese is more consistent with the category it precedes, 'other countries'. The latter reports 236 for 1931, 230 of which are in the food products industries, where the majority of the Japanese are always recorded.

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1920-1939.

The Department of Labour collected statistics in only 25 industrial sectors and was, for the most part, concerned with documenting the male labour force. Service occupations, such as domestics, shop clerks and hotel and restaurant workers, as well as farm labourers, were completely excluded from the data. Yet these were important areas of employment for women. In only six out of 25 industries surveyed did women constitute more than 15 percent of the labour force between 1920 and 1939. Four of these were in manufacturing (cigar making, food products, garments, and

leather and fur production); the other two industries⁹ were laundries, the only service industry included in the annual survey, and utilities, where women were employed in clerical work (see the Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, 1920-1939). The majority of Asian women recorded in these statistics were employed in food processing, primarily fish canning, and a few were also found in garment making. It is interesting to note that neither Asian women nor Asian men were recorded as employed in the laundry industry, although laundries were a major employer of Chinese men and also employed some Chinese women. Only the white automated laundries were included in provincial statistics. Many areas of women's employment generally, and Asian employment within the Asian-owned business sector specifically, are hidden from government collected statistics during this period.

Table 6.8 compares the occupational distribution of Chinese and Japanese female workers to the distribution of all women working in British Columbia for the year 1931. Although it is likely that the Census did not record all women working in the Asian business sector, the pattern of Asian women's employment is consistent with what we might expect. The pattern of employment among Asian women is similar to that of other women in the province, but even more restricted. Asian women are concentrated in the trade and service sectors of the economy. Eighty percent of Chinese women and over seventy percent of Japanese women were employed in trade and finance, mostly as shop clerks, and in the service sector as domestic servants and waitresses, and in boarding houses. The rest worked primarily as farm labourers or in manufacturing, principally sewing and fish

and vegetable canning. Unlike white women, Asian women were seldom employed in the professional sector as teachers, nurses or stenographers, or in clerical work. Only eight Chinese women were

Table 6.8 The Employment Distribution of Chinese and Japanese Women in British Columbia, Compared to all Women, 1931

Occupation	Chinese Women		Japanese Women		% All Women
	Number	%	Number	%	
Agriculture	8	5	48	7	3
Fishing	0	0	0	0	0
Logging	0	0	0	0	0
Mining	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing and Mechanical	5	3	97	15	7
Construction	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation	0	0	1	0	4
Trade and Finance	48	30	63	10	12
Service	80	50	402	61	53
Clerical and Professional	17	10	40	6	20
Other Labourers	3	2	5	1	0
Total Employed	161	100%	656	100%	99%

Source: C. Young and H. Reid, The Japanese Canadians, 1938: 239-245; Census of Canada, 1951, Volume V.

listed as professionals, all teachers; of the 27 Japanese women professionals nine were nurses and fifteen were teachers (see Young and Reid, 1938:239-245). Moreover, Asian teachers were most likely confined to schools populated by children of their own ethnic groups. Oral histories of Chinese women in British Columbia suggest that few Chinese women worked outside of the Chinese-owned business sector.[56] Although Asian and white women were employed in many of the same types of jobs, they were not employed in the same workplaces. White women, for example, were employed as shop clerks in large department stores and as office workers in large companies; Chinese and Japanese women tended to

work in trades and services within the Asian business sector.

Chinese women recall working before the Second World War, on Chinese-owned farms, in Chinese-owned laundries, as clerks in Chinese grocery stores and other retail businesses, in Chinese restaurants, as home piece workers for Chinese tailors, in a Chinese-owned garment factory, and in canneries in the Vancouver area (see PABC, 4126, Tapes 1, 5, and 6). Of all of the jobs discussed by Chinese women, only the canning work was done for employers who were not Chinese. Many other Chinese women worked in family businesses without remuneration.

Japanese women also worked within family businesses, usually without pay, and in stores and farms owned by other Japanese. Probably because Japanese women were more numerous than Chinese women, however, it was not unusual for Japanese women to work in white-owned fish canneries and vegetable canneries, and on large white-owned farms. In fact, there were instances of Japanese women striking at canneries and farms in the 1920s and 1930s.[57]

It is impossible to be precise about the number of Asian women working in the labour market in British Columbia before the Second World War. The tendency for Chinese women, and to a lesser extent Japanese women, to work within the Asian-owned business sector suggests that there were probably more women employed in British Columbia than the 1931 Census records. Certainly the number of Chinese women workers was extremely small, perhaps only a few hundred. Since there were few Chinese families in British Columbia during this period, a second generation of Chinese-Canadians did not add appreciably to the labour force. Japanese women were more numerous in the province, more likely to be

employed outside of the Asian-owned business sector, and, since families were a major part of the Japanese community, a second generation of Japanese-Canadian women was beginning to enter the labour force by the time of the Second World War. Of the 55,000 women in the provincial labour market in 1941, however, Japanese women probably did not account for more than one or two thousand workers.

Female workers typically occupied 'women's jobs' in British Columbia and earned 'women's wages' which were considerably lower than those received by white men. Women's labour was, and is, defined as cheap wage-labour for a number of reasons. There was a history of lower female wages in Europe that was part of feudal and early capitalist development, which was transferred to Canada with colonialism. During the 19th century rationalizations for lower women's wages included the lower nutritional needs of women, the higher output of male labour, the lower qualifications of female workers, the more demanding nature of male jobs, and the argument that men supported families while women did not (see Drake, 1984:227-237). Low wages were related to the type of work that women did for pay, jobs that usually entailed skills related to domestic labour and which all women possessed. Thus women's job skills were difficult to monopolize and therefore more difficult to define as expensive skilled labour (see Barrett, 1980; and Hartmann 1979). Moreover, women were defined as socially inferior to men, a condition reflected in assumptions about their inferior labour power, their inferior intellectual powers, and an inferior moral character requiring 'protection'. Ideologies about the social inferiority of women were linked to

the separate spheres of men and women, whereby women should, ideally, be concerned only with the home.

Women were, and are, the primary domestic labourers within the family, so wage labour took place within the context of child-bearing, child-rearing, and other domestic responsibilities. Domestic responsibilities defined the ability to work, the hours one could work, and even the type of work available, since patterns of intermittent wage-labour tend to preclude training employees for skilled work. Furthermore, domestic responsibilities constrained women's ability to organize. The lack of available time, energy, opportunities, limited access to meeting halls, media, isolation from other workers, lack of child care facilities, and the prevailing notions of appropriate female behaviour all hampered women's attempts to raise wages and improve working conditions (see Rosenthal, 1979; and Frager, 1983). Although the domestic responsibilities of single women were usually fewer than those for married women, expectations that marriage would soon end paid labour hampered the organization of all working women. In contrast, male workers were economically stronger, with higher wages and access to skilled jobs, and stronger politically, with citizenship rights, including the right to vote, and access to labour media and meeting places, as well as having the time to engage in politics, debate, and organizing that their wives domestic labour made possible. Male workers were capable of demanding more for their labour than were women, and, since men were the primary breadwinners, higher male wages became defined, in the context of the 'family wage', as a right.

In 1902 white women employed in laundries were earning from \$4 to \$7.50 per week, while their male counterparts earned \$10 to \$15 per week, or twice as much. The wages of white women were closer to those received by Chinese men in the industry, who earned \$8 to \$18 per month plus board in Chinese-owned laundries (see Royal Commission, 1902: 175). Similarly, white tailloresses earned \$6 per week while white tailors earned \$12 per week. The wages of Chinese tailors were again closer to those earned by white women, averaging from \$25 to \$35 a month (see Royal Commission, 1902: 177). White female domestics in private homes earned from \$12 to \$15 per month, plus board, while the wages of Chinese male domestics ranged from \$10 to \$30 per month, plus board (see Royal Commission, 1902: 167-171). Wage differences between men and women were also incorporated in union agreements. Telephone operators were one of the few groups of unionized women at the turn of the 20th century. Unionized telephone operators earned from \$20 to \$30 per month while male linemen earned almost as much in a week, \$18 to \$19.50. These particular wage rates were the outcome of a successful strike by telephone workers (see Labour Gazette, January 1903: 517).

At the turn of the 20th century, white women were earning about half of what white men were making in the same industries. In industries that also employed Asian men, white women's wages were closer to those of Asian men than they were to the wages of white men. Since most women's work was considered unskilled, it is useful to compare the wages of unskilled white male labour to white female wages. In the first decade of the 20th century, wages for unskilled male labour averaged from \$2 to \$2.50 per

day, increasing to \$3 by 1912 (see Labour Gazette, 1900-1912). Skilled male labour, on the other hand, earned as much as \$4.50 a day in 1912. At the same time, women continued to earn as little as \$1 a day. Table 6.9 shows the average wages of women in 1913 as reported by witnesses at the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia.

Table 6.9 Women's Average Wages in Selected Occupations in British Columbia, 1913

Occupation	Women's Wages	Men's Wages
-----	-----	-----
Retail Clerks		
Department Stores	\$5-\$10 week	\$15 week
Drug Stores	\$40 month	\$75-100 month
Book Stores	\$28-40 month	\$50-85 month
Jewelry Stores	\$40-60 month	\$75-100 month
Factory Workers		
Chocolate Factory	\$6-12 week	--
Cigar Factory	\$7-13 week	--
Glove Factory	\$7-12 week	--
Biscuit Factory	\$5-8 week	--
Laundries	\$7-13 week	\$16-25 week
Garment Factory	\$6-15 week	--
Telephone Operators	\$35-45 month	--
Waitresses	\$10-12 week	\$14 week
Domestics	\$30 month	--
Teachers	\$60 month	--
Accountants	\$50-125 month	\$60-150 month
-----	-----	-----

Note: A major task of the Royal Commission on Labour was to examine women's wages in the province and recommend appropriate minimum wages if necessary. For this reason, the commission was not as concerned with male wages, and often witnesses were not asked about the wages for men in the same industries.

Source: PABC, GR 684, Proceedings of the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia, 1912-1914.

As Table 6.9 suggests, women continued to earn considerably less than men on the eve of the First World War. The lowest paying jobs for women were in the service industries, particularly jobs as domestics and clerks in various types of stores. Factory workers could earn slightly better wages, although the testimony at the Royal Commission suggests that most

women were paid at the bottom end of the wage scale. As we would expect, moreover, skilled women such as teachers and accountants earned better wages than most women, though still less than their male counterparts. Waitresses were better paid than most service workers. The wages cited for waitresses are union rates, however, and apply only to union waitresses. Waitresses working in non-union establishments earned less. Wage differentials between union waiters and waitresses were considerably lower than in other occupations. In 1907, for example, the union scale of the Cooks', Waiters and Waitresses' Union in Vancouver set a \$12 weekly wage for waiters and a \$9.50 wage for waitresses for the same work-week; and in 1919 the union scale was set at \$19.50 for counter waiters and \$16.50 for counter waitresses. This particular contract also included a clause that "Women cooks shall receive the same wages as men" (see Labour Gazette, July 1907: 51; and November 1919: 1334). Although unionization did not abrogate wage differentials based on gender in the restaurant industry, it did reduce the range of pay differences. It should be noted, however, that pay differences in the restaurant industry were less a matter of women earning more than of men earning less than males in other occupations.

One of the major outcomes of the 1914 Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia was the post-war establishment of a provincial Department of Labour and a Minimum Wage Board which legislated minimum wages for women. The minimum wages established for women were low and did not apply to 'inexperienced' workers or those under 18 years of age, to farm labour, domestic service or fish canning, so many women were

still paid below minimum wages in the province after 1920.[58] Table 6.10 outlines the minimum wages which were established for women in the early 1920s, and which remained in effect until the Second World War. The effects of full employment during the war, inflation, and the implementation of minimum wage legislation after the war, did raise the wages of lower paid female workers in most industries, at least in comparison to the wages for women cited during the Royal Commission proceedings (see Table 6.9).

Table 6.10 Minimum Wages for Women in British Columbia, 1920-1939

Employment Sector	Minimum Weekly Wage
-----	-----
Mercantile	\$12.75
Laundry	\$13.50
Hotels and Restaurants	\$14.00
Offices	\$15.00
Manufacturing	\$14.00
Personal Service	\$14.25
Telephone	\$15.00
Fruit and Vegetable	\$14.00
-----	-----

Source: The Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, and 1939.

The minimum wages cited in Table 6.10, however, represent the highest category of minimum wages set for women. In the mercantile industry, for example, girls under eighteen years of age earned a minimum wage of \$7.50 a week for their first three months of work, rising to \$11 after two years, or when they turned eighteen and received the adult minimum wage of \$12.75 a week. Women over eighteen classified as inexperienced workers continued to earn less than the adult minimum wage, starting at \$9 per week for the first three months, with an increase of \$1 every three months up to the minimum wage of \$12.75. The minimum wage legislation for women followed this pattern in all

industries (see Appendix, Minimum Wage Act, Annual Report of the Department of Labour, 1932).

Women's wages rose after the First World War, but it appears that this was mainly due to inflation, and the marked differences between the wages of men and women remained. As Table 6.11 indicates, women continued to earn considerably less than men in similar jobs in the same industries. Women averaged between one-half and two-thirds of men's wages. Only in two occupations, among launderers and servants, did women earn almost as much as men; but in both occupations men earned lower wages than usual. In these instances men were performing typically 'women's work' and their wages apparently suffered accordingly.

Table 6.11 Average Weekly Earnings for Selected Occupations in Vancouver, by Gender, 1921

Occupations	Male Wages	Female Wages	Female Wages as % of Men's
Biscuit/Confectionery	19.87	13.10	66%
Bookbinders	32.78	15.00	46%
Boot/Shoe Makers	23.11	16.95	73%
Clerks, Office	27.03	18.31	68%
Clothing Factory	20.06	14.77	74%
Furriers	26.35	16.83	64%
Laundry Workers	11.60	11.46	99%
Salesmen/women	24.61	14.40	59%
Servants	10.30	8.60	83%
Telephone Employees	31.08	15.54	50%
Waiter/Waitress	17.80	12.48	70%

Source: Census of Canada, 1921, Volume III.

The continuing pattern of male-female wage differences can more clearly be seen in a comparison of average male and female wages in Vancouver between 1911 and 1931. Table 6.12 shows the average yearly and weekly earnings, and the average number of weeks employed, for men and women in Vancouver. Although wages rose considerably between 1911 and 1921, women's wages as a

percentage of men's remained about the same. As a percentage of men's weekly wages, women earned 63 percent of what men earned in 1911, 62 percent in 1921, but only 56 percent in 1931. The depression seems to have reduced women's wages in comparison with men's. However, the average number of weeks worked changes considerably in the 1931 period, suggesting that to some extent women were likely to be more steadily employed than men. Women worked an average of eight weeks longer than men in 1931; this increased their average yearly income to 69 percent of the yearly income of men, even though their weekly wages were only 56 percent of what men on average earned.

Table 6.12 Average Earnings for Adult Wage Earners in Vancouver by Gender, 1911, 1921, and 1931*

Year	Average Yearly Earnings	Average Weekly Earnings	Average No. of Weeks Employed
<u>June 1910-June 1911</u>			
Male	\$786	\$19.16	42
Female	\$499	\$12.13	41
<u>June 1920-June 1921</u>			
Male	\$1,095	\$24.62	44
Female	\$ 726	\$15.34	47
<u>June 1930-June 1931</u>			
Male	\$947	\$25.63	37
Female	\$653	\$14.40	45

* Adult wage earners are defined as those over fifteen years of age.

Source: Census of Canada, 1931, Volume V.

In the annual survey of the provincial Department of Labour, women constituted at least fifteen percent of the labour force in six industries: cigar making, food processing, garment making, laundering, leather and fur production, and utilities. Table 6.13 shows the average male and female wages in these six

industries between 1920 and 1939. Women's wages ranged from just under one-half to slightly over three-quarters of what men earned in the same industries. In 1920, women averaged 57 percent of male wages, 65 percent in 1925, 64 percent in 1930, 70 percent in 1935, and 65 percent in 1939. The higher percentage of women's

Table 6.13 Average Adult Male and Female Weekly Wages for Selected Industries, in Dollars, 1920-1939

	1920	1925	1930	1935	1939
	----	----	----	----	----
<u>Male Wages</u>					
Cigar Industry*	32	23	24	16	
Food Processing	28	25	27	21	23
Garment Industry	29	28	27	21	23
Laundries	27	25	26	21	23
Leather/Fur Industry	28	26	27	19	21
Utilities	31	27	29	26	28
<u>Female Wages</u>					
Cigar Industry*	17	17	17	13	
Food Processing	18	16	17	14	14
Garment Industry	18	17	18	14	15
Laundries	15	15	14	13	13
Leather/Fur Industry	17	19	18	15	16
Utilities	15	16	17	17	18

* There is no data for wage differences in the Cigar Industry in 1939. Only 3 firms reported, with a total of three male employees.

Source: The Annual Reports of the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, and 1939.

earnings in 1935 reflects the decrease in wages during the depression, when men's wages fell more than women's wages in the industries listed in Table 6.13. By 1939 men's wages were increasing at a faster rate than women's wages, again increasing the gap between male and female earnings. The average wages for women in all six industries between 1920 and 1939 was 64 percent, or just under two-thirds, of what men earned.

It is much more difficult to determine the wages of Asian

women in British Columbia. Information on the ethnic origin of women covered under the Minimum Wage Board legislation was not collected by the provincial Department of Labour. The major areas of employment for Asian women, farm labour, domestic service and fish canning, were, however, not covered by minimum wage legislation. Female Asian workers were less likely to be covered by minimum wage legislation than white women. The Minimum Wage Board investigated only those complaints lodged by individual women earning less than the minimum wage. This process made enforcing minimum wage laws difficult. Asian women working in small ethnic businesses were even less likely than white women to take advantage of these laws, and probably less likely to be aware of them. For these reasons, we cannot assume that Asian women earned the minimum wage after 1920, though they were not explicitly excluded from the legislation.

Oral histories of Chinese women suggest that Asian women continued to earn about \$1 a day on farms, in Chinese-owned stores, and in garment factories until the Second World War. Around the First World War, one woman remembered earning \$13 a month as a home domestic, and later, while still a teenager, \$2.50 a week at a clothing store. Leaving these jobs because of low pay, she went to work as a waitress for \$7 a week and, after a few years, earned as much as \$16 a week in the 1920s (see PABC, Tape 3706). Waitressing was not considered entirely respectable for Chinese women, however, which may be a contributing factor to the high wages she earned as a waitress. [59] Other Chinese women remember working on Chinese-owned vegetable farms in Richmond during the 1920s and 1930s, where women earned \$1 a day and girls

earned half that for picking vegetables and weeding. Working as clerks in grocery stores, women remembered earning \$6 a week in the 1930s, and \$25 to \$35 per month in the early 1940s. One woman earned \$25 a month in a garment factory at the beginning of the Second World War (see PABC, 4126, Tapes 1, 5, 6, and 9). Although the evidence is sparse, it would appear that Asian women were earning similar wages throughout the first four decades of the 20th century, usually \$1 a day for adult women. Moreover, although the wages of many white women rose after the First World War, due to a combination of inflation and minimum wage legislation, the wages of Asian women apparently remained static.

The prevalence of a gender ideology and family structure that defined women as primary domestic labourers dependant on men is central to the development of a gender segregated labour market. Issues of women and wage labour were constructed around the role of women as wives and mothers, and the need to protect women and the sanctity of the family. Issues of male wage labour, on the other hand, centred on questions of a living wage and, by the late 19th century, a male 'family wage'. The activities of male trade unions toward the problems facing women workers will be addressed in chapter seven. In general, however, organized male workers in Vancouver, and in the province as a whole, supported protective legislation and the institutionalization of a male 'family wage', rather than the organization of women as equal members of the labour movement. The convergence of views about female domesticity among middle class reformers, male working class organizations and, increasingly, the state generated protective legislation for women and children throughout Canada

as it had in other capitalist societies. As Kessler-Harris writes:

Of all the potential solutions to the 'problem' of wage-earning women, protective legislation satisfied more interests than any other. Widely accepted views of women's primary responsibilities to the home governed its development and guaranteed its acceptance. A world view shared by trade unions and employers alike and acknowledged by most women - wage earners as well as reformers - made protective legislation the final seal on already accepted behavior patterns. In a period when the notion of equal opportunity for women at work had virtually no popular approval, ameliorating their work conditions seemed wholly to satisfy perceived need. The body of legislation that emerged undertook to help women without violating traditional female roles and in accord with labour market needs and trade union sensibilities...[Protective legislation] recognized that women had two jobs, one of which had to be limited if the other was to be performed adequately. By denying that women were full-fledged, equal wage earners, legislation institutionalized social reproduction as women's primary role. It thus extended a version of the ideology of domesticity to working-class people (1982:212).

These views pervaded the proceedings and the Report on Labour Conditions in British Columbia before the First World War. The testimony of employers, for example, stressed that women's wages had nothing to do with any notion of a 'living wage' because women were not expected to live on their salaries. Young women earned about \$1 a day in stores and factories at a time when the Vancouver Women's Council estimated that \$10 a week was a minimum living wage for a young woman.[60] Employers in department stores, laundries, chocolate factories and garment factories, argued that only young women living at home were hired, that it was not respectable for a young women to be living anywhere else, and that because they lived at home higher wages were not necessary. The comments of a manager of a Vancouver laundry illustrate this argument:

Q. With the minimum wage you pay a woman, \$1.25 a day, if she were not living at home do you think she could live on that?

A. No. I would not expect her to... They should not be away from home, those that get \$1.25 a day.

Q. Suppose it was not their own fault? Suppose their parents were dead and they had to go to work?

A. I don't expect they could live on that. But these girls that get \$1.25 have homes and help to support the family by working in the laundry. That is the way I look at it (PABC, GR 684, Box 1, File 8: 105).

Young teenage girls, from fourteen to sixteen years of age, worked for even lower wages in order to acquire job experience. Testimony indicates that these girls were hired only when brought into stores and factories by their parents. There are reports of young teenage girls earning as little as \$3 and \$4 a week in department stores, and other instances of young girls working as apprentices to tailoresses for nothing (see PABC, GR 684, Boxes 1 and 2). The availability of this cheap pool of young labour helped to keep the wages of women workers low. In general all single women, not only teenagers, were expected to live with their parents until they married. After marriage women were not expected to work in the labour market, and when they did low wages were justified in terms of contributing to a family income headed by the husband. The very nature of the discourse on women's wages was couched in terms of the dependence of women, first on their fathers, and later on their husbands, regardless of whether this was in fact the case. It is impossible to assess how many single women working in British Columbia were supporting themselves or other dependents, or how many married working women were supporting dependents. It is clear, however, that the real status of dependence was less important than the definition of

all women as dependents of men. Regardless of their marital status, men earned higher wages and had access to better jobs than did women.

In addition to the passage of minimum wage legislation for women, other legislation limiting hours of female employment, the age of juvenile employment, and prohibiting women's employment in some jobs, was passed by the British Columbia government. By 1923, the Factory Act in British Columbia contained the following forms of protection for women: women and girls were restricted to a maximum eight hour day, 48 hour work week, which could be extended to nine and 54 hours in "special circumstances"; women and girls could not work "before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m."; and they could not clean machinery in motion or work between "fixed and traversing" parts of machines. Workers under eighteen years of age were not to be employed in "dangerous or unwholesome occupations". In addition, clauses preventing overcrowding of workplaces, promoting proper ventilation and heating, and regulating meal times, were part of the Factory Acts (see Labour Gazette, June 1923:622-625). All of this legislation was designed to protect 'weaker' women and children, rather than to improve conditions of work for all workers. As the Report on Labour Conditions in British Columbia argued:

It cannot be denied that the best and highest interests of the State are served by preserving the integrity of home life. Children left without proper companionship drift into the delinquent class and so become a charge on the State. The conservation of the home must be conceded to be more important than the conservation of our material resources (1914:M24).

By restricting protective legislation to cheaper women and

children the state strengthened a segregated labour market and a split wage scale without greatly improving the conditions of work for women. In conjunction with support for a male 'family wage', protective legislation ensured the continued subordination of women to men within the labour market and the home, conditions on which the legislation was premised in the first place.

The dependent status of women was reflected in other state legislation as well. Fathers had sole authority over the education of their children, power of consent for marriage of children under 21 years of age, and control over the disposition of the earnings of their children. Even in the case of desertion, fathers maintained the right to collect the earnings of their children under 21 years of age, even though the mother was responsible for their maintenance. Not only were women denied equal guardianship over their children, they were also denied any legal claim to a portion of their husbands' earnings or property, even if the wife's money helped to purchase the property (see The British Columbia Federationist, April 4, 1913:3). Political rights were slowly extended to women over the next two decades. In 1912 women were granted the right to practise law in British Columbia (see Cleverdon, 1974:91). Women were enfranchised in British Columbia on April 5, 1917. The right to vote municipally had been granted women in 1873, but did not include the right to hold office. After 1917 women were also eligible to hold municipal and provincial office (see Cleverdon, 1974:87-101). The federal franchise was extended to women who already had provincial voting rights in 1919. Not until 1929, however, did women become 'persons' as defined in the British North America

Act, with the rights, and not only the obligations, of full citizenship (see Cleverdon, 1974:136-154).

In the context of women's dependence/subordination to men in the family-household system, and an ideology that posited women's domesticity as appropriate and desirable, male workers engaged in activities that made the position of women even more marginal in the labour market. Men organized to exclude women from skilled jobs and occasionally from trade unions, and defined union objectives around male interests that sometimes explicitly hurt women workers' interests, such as the struggle for the 'family wage'. Differences between male and female wages were commonly entrenched in union contracts, and when women's problems were addressed the labour movement often turned to middle class women's reform groups rather than to their female co-workers for solutions (see Campbell, 1980). As Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg (1984) have pointed out, the labour movement's half-hearted support of equal pay for equal work was premised on the assumption that men were superior workers and employers would hire men rather than women if each were paid the same. As we shall see, the male labour movement supported equal pay for women during the war only in order to ensure that men would return to their jobs at the same rates of pay. During periods of high unemployment, for example after the First World War, organized male workers routinely argued that women, especially married women, had no right to work as long as men were unemployed. All of these issues centred on women's relations of dependence on men. The actions of male workers helped to maintain the dependence of women within the household and within the economy.

At the same time, however, gender segregation within the labour market was, at least potentially, a threat to male workers because of the threat of competition from cheaper female labour. The labour movement adopted the goal of a male 'family wage' to ensure higher male wages while keeping the supply of cheap female labour low, diminishing the problem of competition with cheap female labour without strengthening women's economic independence. Moreover, in the context of the economic and political subordination of women within British Columbia, women were in a much weaker position to organize for improved wages and working conditions, political and other citizenship rights, than were men. Women were not simply passive victims of male employment practices and labour strategies. Women did organize unions, struck, walked the picket lines, and engaged in politics throughout this period. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, the second-class citizenship of women and their dependent role within the family constrained their labour politics, and the sexist practices of male workers entrenched the economic and social subordination of women within the family and the economy.

Chapter Seven

Gender Divisions in Working Class Politics in Vancouver,
1900-1939

By the turn of the 20th century a gender segregated labour market had emerged in British Columbia. Most female wage labourers were young, unmarried, and unskilled; they worked in domestic and personal service, clerical work, sales, sewing, canning, farm labour and, the more fortunate, in nursing or teaching. Concentrated in female job ghettos, working women earned between one-half and two-thirds of the wages of white men. Defined as dependents of men within the family-household system, women's wage labour was viewed differently than men's. Women's wage labour was considered temporary, supplemental family income that did not entitle women to the same wages as male breadwinners. As a consequence of the way that patriarchal relations were incorporated within capitalist relations, gender defined the nature of one's experience in the labour market, the kinds of work available, the level of remuneration, and the patterns of wage labour. Gender relations also played an important part in the development of working class politics in Vancouver.

There is no clear parallel between the response of the white male labour movement to cheaper Asian labour and its response to cheaper female labour. In the former case, Asians were defined outside of the working class, 'foreigners' with no rights in the country whose expulsion might end the problem of competition. Although defined as 'foreigners', there was no doubt that the primary role of Asian men was to labour for wages. The pattern of ethnic labour politics that developed in Vancouver centred on

the inclusion or exclusion of marginal Asian workers by dominant white workers. A prerequisite for bridging ethnic divisions within the Vancouver working class was the redefinition of Asians as Canadian rather than foreign workers, focusing on class cleavages rather than ethnic cleavages.

In contrast, female workers were defined primarily in terms of their role within the family-household system. The patterns of gender labour politics that developed in Vancouver centred not on women's role within the labour market, which was considered to be temporary, but on the way that conditions of wage labour affected women's current or future roles as wives and mothers. White women were not considered outside of the working class in the way Asians were. Working women were the wives, daughters and sisters of working men, an integral part of the white community. Women were not, however, men's equals. The relations of female dependence/subordination to men within the family-household system were incorporated within economic relations. Women did not share equal rights and privileges with men, as workers or as citizens. Female dependence was legally entrenched in family law, in their lack of political rights, and in 'protective' legislation in the workplace, as well as reinforced through gender ideologies of female domesticity. Gender divisions focused on the appropriate sphere of working class women, not on whether women were part of the working class. The redefinition of women as equal workers and citizens was necessary to bridge gender divisions within labour politics. The redefinition of women as equal members of the working class posed a fundamental threat to male dominance, however, and had barely begun to occur during the

period under study.

Working class politics in Vancouver emerged out of the realities of wage labour under capitalism, with the constant struggle for control, dignity, and conditions of work and wages that would provide for quality of life and not mere survival. To this extent, all workers have a stake in a strong labour movement. Since the conditions facing workers are not homogenous, however, strategies to achieve gains for one group can negatively affect other workers. We have already discussed the importance of ethnic relations for defining working class politics. In a similar fashion, gender relations affected labour strategies. Labour strategies were rooted in the realities of an existing family-household system based on a male breadwinner and a dependent female domestic labourer, and an ideology that both posited this structure as desirable and defined domesticity as appropriate for women. The contradictions between patriarchal definitions of women's proper sphere and the realities of wage labour experienced by women produced tensions between spouses and male and female workers. The cheapness of female labour and the limited number of 'women's jobs' was directly related to the dependence/subordination of women to men in the family-household system. In turn, a gender segregated labour market reproduced women's subordination in the family and throughout civil society.

The existence of a gender segregated labour market need not result in practices of exclusion by the dominant segment of the working class. Cheaper female labour was not a threat to male workers as long as the separation between women's and men's jobs remained fairly clear. Labour market segregation is never that

clearly defined, however, and the boundaries between male and female jobs shift with changes in technology, as economic crises reduce wages and increase the drive for cheaper labour, and as labour shortages necessitate drawing new recruits into the labour market. It was during these periods of shifts in the labour market, during economic depressions and wars, that the Vancouver labour movement expressed concern about the wages and conditions of female workers.

For the most part, the male labour movement in Vancouver either ignored women workers, supported protective legislation, or sought the inclusion of women in trade unions to supplement the strategies of male workers. Women who worked in traditional female jobs were encouraged to join the labour movement; women in non-traditional jobs were more often excluded from trade unions. The evaluation of male labour as dear and female labour as cheap was entrenched within labour movement practices, and women were routinely excluded from defining the goals of the labour movement. These practices helped to weaken the position of women in the labour market, and their weak position in the labour market helped to reproduce their dependence within the family-household system. The goal of an adequate male 'family wage' was central to the politics of the labour movement during this period. A 'family wage' could ensure higher male wages while keeping the supply of cheap female labour low, thus diminishing competition from cheap female labour without strengthening women's economic independence. Women were not treated as equal workers by the labour movement; they were viewed primarily in terms of their role as current or future wives and mothers.

Issues of women's wage labour revolved around protecting future wives and mothers from moral degradation and hazardous health conditions, rather than protecting their right as workers to demand a living wage.

The economic and political marginality of women affected their involvement in labour politics in Vancouver. Women did not possess the same resources as male workers; women were constrained by lower wages, fewer job skills that could be monopolized, onerous domestic responsibilities, limited access to media and meeting places, and the prevailing notions of women's inferior place in society that were entrenched through custom, law, and ideology. These impediments to the militancy of female workers were aggravated by practices of the male labour movement that reinforced the marginality of women workers. Yet although the Vancouver labour movement was dominated by men, and its strategies defined in terms of maintaining the dominance of men within the labour market, women were not absent from the labour movement in the early 20th century.

Women in Vancouver joined unions, organized their own locals, and engaged in strikes throughout the 20th century. Female workers in the Vancouver area actively participated in at least 43 separate strikes between 1900 and 1939 (see Appendix B).[61] This is a small number of labour conflicts over a forty year period and appears to support the view that women were relatively docile workers. However, almost fifty percent of these strikes took place during the depression of the 1930s, and another twenty-five percent occurred in the three year period between 1917 and 1919. In general the marginal economic and

political position of women workers limited their involvement in labour politics. Only during periods of economic crisis, which either strengthened the economic position of women workers or profoundly radicalized the working class, was women's labour militancy facilitated. As we have seen in chapter five, a similar pattern was found among another group of marginal workers, Asian men. The position of Asian women workers, in contrast was so much more marginal, and their numbers so much smaller, that they are virtually absent from labour politics before the Second World War. Japanese women in Vancouver are known to have taken part in only three strikes prior to the Second World War, while there is no record of Chinese women striking (see Appendix B).

The Early Years: 1900 to 1916

Although considerable labour militancy among white women in Vancouver was limited to two periods, their involvement in the labour movement was continuous. Women were members of at least six unions in Vancouver around the turn of the 20th century. A woman was elected treasurer of the Tailors' Union in 1898 (see Rosenthal, 1979:45). Women were among the founding members of the Retail Clerks' Union, formed in 1899 (see Rosenthal, 1979:44). The Shirt, Waist and Laundry Workers' International Union had three women among its executive when it was formed in March 1902 (see Rosenthal, 1979:46-47; and VTLC Minutes March 20, 1902). The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council reports the membership of the Waiters' and Waitresses' Union in April of 1902 (see VTLC Minutes, April 17, 1902). Women are reported in the membership of the Factory Workers' Union, which organized candy factories and

confectionary shops, as early as 1903 (see Rosenthal, 1979:48). And female telephone operators organized an auxiliary of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in late 1902, following the first known strike of women in the Vancouver area (see VTLC Minutes, December 11, 1902; Bernard, 1982:18-27; and Rosenthal, 1979:42). In 1913 women were also members of the Bookbinders' Union, The Garment Workers' Union, the Waitresses and Lady Cooks' Union, formed as a separate organization in 1910, and the Home and Domestic Employees' Union which organized in the spring of 1913 (see Labour Gazette, April 1913). By the end of the First World War women were also members of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, the Butchers' and Meat Cutters' Union in meat packing plants, and a union of Sugar Refinery workers (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 304, Strike 23; Volume 305, Strike 21; and Volume 305, Strike 28). But in spite of the diversity of their involvement in organized labour, women were a marginal minority within the Vancouver labour movement.

Male workers dominated all working class organizations in early 20th century Vancouver. Trade unions and labour reform and socialist political parties were headed by men, constituted primarily by men, and defined issues as they affected male workers. With the exception of some skilled craft unions, it was rare for women to be explicitly excluded from trade unions or political parties. The inclusion of women was often proclaimed as an objective of the labour movement. Women were not, however, equal members of the labour movement. Wage differentials between male and female workers were entrenched in union contracts, grievances specific to female workers seldom gained prominence

within labour politics, and only in a few unions dominated by female members, such as laundry workers, garment workers, waitresses and domestics, did women play a role in union leadership.

Women belonged to two kinds of unions. Women belonged to unions that emerged in industries that were predominantly female, and in which women played a dominant role; for example, waitresses, laundry workers, garment workers, and domestic workers. Waitresses and domestic workers formed the only all-female unions. The Waitresses' Union merged into the Cooks, Waiters, and Waitresses' Union in 1915, and was closely associated with the Cooks and Waiters' Union from its formation in 1902 (see Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees' Union, local 28, 1910-1939). Waitresses were active in union organizing and strikes in Vancouver throughout the period under study, and were by far the most militant female workers during the 1930s. The Home and Domestic Employees' Union formed in March of 1913 with an initial membership of 35 women out of an estimated 2,000 domestic workers in Vancouver. Two months later the union had a membership of seventy. The union sought a nine-hour day, a minimum wage, and "recognition as a body of industrial workers". The isolated working conditions of domestics made unionization extremely difficult, however, and although domestic workers continued to try to organize until the Second World War, they had little success (see Labour Gazette, March 1914:1071; and The British Columbia Federationist, March 28, 1913:1; May 9, 1913:4; and July 11, 1913:4).

Women were also admitted into predominantly male unions in

industries where men and women performed similar work. Women joined unions of meat cutters in meat packing plants, shoe makers in shoe factories, tailors in ready-made clothing manufacturing, and other light factory work, where deskilling had already occurred among previously skilled male workers. Skilled craft unions continued to exist in areas where women did not work, in construction, the railways, among machinists and engineers. Among other skilled unions, such as cigar makers and bookbinders, unionized male workers attempted without success to resist the introduction of machines and female labour by excluding women (see The British Columbia Federationist, January 9, 1914:7). In 1913 the Moulders' Union advocated banning women from foundries because of their unsuitability for women, a view endorsed by the VTLC (see Rosenthal, 1979:37). The Barbers' Union restricted its membership to white male barbers and organized against both women and Chinese barbers. Rationalizations for the exclusion of women centred primarily on conceptions of women's proper sphere. At the hearings of the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia in 1913, union barbers gave the following reasons for the exclusion of women from their organization:

Mr. Stoney [commissionaire]: I understand women can't join the barbers' Union?

A. No.

Q. What's the reason for that?

A. If you had a sister would you like to have her a barber.

Q. That's not the question.

A. We have a constitution that only male barbers of the white race are admitted. We accept colored barbers in the Union too.

Q. What is the real objection to the women? Why won't they allow them in the Union? We are trying to find that out and never can get to the bottom of it.

A. In the first place they are incompetent to compete with the male in the barber business. That's one of the main

reasons.

Q. Any other reason?

A. Another reason is that it is not a proper occupation for a woman to be in.

Q. You think it has a bad moral effect on women?

A. Yes.

(PABC, GR 684, Box 2, File 1:35).[62]

Q. You don't admit them [women] to your organization [the barbers' union]?

A. No sir.

Q. Have they made application to join your Union?

A. O[h], yes, quite a number of times, but none of them have been admitted.

Q. What is the objection to admitting ladies into the Union?

A. The general objection brought before the International is that when women come to slopping around over some of these dirty old bums the way they sometimes have to do we don't consider that they ought to be in that kind of business. It does them no good as a general rule. I don't think you would choose a lady barber for a wife.

(PABC, GR 684, Box 1, File 2:104).

A major feature of male workers' concerns about the low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions facing women workers centred on the 'moral' well being of female workers. It was frequently observed that "no young woman could live a virtuous life" on the low wages they received (for example, see VTLC Minutes, March 20, 1902; and the Proceedings of the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia). The first motion supporting legislative restrictions on women's and children's labour was passed by the VTLC in 1904. Factory inspectors and hours of work legislation were demanded to protect women and children from the excesses of capitalist exploitation:

Whereas certain conditions are obtaining inimical to the physical and moral well being of females and young persons in factories and workshops, therefore be it resolved that the Provincial Government be petitioned to pass an act at the next sitting of the Legislature providing for the inspection of all workshops and factories, and also the limiting of hours of labor for females and young persons (VTLC Minutes, December 15, 1904).

The motion was passed unanimously. The moral dangers facing female workers ranged from services to male customers that were improper for women but proper for men, for example barbering, serving alcohol, or work in the foundries, to the more serious problem of prostitution. Female prostitution was frequently linked to wages too low for self-support (for example see The British Columbia Federationist, 1911-1918).

Issues of morality pervaded the testimony given by labour representatives at the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia prior to the First World War. A representative from the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses' Union provided extended testimony on their members' grievances. Union grievances included problems with underground kitchens, poor ventilation, unsanitary conditions, competition with Asian labour, and the bad moral effect that working alongside Asian men had on white women. Among the reforms endorsed by the union representative was legislation to prohibit the employment of white women and girls by or alongside Asians because of the tendency for such contact "to reduce the moral standard of the women" (see PABC, GR 684, Box 1, File 9:205-219). A representative from the British Columbia Federation of Labour endorsed minimum wage legislation for women, arguing that this was the only way to alleviate the 'immorality' associated with wages that were far below a living wage:

The enforcement of a minimum wage would, I think, protect a very large number of women who are at present unable to do anything for themselves. No doubt about it the class of women or girls who live at home are doing more to increase immorality than any other class in the community and they are doing it without a knowledge of what is actually occurring...

The result is that the girl who has no home is compelled to compete against a class who are better fixed and who don't have to rely entirely on wages for a livelihood. The enforcement of a minimum wage, I think, would eliminate the class that are only partially dependent on their occupation and give those who are dependent on the occupation for a living a better opportunity to live (PABC, GR 684, Box 1, File 9:290-291).

A joint committee consisting of the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Vancouver Local Council of Women, and the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council also submitted recommendations for legislation regarding female labour. The recommendations submitted by the joint committee adopted the protectionist approach embedded within middle class 'maternal feminism' and were, in fact, almost identical to an independent report submitted by the Vancouver Local Council of Women.[63] The committee called for the extension of legislation limiting female employment to eight hours a day in all industries, restrictions on overtime, a compulsory weekly half-holiday, improved sanitary conditions, enforceable legislation providing seats for female shop employees, minimum wage legislation for women, and a prohibition against white women working "in the same establishment with Asiatics" (see PABC, GR 684, Box 2, File 1:13-15). All of this legislation was justified on the basis of protecting female workers from the excesses of capitalist exploitation, which was leading some of them into 'moral degradation', rather than on the grounds that female workers were inadequately remunerated. For the most part middle class women's groups, male trade unionists, and employers provided information on the conditions and grievances of female workers. Some working women did testify, but the commission admitted to difficulties in obtaining direct evidence from

working women. As Campbell (1979; 1980) has pointed out, the testimony of female employees usually followed their employers' testimony, which no doubt contributed to their hesitancy to discuss grievances, and also suggests that these women were chosen to testify by their employers. The dependent status of working class women was reinforced by the fact that working class men and middle class women's reform groups were the major architects of strategies to improve conditions for working women.

Although male workers' concerns with overworked and underpaid female workers were most often couched in terms of 'morality', legislative solutions also had the effect, by restricting women's conditions of labour, of reducing the competitive advantage of hiring female labour. Protective legislative did not strengthen the position of women workers, as union organization would have done. Furthermore, evidence indicates that legislation did not greatly improve women's working conditions because it was not strictly enforced. Factory inspections were infrequent and cursory, stores were required to provide seats for female clerks but workers were afraid to use them for fear of losing their jobs, and forced overtime was commonly required in some industries (see PABC, GR 684).

The female minimum wage laws that were introduced after 1918, for example, did not provide minimum wages for large numbers of working women. Minimum wages were not set for domestic workers, farm labourers, or fish canneries, all major areas of female employment. Minimum wages were extremely low, but even lower wages were set for 'inexperienced' workers and those under 18 years of age (see Appendix, Minimum Wage Act, Annual Report of

the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1932).[64] Moreover, without labour organization this legislation was difficult to enforce. Female workers were required to file complaints with the Minimum Wage Board before wages were investigated, and unorganized women lacked the protection necessary to launch actions against their employers. Legislative solutions provided little or no 'protection' for women, either from the moral degradation of work or from the economic realities of penury. In fact, as Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg, (1984:300) have pointed out "moral concerns were often completely insensitive to the economic and social needs of women."

When women did organize in the workplace, they continued to face unequal conditions of labour. Wage differentials between men and women were entrenched in labour demands and union contracts even in unions where women formed an active part of the membership. Among telephone workers, laundry workers, restaurant workers, and tailors and tailoresses, low female and higher male wages were incorporated within union agreements. This was true even when men and women performed the same jobs and, as we shall see, when contracts were the outcome of successful strikes by male and female workers.

The Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union provides a good example of the persistence of entrenched wage differences in a union where women formed the majority of the membership and expressed considerable militance over the years. In 1907 collective agreements in the restaurant industry stipulated a wage of \$9.50 for waitresses and \$12 a week for waiters with the same length work week (see Labour Gazette, July 1907). In 1915

the union scale for a 10 hour day was \$12 per week for waitresses and \$14 for waiters, and for an 8 hour day it was \$10 a week for waitresses and \$12 for waiters (see the Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees Union, local 28, January 20, 1915). Although a motion in support of equal pay for waiters and waitresses was approved in January of 1919, a union wage scale of \$16.50 for counter waitresses and \$19.50 a week for counter waiters was set in the fall of that year (see the Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees Union, local 28, January 15, 1919; and Labour Gazette, November 1919:1334). From 1919 on, union contracts did include an equal pay clause for male and female cooks, but almost all cooks were male. Cooks earned from \$30 to \$42 a week in 1926, considerably more than waiters and waitresses. In contrast, waitresses continued to earn less than waiters for the same jobs and hours of work. The wage scale in 1923 accorded counter waitresses \$19 for the same work week that counter waiters earned \$24; and in 1926 counter waitresses earned \$18.50 for a work week that paid counter waiters \$25 (see the Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees Union, local 28, May 9, 1923; March 17, 1926).

The Tailors, Garment Workers, Laundry Workers, Domestic Workers, and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' unions were the only unions to elect female delegates to the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (see VTLC Minutes, 1900-1939). The delegate from the Waitresses' Union, Mrs. Gardiner, became, in 1910, the first woman elected to the executive of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (see The Western Wage Earner, December 1910:10). Helena Gutteridge of the Tailors Union joined the VTLC executive in

1914, and was the most prominent of the women trade unionists in Vancouver prior to the Second World War (see VTLC Minutes, June 4, 1914).[65] Women were active organizers among tailloresses, restaurant, garment, and laundry workers, and also played leadership roles within these predominantly female unions. In 1915 Helena Gutteridge became the president of the Tailors' Union (see The British Columbia Federationist, May 7, 1915:1). In 1923 the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union elected their first woman president, Minnie Barnes (see Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant and Culinary Employees Union, local 28, April 4, 1923). The presence of active female trade unionists and large female memberships in these unions did not result in the equal treatment of male and female workers, however; consideration of men as breadwinners and women as dependents of men continued to underlie gender differences in the workplace and in the strategies of the labour movement.

Between 1900 and 1916, women participated in at least ten strikes in the greater Vancouver area (see Appendix B). All but two of these involved male strikers as well as women, and all but one took place among unionized workers. Early strike activity demonstrates a continuous thread of labour militancy among women workers in Vancouver, and the definition of women as cheap wage labourers in the practices of the labour movement. The earliest strikes involving women occurred among telephone operators and laundry workers. In November of 1902 telephone operators, linemen and repairers in Vancouver and New Westminster struck for shorter hours, better pay, and union recognition of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, to which the male linemen and

repairers belonged. Either during the strike or just afterward, the operators formed an auxiliary of the I.B.E.W. local. The strike was successful, winning an eight hour day, union recognition, and a pay increase. Operators earned between \$20 and \$30 a month, depending on length of service, and linemen received \$3 to \$3.25 per day, or \$18 to \$19.50 per week (see Labour Gazette, December 1902; Bernard, 1982:18-27; and Rosenthal, 1979:42-43). The strike settlement entrenched a wage scale in the union that paid male workers almost as much in a week as many women earned in a month. The formation of a separate women's auxiliary of the union further reflected the primary role of the men's local. Moreover, although the Telephone Company recognized the union, it insisted later that only the original male local of the I.B.E.W. was recognized and refused to recognize the operators auxiliary. In February of 1906 telephone operators, linemen and repairers struck to enforce a closed union shop and to force the Telephone Company to hire operators from the union local. This time the strike was unsuccessful, dragging on until August when the union called it off. All strikers were replaced during this period (see Labour Gazette, March 1906; August 1906; Western Clarion, March 31, 1906; Bernard, 1982:29-37; and Rosenthal, 1979:43-44).

Laundry Workers' first organized in March of 1902. In June of 1903 workers in two Vancouver laundries struck when they refused to work with non-unionists. An increase in wages is reported as the outcome of the strike, but there is no record of whether the workers won a closed shop (see Labour Gazette, July 1903). An earlier strike is also reported but the details are less clear.

Sometime in 1902 a strike involving women is reported to have taken place at a Vancouver laundry which refused to endorse the union work schedules (see Weppler, 1971:32-33; and Rosenthal, 1979:47). Male and female laundry workers performing the same jobs earned different wages. In 1914, head markers earned \$12 per week if female and \$18 if male, while female sorters earned \$9 and male sorters \$12 (see The British Columbia Federationist, March 27, 1914:1).

During this period women were most active in labour conflicts in the tailoring industry. In March of 1909 four men and three women at a Vancouver tailor shop struck against working overtime without pay. During the dispute the strikers joined the Tailors' Union. The outcome of the strike was the replacement of daily wage rates by a piece-rate system (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 296, Strike 3121). In October of 1909, 45 strikers, including thirteen women, struck 32 firms in the Vancouver area for a wage increase. All were members of the Tailors' Union. Twenty-nine of the firms settled with a new union wage scale that increased tailors wages from \$18 to \$20 a week and provided tailloresses, who worked on the piece-rate system, a 10% wage increase (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 297, Strike 3202; and Labour Gazette, November 1909). Once again, a system of wage differentials between male and female union members was entrenched within the union contracts, including different systems of payment for men and women. In September of 1913 nine men and 21 women struck at a Vancouver garment factory for a 48 hour work week with no reduction in pay from the existing 54 hour week. During the strike the women, who were previously unorganized, joined the Tailors' Union. The

strike lasted more than a month, and ended successfully with a fifty hour work week. It was reported, however, that some of the strikers were not reinstated at the end of the dispute (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 302, Strike 108; Labour Gazette, September 1913; and The British Columbia Federationist, September 12, 1913:5). In April of 1915, 28 workers, two-thirds of whom were women and girls, struck a Vancouver garment factory for higher wages, regular hours, and a closed union shop. All demands were granted (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 304, Strike 12). Wage differences between tailors and tailloresses were entrenched in the Tailors' Union throughout its early history. In 1940 the union scale for tailloresses was \$25 per week, compared to \$36 per week for tailors (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 4091, File 271-13).

In addition to strikes among telephone operators, laundry workers and tailloresses, all of which involved male co-workers, women struck a fruit farm and a restaurant during this period. In August of 1907, twelve women struck a Fraser Valley fruit farm for a wage increase which they succeeded in winning (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 295, Strike 2983). In March 1913, ten waitresses at the Ritz Cafe in Vancouver walked out to protest the abusive language used by the non-union cook. The strike was unsuccessful and the women, all members of the Waitresses' Union, were replaced (see The British Columbia Federationist, March 14, 1913:4). Finally, in November of 1916 the Leckie Shoe Company was struck. Forty-one men and nineteen women went out for a wage increase. During the dispute they formed a local of the Boot and Shoe Union. Although a wage increase was not won, the strikers settled for a 75% Christmas bonus (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 304,

Strike 23; and Labour Gazette, December 1916).

Patriarchal relations clearly affected the practices of the labour movement and the role of women within trade unions. The response of organized labour to issues of female equality, for example female suffrage, equal pay, and the role of women in the socialist movement, were also deeply affected by patriarchal relations within civil society. A heated debate about women and socialism erupted in the pages of The Western Clarion in the fall of 1908, and ran for three months. This debate is interesting because it highlights the contradictions between patriarchal and socialist ideology. Several women wrote letters to the editor of the Vancouver labour newspaper condemning the attitudes of male workers and pointing out the contradictions inherent in male socialist practices that, on the one hand, excluded women and, on the other hand, blamed them for failing to take an active part in socialist politics. The debate started when an editorial stated that "women are socialists generally because some man is". Some women had criticized the male bias of the newspaper and suggested a women's column to deal with issues pertaining to working class women. The editorial response denigrated the commitment of women socialists:

That the Clarion is a 'man's paper' is largely the fault of the women, and if the women are given a column we expect they will prove this by petering out. But of one thing we give you fair warning, fair ladies: if the Clarion's 'Woman's Column' ever becomes like the 'woman's columns' in some other Socialist papers, which seem to be written for human dressmakers and cooks, the poor Scotchman will be turned loose with a meat-axe (September 12, 1908:2).

Many women readers were outraged. Rejecting the notion that women simply adopt the politics of their men-folk and are interested

only in 'frivolous' domestic issues, several women, and one male writer, pointed out that socialist propaganda ignores the realities facing women and that male socialists treat women as inferiors:

I have come in contact with women full of the spirit of revolt and very often it is not 'because some man is a Socialist', but because of some man that she is working for; the emancipation and freedom of her sex from economic slavery. She is 'sex conscious' as well as 'class conscious', and recognizes the Socialist party as the only existing force in society today that will help her attain her freedom (September 12, 1908:2).

Socialist propaganda does not appeal to women from the standpoint of workers, and the reason they are not drawn into the movement more, is that Socialist addresses and literature are chiefly directed to men and their particular position in the system of production. Women cannot and should not recognize themselves under the name of men (September 12, 1908:4).

There are others who have expressed the idea that 'the way to get a girl interested in Socialism is to get her interested in some man'; and 'women are all right in the auxiliary'. Undoubtedly some comrades would like to see more 'me too' women in the party to get up bun feeds and picnics. And it would never do for some comrades to stay home occasionally and mind the babies while the wife attends a party meeting (September 12, 1908:4).

Comrade Gröble has stated that because there are more women than men in the world and vastly more men than women in the Socialist movement, that it is apparent that women are less capable than men of grasping the teachings of Socialism. To my mind this proves nothing of the kind. The presence of so few women in the movement is due more to the absence of any effort to push the propaganda amongst women.. what effort has been made in our party literature to show women the economic reasons for her servitude through the ages (October 10, 1908:4)?

I hear a great deal of talk about educating the women. But to my mind the women are not the only ones who need educating. Some of the men who are well up in Socialism would be better off for a few lessons in humility, consideration for others, and unselfishness... As far as my experience goes, I have never found it difficult to interest the average woman in Socialism, but I sometimes have a woman say 'Oh, yes, but the men preach Socialism on the street corner and play the petty tyrant at home'. Or, 'But if we join the Socialist movement we

will be accused of neglecting our homes and pining for outside glory' (November 14, 1908:4).

Male socialists criticized women for not taking an active part in trade union and socialist politics and for failing to understand the issues, apparently indicating the intellectual weakness of women.[66] The fact that the realities of women's oppression were not identical to men's, that the dual subordination of women in the workplace and in the family made the active participation of women in labour politics extremely difficult, were not addressed by male socialists. On the contrary, socialist parties of this period, including the Socialist Party of Canada, viewed motherhood as the appropriate role for women, and wage labour as a temporary necessity under capitalism. The needs of working women were ignored by socialists in the labour movement (see Kealey, 1984). As many of the women who wrote letters to The Western Clarion argued, the attitudes and practices of working class men were part of the problem and not part of the solution for the emancipation of working class women.

The failure of the male Socialist movement to consider the nature of women's oppression was also evident in its response to the issue of women's suffrage. Socialists commonly argued that women's suffrage was nothing more than a 'bourgeois' movement, a red herring that would divide male and female workers who really ought to be working for socialism (see The Western Clarion, July 23, 1910:1). Socialist parties in British Columbia were by no means uniformly opposed to women's suffrage. The short-lived United Socialist Labour Party was the first labour party in

British Columbia that did not endorse Asian exclusion, and the only one to go beyond the endorsement of political rights for women and support "economic equality in the form of equal pay" in its platform of 1900 (See Loosmore, 1954:116-117). Since the turn of the century socialist organizations endorsed the extension of the franchise to women, and socialist M.L.A's, including J.H. Hawthornwaite and Parker Williams of the Socialist Party of Canada, introduced several female suffrage bills into the legislature before one was passed in 1917 (see Loosmore, 1954; and Cleverdon, 1974). However, the stronger the suffrage movement became, the less the Socialist Party of Canada supported female suffrage and the more it condemned it as a bourgeois movement.

Remember that those who talk of the woman question, of women's rights, and her place at home, who [talk] of social reform and the power of the 'better sex' to overcome evil conditions by tactful means, are working against your interests. There is no 'woman question'. There is only one question for you to solve, the slave question and it calls women and men alike (The Western Clarion, December 10, 1910:1).

When the Vancouver Political Equality League asked the Western Clarion for support, the editorial response was negative: "we know only two kinds of people, not men and women, but masters and slaves" (April 22, 1911:2). Socialist claims that equality with a 'wage slave' was not equality, and that under capitalism neither women nor men could gain real equality, were certainly true. These observations often led, however, to the argument that attempts by women to better their conditions under capitalism were regressive. On the issue of the struggle for equal pay for women, for example, the movement was declared not only wrong-headed but detrimental to men. Its effects on the conditions of

female workers were ignored:

[T]he limited environment of your life is obscuring your vision, and dimming the awakening consciousness. You see in man the author of your ills, the barrier to your freedom, yet man is just as great a slave to economic forces as yourself. You demand the right to compete with man for jobs, unhampered by ideas and customs, which for ages have surrounded your sex. But man is no barrier between you and the doors of closed industries. Where you have proved your ability to produce cheaper than man you have always been welcomed into equality [as a wage slave]... Your plea for equal wages is at variance with the possibilities of modern capitalism. The wage of the male is in the main fixed by the requirements of the head of a family, upon whom is dependent the future supply of wage slaves. Your wage is based upon the requirements of the individual... You are helping to cheapen him. You intensify his struggle to live, and, ironical though it may seem, insofar as you crowd him from industry you aggravate the poverty of your own sex, the wife and daughters dependent upon him (The Western Clarion, May 23, 1914:1).

While recognizing the middle class bias in the suffrage movement, many socialists failed to see that political rights would aid working class women in their attempt to become full members of the labour movement. To a certain extent criticism of female suffrage was premised on the assumption that working class women could not grasp the essentials of socialism and would use the vote against the interests of the working class (see The Western Clarion, October 3, 1908:4; July 11, 21-25). The interests of male workers and the interests of the working class were treated as one and the same; working class women struggling for the franchise, for the right to work in the labour force, for the right to be independent of men, and for equal pay, were often defined by male socialists as bourgeois and regressive.

Divisions between socialist and labour reform politics also played a role in the response of male workers to the movement for women's suffrage. For socialists, the aim of working class

agitation was to abolish capitalism, and women's suffrage under capitalism would clearly not accomplish that aim. For labour reformists, on the other hand, commitment to immediate reforms produced greater support for women's suffrage. The middle class suffragette's claim that women were a good moral influence and would vote for measures to improve social welfare were usually accepted by the labour reformists. Although assumptions that working class women did not understand the essentials of the labour movement and might vote against (male) working class interests, remained, it was difficult for reformists to ignore the argument that working class women could help to win general social reforms.

When the reform labour movement supported women's suffrage, however, the support was usually more consistent with 'maternal feminism' than with sexual equality (see Weppier, 101-106):

Women were meant to be men's helpmates - the joys, the beauties, the flowers of life; the things which make fights worth winning; the ennobling force, the tender, gentle, civilizing, essence, through their emotional influence... Women should vote because their vote would supplement man's, and while he looked after the big things they would look after the little things. The man might interest himself in making his country a world power; the woman voter would see that the street cleaner did his duty, so that her children might not be killed by diphtheria (The Western Wage Earner, February 1909, 19-20).

We believe that there are some questions that wives and mothers are capable of handling. The man of 21 doesn't know much more than the mother who gave him life. If the ballot is in the woman's hands she will close the factory door against child labour. She will take hold of the social and economic problems and solve the big problems in human life (The British Columbia Federationist, November 18, 1911:2).

Among the 'maternal feminist' arguments stressing the positive moral impact that women voters would have on politics, was the

assumption that women would vote to exclude Asians from the province and thereby improve conditions in the labour market (see The British Columbia Federationist, July 3, 1914:3).

Helena Gutteridge was the leading suffragette in the Vancouver labour movement. She formed the British Columbia Woman's Suffrage League and raised issues of female suffrage as they affected working class women (see Weppler:104). From October 1913 until February 1914 Gutteridge wrote a weekly "Woman Suffrage" column for The British Columbia Federationist. In her columns, Gutteridge mixed the arguments of 'maternal feminism' with arguments for the equal rights of women as citizens and workers, and attacked male working class paternalism:

Working men for their own sakes should help, because the underpayment of women workers is a serious danger to men... The only way that men can do away with the bad effects of female competition is to help the women in their struggle for equal rights -- equal pay for equal work. Men ought to want women to have the vote because if we are to have strong, intelligent men nothing should be done to hinder the development of the mothers (The British Columbia Federationist, November 21, 1913:5).

Gutteridge marshalled numerous types of arguments to persuade male workers to support women's suffrage. Her columns were not directed only at male workers, however. Gutteridge used the column to politicize women workers by, exposing them to the history of male injustices toward women. As a feminist and a leading member of the Vancouver labour movement, Gutteridge saw the close links between political and economic equality for women and the role that male workers played in the subordination of women workers:

After years of slow starvation wages for the most monotonous

work in the labour market, in the sweated industries that are peculiarly women's own because men have generously left the badly paid work to women and called it women's work, for his own protection, man finds it necessary that women should have a living wage, then she is still only an adjunct to man's needs and to serve his interests, the minimum wage shall only apply to women until such time as it is seen to be successful enough for him to come within its scope.

The way the so-called stronger sex protects the weaker is truly wonderful. The history of women in industry - where they are forced to be - if allowed to live at all - is the story of struggle against, not only the capitalist class who have exploited them mercilessly, but also against the men of their own class who said because they were women they must not expect to be looked upon as co-workers or receive the same pay when doing the same kind and quantity of work (The British Columbia Federationist, January 16, 1914:5).

Gutteridge's columns stood alone in the Vancouver labour newspapers as a working class feminist view on women's suffrage. Support for women's suffrage did become more widespread among the labour unions by the First World War, but it was based essentially on 'maternal feminism' rather than the full equality of women. In 1912 The British Columbia Federation of Labour endorsed female suffrage (see Cleverdon, 1974:90). By the end of 1913, sixteen unions in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council had endorsed motions for female suffrage, and in 1915 the VTLC adopted a provincial election manifesto that included female suffrage (see The British Columbia Federationist, December 12, 1913:7; April 23, 1915:1). Although considerable male support had been won for female suffrage, the male labour movement's failure to accept women as equals became especially apparent as women were drawn into the war industries over the next few years.

Women Workers and the First World War

The greater participation of women in the labour market during the First World War gave the issues of female suffrage and

equal pay a new impetus. Many suffrage supporters argued that since women had proved themselves as industrial workers equal to men there was no excuse for denying women full citizenship rights. In addition, the performance of women in previously male jobs brought into question many of the notions about women's capabilities that had been used to justify lower wages and restricted job opportunities for women. Traditions of male privilege in most jobs, and unequal pay for men and women doing the same kinds of work, were challenged by the events of the war. As Gutteridge wrote:

Thank God for the war. If it will be a means of forcing upon the people a realization that men and women who labor are first and foremost workers, and all they have to sell is their labor power, not as 'men' or 'women' but as workers (The British Columbia Federationist, October 15, 1915:1).

The possibility of women continuing to be cheap labour while filling men's jobs was considered a serious problem. It was feared that this would result in the reduction of men's wages and high male unemployment when the war ended. Gutteridge argued that the only solution, for the sake of working men and women, was for male unionists to insist on equal pay wherever "women replace men or work side by side with men, doing the same amount of work, of the same quality in the same time" (The British Columbia Federationist, October 15, 1915:1). At the same time, working women must unionize and demand equal pay for equal work (The British Columbia Federationist, January 14, 1916:1).

Support for equal pay for women doing 'men's work' was adopted by a large section of the male labour movement during the war, but out of expediency. They supported equal pay in order to

protect male jobs for soldiers returning home, not because the experiences of the war generated new perceptions of women's equality. The Machinists Association, for example, supported equal wages for women only when the Canadian Pacific Railway munitions shop in Vancouver started to replace soldiers with women. The Machinists demanded that men be hired wherever possible, that returning soldiers be given preference for jobs, and that when women were hired, as a last resort, they be paid the same wages as men (see The British Columbia Federationist, January 5, 1917:3). Similarly, the street car conductors demanded that female replacements "become members of our association and receive the same wages and consideration as the men", although women were not expected to remain conductors for long (see The British Columbia Federationist, November 24, 1916:4). The postal clerks recommended that female replacements be hired on a temporary basis so that these jobs would be available to soldiers when they returned (see Campbell 1980:181). The Trades and Labour Congress, at its annual convention in September of 1915, amended its platform dropping the demand for the "exclusion of women from factories, workshops, and mines" and including the "principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women" (see Labour Gazette, October 1915:405). Support for equal pay for women during the war was, however, a short term strategy to protect male wages:

... We will not only benefit them [women] by helping them to secure equal pay for equal work, but we shall, at the same time, prevent our own wages and conditions from being drawn down to a lower standard by any successful efforts of employers to use female labor at a lower price (The British Columbia Federationist, September 6, 1918:7).

Women were expected to leave 'men's jobs' when the war was over

and return to traditional 'women's work', presumably at traditional 'women's wages'.

The fear of cheap female workers denying men jobs was often linked more to male attitudes about the political conservatism of women, their inability to grasp the fundamentals of working class politics, than to any self-criticism about the male labour movement's failure to organize women workers. As one male worker wrote:

Thus the women will be better able to assist the employer through government action, to perpetuate such [low wage] conditions. The pay-triotic employers have had a taste of cheap labour, and will be loathe to part with their feminine employees at the close of the war. When the 'heroes' return to civilian life, they will be all but broke, as has always been the case. They will have to seek jobs. The women will insist on staying where they are in the industrial field... The government will be able, with the vote of the women, to maintain their political power. Hence the 'heroes' will have to live on the memories of the battlefield, or accept employment at such work and wages as the employers see fit to give. The work of the trade unions for the past fifty years will have to be done all over again (The British Columbia Federationist, August 11, 1916:1).

An unsigned response in the next issue of The British Columbia Federationist pointed out that working women were more likely to use the franchise to demand higher pay and equal pay with men, than conspire to maintain a low wage market. Furthermore, male workers were largely to blame for women's low wages since they refused to allow women into their unions, preserved the more desirable jobs for themselves, and "belittled women's work and said that a woman should not be paid as much as a man":

And 'now the work of the trade unions for the past fifty years will have to be done all over again'.
Of course it will. It has been done all wrong. The men taught the women to accept less for their work, and now they must laboriously teach the most ignorant and down-trodden of them

to claim equality and to come into the unions and to be the comrades of the men (The British Columbia Federationist, August 18, 1916:1).

The labour movement was split. A minority, including the few prominent women unionists, advocated the equality of women with regard to work and wages, but the majority of the male labour movement asserted the primary right of men to jobs. Female workers did not gain acceptance as equals during the First World War. This was reflected in the movement of women back into traditional women's jobs after the war, the movement of married women back into the home, and the continuation of labour strategies focusing on protective legislation for women rather than issues such as equal pay for equal work.

Women's strike activity was sporadic prior to the First World War, but labour militancy increased considerably by the end of the war. Women's labour militancy was facilitated by the labour shortage during the war, the more active attempts to include women within the labour movement, and the general increase in labour radicalism during this period. From 1917 to 1919, women in the Vancouver area participated in as many strikes as they had in the previous sixteen years (see Appendix B). Moreover, in contrast to the earlier period when strikes usually involved small groups of workers, several of the post-war strikes involved hundreds of workers.

The area of most intense female labour militancy during this period was the laundry industry. The Laundry Workers' Union began to actively organize again in 1914, and strikes to improve conditions for the predominantly female laundry workers started in 1917. In March of 1917 women at the Cascade Laundry in

Vancouver struck to resist a reduction in hours that resulted in a wage reduction. The strike was successful with the old conditions restored (see The British Columbia Federationist, March 23, 1917:1). At the end of November workers again struck at the Cascade Laundry. Two women were fired for trying to enforce the Factory Act limiting the employment of women to eight hours a day. The two fired workers were reinstated as a result of the strike. However, several weeks later seven women who took part in the strike were fired. According to The British Columbia Federationist, the strike was originally settled because the owner was running in the federal election; the second set of firings occurred after the election was over (see The British Columbia Federationist, January 11, 1918:4). In September of the following year 290 laundry workers at seven Vancouver laundries, including the Cascade Laundry, struck for a wage increase and shorter hours. Although 236 of the strikers were women, union demands included lower wages for women performing the same jobs as men. Wage demands included a minimum of \$12 a week for women, \$18 for female and \$25 for male head markers, \$15 for female and \$20 for male assistant markers, and a minimum wage of \$24 for male drivers who already earned \$20 to \$30 a week. Of the seven laundries struck two agreed to the union demands at the end of October, the other five hired strikebreakers and the union called off the strike during December (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 310, Strike 182; The British Columbia Federationist, September 27, 1918:1; and Labour Gazette, December 1918).

A major strike at the Vancouver Sugar Refinery in 1917 demonstrated the marginal position of women within the unions,

even during periods of labour shortage. Two hundred workers, including forty women, struck in April of 1917 for a 20% wage increase, union recognition, and the reinstatement of fired co-workers. The strike lasted for three months with strikebreakers, many of whom were women, running the refinery. The union settled in July for a 10% wage increase for the men but nothing for the women, even though women earned only \$1.50 to \$1.80 for a nine hour day, or 17 to 20 cents an hour, while men earned a minimum of 32 cents an hour (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 305, Strike 21).

A strike of the Butchers and Meat Cutters' Union at two Vancouver companies occurred in November of 1917. Of 179 strikers, only 14 were women. There is no record of different demands on the basis of gender, but the common practice of a percentage rather than a flat wage increase increased wage differentials between men and women. The strike, for higher wages and shorter hours, ended successfully with a 10% wage increase, time and a half for overtime, and a reduction in working hours from ten to nine (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 305, Strike 28).

Women also took part in two strikes in the hotel and restaurant industry during this period. In October 1917, ten women struck McLeod's Cafe in Vancouver for the reinstatement of two women fired for union activity, a wage increase, shorter hours, and one day off a week. The strikers were replaced, but picketing continued through January (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 307, Strike 133; and The British Columbia Federationist, October 12, 1917:1). In August of 1918 a more successful strike occurred at the Vancouver Hotel. This strike involved 25 male waiters and 25

female chambermaids, all members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union. The strikers demands included major wage differences between ~~men~~ and women unionists. Waiters, already earning \$35 a month, sought \$50, while chambermaids, earning only \$19 a month, sought \$25. The union settled for \$36 for waiters and \$22.50 for chambermaids. In this instance the women received a larger pay raise than the men, while still earning one-third less than their male co-workers (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 310, Strike 180).

Women played an active part in the general strikes called in support of the Winnipeg General Strike in the summer of 1919 in Vancouver and New Westminster. There is no record of how many women participated, but the strikes included many unions in which women were active. The most notable feature of women's involvement in the sympathy general strikes involved the telephone operators, who were the last to return to work after the general strike ended. The Telephone Company accepted its male employees back without discrimination when the sympathy strikes ended; but women supervisors and senior operators were demoted and strikebreakers were promoted to supervisory jobs. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which included the operators, stuck against the company's discrimination against the operators. One hundred and twenty men and 325 women stayed out after the rest of the labour movement in the Vancouver area had returned to work. The dispute lasted another two weeks, but financial pressures resulting from the long strike forced the union back to work on company terms; the operators were unable to win a 'no discrimination' agreement and senior operators and supervisors

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were demoted. Many operators apparently felt betrayed by their male co-workers and the operators' auxiliary of the I.B.E.W. gradually disappeared over the next two years (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 314, Strike 190; Volume 315, Strike 221; Volume 317, Strike 285; Bernard 1982:50-71; and Bernard, 1984:279-285).

The period of post-war female labour militancy in the Vancouver area ended with the defeat of the telephone operators following the general sympathy strikes. The strikes associated with the One Big Union, from 1919 to 1921, took place mainly in areas of male employment, especially in the lumber industry. Although the O.B.U. drew its members from many VTLC unions to which women belonged, including restaurant and garment workers, it was strongest in the resource industries where men dominated. Although the O.B.U. included women within its membership, women did not play a role in the labour radicalism of the O.B.U. during this period.

It should be noted that the increased involvement of women in labour militancy at the end of the First World War does not seem to have shifted perceptions within the labour movement regarding women's equality. The One Big Union, which advocated the organization of all workers regardless of race or gender, repeated the usual practice of establishing separate Women's Auxiliaries. The Women's Auxiliary of the O.B.U. was "open to all women who are wage workers or dependents on wage workers":

It is the intention of the women's Auxiliary to make themselves an important factor in the labor movement, by arranging various social functions for the workers and by carrying on education work along working-class lines among the women. There is no doubt but that their activities along these lines will be a great assistance in the labor movement

and that their services will be appreciated by the male of the species (The British Columbia Federationist, November 28, 1919;1).

The creation of separate Women's Auxiliaries reflected the continuation of separate male and female roles within the labour movement, where women's roles continued to be linked to domesticity. The O.B.U. auxiliary included working women and housewives; this suggests that gender played a greater part in defining one's place in the union than did wage labour. Moreover, the O.B.U. was not concerned with issues specific to women workers. Within the Vancouver labour movement generally, the issue of equal pay for women was dropped after the war ended. As the post-war depression deepened concern over unemployment dominated labour politics in Vancouver; concern about the conditions facing unemployed women once more returned to issues of 'morality' and the effect of cheap female labour on male wages.

Protectionism and Female Unemployment: The 1920s

The dependence of women on men within the family-household system affected the conditions facing women during periods of high unemployment. Married women and single women living with their families were considered to have no right to hold jobs while men were unemployed, even though many of these women worked to support dependents. The right of single self-supporting women to jobs was unquestioned by this time, but the dependent status of women affected self-supporting women nonetheless. Unemployed women, unlike men, were ineligible for city relief (see The British Columbia Labor News, March 24, 1922:1). During periods of

high unemployment, such as occurred in the two years prior to the First World War and in the early 1920s, unemployed women were dependent on charity organizations, for example, the Vancouver Local Council of Women, for survival. Since women did not have an established right to work, they also had no right to unemployment relief. In October of 1913 The Vancouver Local Council of Women organized a Women's Labour Exchange to provide domestic work for unemployed women. The Labour Exchange was linked to a creche where married unemployed women could leave their children while employed in day-work as domestics (see Labour Gazette, November 1913:556; January 1914:789-790). [67] While unemployed men received relief, albeit limited, from the city government, women received no state support during periods of high unemployment.

During the first part of the post-war depression in 1920 and 1921, the Vancouver labour movement was primarily concerned with male unemployment. As the depression deepened in 1922, however, the situation of unemployed single women was recognized as more extreme than that facing unemployed men, who were receiving at least some city relief. Once again, the vision of women turning to prostitution out of desperation was raised within the labour movement (see The British Columbia Federationist, March 3, 1922:1). Articles in labour newspapers linked the presence of married women in the labour market to the prospects of immorality among unemployed single women. As a delegate at a VTLC meeting commented :

... a number of married women were working for low wages and taking the place of single girls. Some of these women, he said, joined some league for the uplift of fallen women, but were at the same time driving more on the streets (The Labor

Statesman, July 9, 1926:1).

The issue of married women working for wages was never clear cut, because it was recognized that those with unemployed or absent husbands needed the employment. The central strategy proposed to address unemployment was to increase male employment and to "get the [male] laborers wage increased", which in turn would reduce the need for women to enter the labour market (see The Labor Statesman, July 9, 1926:1).

As always, employers took advantage of high unemployment to try and reduce wages. Although new minimum wage laws were established after the war, different rates for girls under 18 and for inexperienced labour reduced the job security of more experienced women workers. The British Columbia Federationist complained that "experienced girls were being dismissed by their employers and less efficient girls taken on at less wages" (March 24, 1922:1). In an effort to reduce wages, employers preferred to hire female workers still living with their parents, thereby increasing the number of unemployed and destitute self-supporting women (see The British Columbia Federationist, July 20, 1923:1-2). The ineffectiveness of minimum wage legislation in the absence of union organization soon became clear. In the summer of 1922 the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council requested that a woman organizer be contracted since "the unorganized state of women in the local factories, make[s] it impossible to get any effective results from the Minimum Wage Act" (see VTLC Minutes, May 16, 1922). Women who complained to the Minimum Wage Board were often fired, and there were reports of blacklists against women workers who testified about minimum wages (see The British

Columbia Federationist, July 27, 1923:2). The organization of women workers was advocated for two reasons: first, to enforce the minimum wage act and provide greater job security during times of high unemployment; and, second, so that lower female wages would not contribute to the lowering of male wages.

Female labor always has been more exploited than that of men, because it is, naturally, a more uncertain quantity. But the lower rate of wages paid to women affects men's labor indirectly, causing the latter to be cut out entirely, or employed at lower than standard rates in many industries (The British Columbia Federationist, March 28, 1924:1).

Although the organization of working women was strongly advocated by the Vancouver labour movement during the 1920s, it remained a strategy designed more to preserve higher male wages than to raise women's wages to a reasonable level. Moreover, the chronic economic stagnation of the 1920s was not conducive to successful union organizing among men or women, so little was accomplished to improve the situation of women workers during this period. Working women were placed on the defensive as returned veterans expected their jobs back. As the post-war depression deepened labour organization and confrontations subsided, with unemployment a serious problem for men and women. Women were involved in only two strikes in Vancouver throughout the entire decade of the 1920s. In May of 1926, six union waitresses were locked out by a Vancouver cafe that refused to institute the new union wage scale, replacements were hired and the restaurant workers picketed (see The Labor Statesman, May 28, 1926:1). In July of 1926, 175 women struck a Vancouver fruit and vegetable cannery for a wage increase. The most notable feature of this strike is that it included Japanese women, who constituted

one-third of the strikers. This is the first known case of Japanese women participating in a labour conflict. The strike was unsuccessful. Eleven women were fired, strike-breakers were hired, and the rest of the strikers returned to work when they were threatened with dismissal (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 227, Strike 51; and The Labor Statesman, July 9, 1926:4).

The organization of unemployed women was also advocated during the 1920s, but no joint organizations of unemployed men and women were formed. Unemployed women formed a separate organization to press for relief rather than charity, an issue that was not adopted by the Vancouver labour movement during the 1920s. As Mrs. J.S. Woodsworth told a meeting of unemployed women in Vancouver, women had to demand the right to relief:

Unemployed girls and women are just awakening to their position, and are now realizing that it is the duty of the government to help them out in their needs. The only way to get the desired help is to follow the spirit of the times and organize in an unemployed body, like the men, then if times get better, we can be better able to organize industrially, and so have a good standard of living (see The British Columbia Federationist, March 24, 1922:1).

Not surprisingly, unemployed Vancouver women did not win relief during the 1920s. The records of the city of Vancouver indicate that in November of 1930 only 155 women were on city relief roles, compared to 4,513 married men and 5,244 single men. The marital status of women was not recorded because single women were ineligible (see VCA, Vancouver City Records, Social Services Files 106, A6). The few women on relief were unemployed widows and deserted wives with dependents. As the severity of the depression of the 1930s began to set in, the movement to remove married women with working husbands from the labour market

intensified (see The Labor Statesman, September 26, 1930:3). Gender and marital status remained important determinants of the conditions experienced by unemployed workers, and continued to influence the Vancouver labour movement's response to unemployment.

Women's Struggle for Equality: The 1930s

The radicalization of the labour movement during the depression of the 1930s was not confined to men. Women were more actively involved in labour conflicts than in any previous period, especially waitresses. Women were also active among the organized unemployed and, for the first time, played an important role in defining the political issues around unemployment. In a period of general opposition to married women working, organized unemployed women began to demand equal treatment for the unemployed regardless of marital status or sex.

Unemployed women, like unemployed men, were organized primarily under the 'Communist-affiliated National Unemployed Workers' Association. The Women's Labour League helped to organize working women, the Womens and ~~Girls~~ Club and the Single Unemployed Women's Protective Association organized unemployed women, and married women were encouraged to join The Women's Labour League, the Block Committees and Neighbourhood Councils which addressed family issues related to unemployment.[68]

The situation facing unemployed single women remained extremely precarious throughout the 1930s, but as the depression wore on unemployed women became more vocal in their demands for equal treatment with men. In the early 1930s, when married

unemployed men were given groceries, and single men received relief through meal tickets, unemployed women were still denied any form of relief (see The Unemployed Worker, December 12, 1931:3). Women participated in hunger marches during this period, and in response to the desperate situation of many at least one hostel was established for unemployed women.[69] Women who sought relief were told that no relief was available. Residence in the hostel, with its strict rules and regulations, was the only alternative to domestic service, and even domestic service could often not be found (see The Unemployed Worker, November 27, 1932:3). As the ranks of unemployed women grew in Vancouver, city relief was finally granted. In May of 1933 there were approximately 900 single women on the Vancouver relief roles (see The Unemployed Worker, May 10, 1933:6). Although relief, rather than charity, could now be obtained, it remained difficult for single women to get relief. Unemployed women were forced to take domestic service positions for as little as "\$5 per month, and sometimes with no wages except room and board", and were only granted relief because of ill-health or when domestic service was unavailable (see The Unemployed Worker, March 22, 1933:9).

At first single women were issued relief in the form of money, a benefit which married families had won, but the city soon shifted to a system of meal and bed tickets, forcing unemployed single women to give up their own lodgings and stay in designated hotels (see VTLC Minutes, June 20, 1933). The Women and Girls' Club staged demonstrations for cash relief rather than meal and bed tickets, and for an increase in the rate of relief from \$2.40 to \$2.80 per week (The Unemployed Worker, June 28,

1933:2). The campaign was unsuccessful, in part because only a minority of the unemployed women were organized. At the end of 1936 the Single Unemployed Women's Protective Association launched a "drive for equal rights with men", but again with little success (see The B.C. Workers' News, December 24, 1936:2). Approximately 400 single women were on the unemployment roles in Vancouver at the end of 1936. Nearly two-thirds of these women were over the age of fifty, and they continued to be denied relief if they could perform domestic service:

All applicants are given relief only after their cards have been signed 'no work' by the Government Employment Service or a doctor's certificate proving them unfit (B.C. Workers' News, December 24, 1936:2).

The Domestic Workers' Union organized to fight for an "adequate minimum wage for domestic workers". Poor response among female domestics in Vancouver was attributed, at least in part, to the fact that existing wages were so low that many domestics could not afford the initiation fees and dues (see B.C. Workers' News, May 8, 1936:2; March 5, 1937:1). In January of 1938, however, the Domestic Workers' Union won a case before the Board of Industrial Relations limiting the amount that employers could charge domestics for rooms and meals. The union claimed the legal victory would mean a \$10 a month pay increase for domestics in British Columbia (see The People's Advocate, January 28, 1938:1). The policy of denying relief to healthy single women so long as domestic service jobs were available at whatever wages continued throughout the 1930s (see The People's Advocate, January 28, 1938:3; March 4, 1938:4). The movement to exclude married women from the labour market also persisted throughout the depression.

In February of 1939 Vancouver City Council proposed a resolution to prohibit "married women from remunerative work, especially in stores, offices, and factories" (The People's Advocate, February 17, 1939:2). With the outbreak of the Second World War, however, women were again encouraged to enter the labour force, and the issue of equal pay for equal work gained favour within the labour movement once more.[70]

Although unemployed women were not completely successful in their attempts to gain equal treatment with unemployed men, they did win a limited 'right' to relief during the 1930s. Unemployed women were more successful, however, in many individual acts of resistance, and in placing the concerns of women and families on the political agenda of the organized unemployed. The shifting of working class politics from the workplace into the community during the depression facilitated the increased political involvement of women, especially married women.- The tensions between women's domestic roles and political activity in the labour movement were not a factor in the politics of the unemployed because the divisions between home and workplace were no longer relevant. The following incidents illustrate the way in which women played an active and more equal role within the organized unemployed.

The Unemployed Worker carried weekly reports on the actions of the Neighbourhood Councils and Block Committees throughout the Vancouver area. Most of these columns carried stories about groups of unemployed women, sometimes accompanied by unemployed men, converging on the local relief offices to demand redress for an individual grievance. These grievances involved single and

married women and their children, and sometimes Asian as well as white women.[71] For example, this kind of direct action won milk for women with babies (February 14, 1933:7), relief for ill single women (June 21, 1933:9), clothing allowances for married women and their children (August 2, 1933:10), and medical care for pregnant women (August 9, 1933:6). As the depression wore on, organized women were also active in resisting evictions and restoring utilities that had been cut off; the success of these actions was, however, usually short-lived (see B.C. Worker's News, 1935-1936). In 1938 The Greater Vancouver Housewives League was formed to "combat the rising cost of living by utilizing mass buying power as a lever to lower prices and better products". It successfully lowered the price of bread, butter, and milk (see The People's Advocate, March 4, 1938:4; May 6, 1938:1; February 10, 1939:1).

In addition to issues that dealt directly with the problems of unemployed women and their families, the Women's Labour League and the Unemployed Women and Girls' Club were also active in support work for unemployed men. When single men from the relief camps staged a mass strike in 1935, The Women's Labour League called on families to "be host to one Relief Camp striker in the city and provide him with a midday meal on Mother's Day" (B.C. Worker's News, May 3, 1935:1). During the single unemployed men's occupation of the Vancouver post office and Art Gallery in 1938, they organized daily food for the unemployed men (The People's Advocate, May 27, 1938:1-2). In addition, unemployed women organized support pickets in aid of striking men and women, demonstrations to mark International Women's Day, lectures on

issues such as birth control, divorce laws and public nurseries, and they participated in hunger marches throughout the 1930s (see The Unemployed Worker, 1931-1934; B.C. Worker's News, 1935-1937; and The People's Advocate, 1937-1939).

The severity of the depression of the 1930s had a contradictory effect on the movement toward women's equality within Vancouver labour politics. On the one hand, massive unemployment increased the agitation to exclude married women, and single women living with their parents, from the labour market in favour of men. Women still had not won the 'right' to independent status as workers. Women's labour was not considered equal, so the issue of equal pay only emerged again when women began to fill 'men's jobs' during the Second World War, where once more it was a strategy to protect the wages of men rather than a move to raise the living standard of women. On the other hand, the severity of the depression increased the militancy of many women workers, employed and unemployed, and resulted in women more vocally placing issues of concern to themselves on the political agenda.

The protracted conflicts during the depression took place within the community as much as within the workplace, and this new locus of working class militancy provided a new forum for female militancy. Moreover, the shift of working class struggle to the community created greater legitimacy and support for the issues raised by women. The male 'family wage' ceased to be central to struggles for relief, and was replaced by women's demands for extra relief for pregnant women and young children, and for the right of all women and men, single or married, to

adequate relief. Women also played a more active role in socialist politics in Vancouver during this period, holding conferences on women's unemployment, and lectures on the importance of legal birth control, divorce, and public daycare for improving the conditions of working class women. Although women did not win the struggle for equal work, equal wages, and equal relief during the depression, their active participation in the politics of unemployment helped to redefine working class politics away from exclusively male-defined issues, and contributed to the development of a more equal role for women in the post-war period.

The contradictory effects of severe depression and working class radicalization on the movement for female equality was also reflected in the labour militancy of employed women during the 1930s. For the first time flat wage increases and equal pay demands were included in labour demands in some strikes. Even massive unemployment, as the chronic unemployment witnessed in the 1920s intensified during the 1930s, did not hamper the growth of labour militancy among women workers in the Vancouver area. The increased activity of female workers was not confined to the Workers' Unity League Unions, which organized a great deal of the Asian labour activity of this period. Most of the strike activity among women took place within the international unions affiliated with the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, especially the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union. The Workers' Unity League was directly involved with women strikers only in the hop fields and the canneries around Vancouver.

Female workers took part in at least 21 separate strikes in

the Vancouver area between 1931 and 1939 (see Appendix B). Half of these strikes were by waitresses, most of whom were members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union. In February of 1931, eleven waitresses in two Vancouver restaurants, the Good Eats Cafe and the Boston Cafe, struck against a 20% wage reduction. Ten other restaurants had proposed a wage reduction but withdrew it when the union gave notice that it would not accept the reduction. The ten restaurants that withdrew the proposed wage reduction reportedly employed mostly men, in contrast to the Good Eats and Boston Cafes. The Good Eats Cafe reinstated the old wage scale, but the Boston hired strikebreakers (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 346, Strike 9; and The Labor Statesman, February 6, 1931:1, and February 13, 1931:1). In August of 1933 nine waiters and waitresses struck a Vancouver restaurant for higher wages following a series of wage reductions. Union demands included \$36 a week for cooks, and wages of \$12 a week for both waiters and waitresses. The current rates were \$28, \$10 and \$8 respectively. Although this strike was unsuccessful and the strikers were replaced, it represents the first time that equal wage demands were placed on a strike agenda (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 356, Strike 89).

Waitresses engaged in two strikes in 1936. In August, 29 waitresses and one waiter struck the Melrose Cafe in Vancouver for a wage increase. Demands were won after a seven minute sit-down strike (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 377, Strike 97). In September, ten waitresses and two waiters struck the Trocadero Cafe in Vancouver for a wage increase. The workers staged a sit-down strike, but were removed immediately by the police.

After a one week strike the union won a wage increase of \$2 per week, a flat wage increase for male and female workers (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 378, Strike 115; and The B.C. Workers' News, September 4, 1936:1).

The high point of strike activity among women workers in Vancouver was in 1937, when waitresses in the city struck six times. In February six women struck the Chinese-owned Crescent Cafe for a wage increase. The waitresses were not unionized when the dispute started and they were supported by the Single Unemployed Protective Association. During the strike the waitresses joined the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, and union rates of \$12 to \$14 a week were won. The waitresses had previously earned only \$9.25 per week (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 381, Strike 27). Three waiters and one waitress struck the White Lunch in April. The strike began when a woman union organizer was fired, and the workers demanded her reinstatement and union wages. Reinstatement and union recognition were won, but there are conflicting reports about whether union wages were ever instituted (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 386, Strike 97; and The People's Advocate, April 23, 1937:1; May 7, 1937:1; and May 21, 1937:1). In July, 26 restaurant workers at the Hotel Georgia, including six waitresses, successfully struck for a wage increase and union recognition (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 388, Strike 179). Seven waitresses at Scott's Cafe also struck for a wage increase and union recognition in July. This was a prolonged conflict that involved an attempt to institute a company union rather than the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union to which the strikers belonged. It finally ended in September with striking waitresses

winning union rates and recognition of their union (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 389, Strike 212; and The People's Advocate, July 23:1; July 30:1; August 6:1; and September 3, 1937:1). In September, cooks, waiters, and waitresses at the Hudson's Bay Restaurant engaged in a twenty minute strike for the reinstatement of a fired cook with 26 years service. The cook was reinstated (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 392, Strike 272; and The People's Advocate, September 10, 1937:1). And finally, seven waitresses at the Royal Cafe in New Westminster engaged in a sit-down strike in November to demand the reinstatement of a fired union waitress. The striking waitresses were fired, but public pressure resulted in their reinstatement a few days later (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 393, Strike 349; and The People's Advocate, November 12, 1937:1).

The most militant group of working women during the depression, and indeed throughout the period under study, was waitresses, even though restaurants are traditionally viewed as extremely difficult to organize, especially during periods of high unemployment. Nevertheless, waitresses led almost half the strikes that occurred among Vancouver area women during the depression, and one-third of all strikes involving women between 1900 and 1939 (see Appendix B). One reason for their success was the nature of the restaurants where these women worked. In the period between the First and Second World Wars the strength of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union was in the cafes or 'class B' restaurants in working class neighbourhoods. Strikes usually occurred in these working class cafes, and their success was often due to the strong support the waitresses received from their customers at the picket lines.[72]

In addition to strikes among waitresses, three strikes occurred among tailloresses during the 1930s. In April of 1931 seven men and eight women in the Tailors' Union struck two Vancouver tailor shops over a 10% reduction in wages. The strike was successful and the old wage rate was reinstated, with tailors earning 91 cents an hour and tailloresses (finishers) and female helpers 63 cents and 55 cents respectively (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 347, Strike 31). In June of the same year, two men and one woman struck a Vancouver Tailor shop to resist changes from an hourly wage to a piece rate that involved a reduction in wages. The strike was unsuccessful and the strikers were replaced (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 348, Strike 55). And in March of 1933, 32 tailloresses and fifteen tailors struck for a wage increase and union recognition. Unfortunately the outcome of the strike was not recorded (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 354, Strike 25). Strike demands in the Tailors' Union continued to include lower wages for women than for men.

Three strikes involving women hop pickers occurred between 1933 and 1935. In September of 1933, 700 men and 500 women (consisting of 250 Japanese and 950 white workers) struck a Fraser Valley Farm. The strike was organized by the Workers' Unity League and demands included a wage increase and better conditions in the Japanese camp. The strike was successful, and although the union was not recognized a hop pickers committee, consisting of three Japanese and six white workers (presumably men), was recognized (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 356, Strike 102). In April of 1934, 93 men and women struck another Fraser Valley hop field. No record of the ethnicity of the strikers was recorded,

but it is possible that it also included Japanese pickers. The strike was for a wage increase and improved conditions; it ended with an increase from 20 cents to 25 cents an hour and the abolition of the contract labour system (see Labour Gazette, June 1934). In September of 1935 a third strike occurred among hop pickers, this time involving 1,000 women and 500 men and including both Japanese and white workers. Again the strike was for a wage increase and better conditions, including specific improvements to the Japanese camps. The police threatened to evict the strikers from their shacks and the strikers returned to work with no gains (see B.C. Workers' News, September 27, 1935; September 18, 1936:2; and Labour Gazette, October 1935). Two of these strikes by hop pickers constitute two of only three instances in which Japanese women are reported to have participated in labour struggles, and in both cases the strikes were organized by the Workers' Unity League. Whether the union demands included issues specific to women is unknown; but the nature of conflict in the hop fields suggests that union demands included equal treatment for all workers, whether white, Asian, male or female.

Female workers in the Vancouver area also participated in strikes in a box factory, a cannery, a meat plant, a bakery, and a shoe factory between 1933 and 1939. The cannery strike was the only strike organized by the Workers' Unity League and it was the only one that did not involve male strikers. In August 1934, between forty and eighty women, all reported to be white, struck a salmon cannery in Vancouver for a wage increase and the reinstatement of a discharged union worker. The women were

supported in their strike by the fishermen and the Chinese and Japanese men working in the cannery. The strike was won after only four days (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 364, Strike 192).

In October of 1933 twenty men and fifteen women struck a Vancouver box factory to resist the institution of a new system of operation. The strike did not involve a union and was unsuccessful (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 357, Strike 144). A major strike occurred at the Burns Meat Plant in Vancouver in December of 1936, and included forty women among the 200 strikers. The strike began when 25 union workers belonging to the Packing House and Meat Cutters' Union were fired. Reinstatement of the fired strikers and union recognition were demanded. The strike dragged on until the spring without resolution. A government enquiry upheld the workers' right to organize and recommended the reinstatement of two-thirds of the strikers. The company refused and no strikers were reinstated (see B.C. Workers' News, December 31, 1936:1; January 8, 1937:1; April 16, 1937:1; and May 14, 1937:1). A strike began in a Vancouver bakery in November of 1938 when the company refused to accept an arbitration award handed down in favour of the union. In February ten female employees joined the nineteen male bakers on strike in an attempt to force the company to negotiate. The final outcome of the strike is unclear, but the length of the strike suggests that it was not a success (see The People's Advocate, February 3, 1939:1). And in April of 1939, 27 women and 78 men at the Leckie Shoe Company in Vancouver struck against a 10% reduction in wages. During the dispute the employees started to unionize. The plant closed for one week and reopened with a reduced staff. No concessions were

won but union organizing continued after the strike (see PAC, RG 27, Volume 400, Strike 28).

Strike activity among women was more intense during the depression than previously, and for the first time included the equal treatment of male and female workers in the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union and the Workers' Unity League. In other respects labour militancy during the depression followed patterns similar to those for the entire forty year period under study. The areas of strike activity were defined by gender segregation in the labour market. For the most part, women struck where they worked alongside men. Three-quarters of the strikes involving women included male strikers. Strikes are noticeably absent among salesclerks, clerical workers, and most service workers, with the exception of waitresses and laundresses. Men rarely worked in these areas. For other women, particularly domestics and piece workers labouring in the home, their isolation made organization to improve their conditions of work almost impossible. Domestic workers did try to organize, but with little success. Workers in restaurants, laundries, the telephone company, canneries, factories and on farms worked in settings where they had contact with co-workers, so organization was strategically possible. The success of female labour action was always limited, however, by the ease with which they could be replaced during a strike. It is worth noting that, with the exception of tailloresses, female strikers were unskilled and could easily be replaced by employers.

There was a consistent pattern of entrenched wage differentials for men and women doing the same or similar work in

strikes involving men and women. As we have seen, the first record of equal wage demands for equivalent male and female jobs occurred in an unsuccessful strike of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union in 1933. Moreover, percentage increases, which widen the gap between higher and lower wages, were usually demanded; flat wage increases were seldom part of labour demands during this period. It is perhaps significant that demands for equal pay emerged in the restaurant industry, since waitresses were the bulk of the union and their labour militancy was unquestioned.

The increase in strike activity among working women during the depression was part of a general radicalization of the Vancouver working class. The massive unemployment of the depression, and the abysmal conditions facing employed and unemployed workers alike contributed to unemployed and union politics in which women took a more active role. Female equality was not won during this period, but a shift was beginning to take place as women placed their own issues on the political agenda of the labour movement.

The Articulation of Class and Gender in Vancouver

The practices of the predominantly male labour movement in Vancouver can be characterized as sexist insofar as they reinforced the dependent/subordinate status of women. Sexist practices toward women workers predominated throughout the period under study. In contrast to racist labour practices during this period, which emphasized the centrality of organizational exclusion, sexist practices rarely excluded women from the labour

movement. The inclusion of women was usually encouraged by the labour movement during the early 20th century. The kind of inclusion, however, reinforced sex-segregation in the labour market. Women were welcomed into the labour movement so long as they kept to their proper place in the social order. As we have seen, waitresses, tailloresses, laundry workers and telephone operators were encouraged to participate in the labour movement, but women barbers, moulders, and machinists, women outside the traditional sphere of women's work, were excluded. Women were encouraged to join the labour movement so long as they performed 'women's work'; exclusion was used to protect 'male jobs' wherever women encroached.

The Vancouver labour movement tended to ignore the specific problems of working women, and when the labour movement addressed the 'problem' of women's wage labour it treated it as a problem of maintaining women's proper sphere. Concern with low wages, long hours of work, and dangerous working conditions were expressed in terms of the need to protect the 'weaker' sex. Preserving a virtuous female morality was central to concerns about low wages which might force women into prostitution. The negative effects of employment on the health of women workers was perceived in terms of women's roles as wives and mothers, not in terms of their rights as workers. The labour movement sought to improve conditions for women through protective legislation and the institutionalization of the male 'family wage'.

Gender politics within the Vancouver labour movement only affected white women. The few Asian women in Vancouver did not work in areas of male employment, nor often alongside white

women. Japanese women were involved in only one known strike before the 1930s, and in the 1930s the organization of Asian women on the farms and in canneries under the Workers' Unity League was part of inclusive practices toward Asian workers in general. Insofar as the white male labour movement made reference to Asian women, it was in the context of their role as wives and mothers. The labour movement expressed concern about the immigration of Japanese women because of their potential to bear large numbers of children. Once the barriers of ethnic exclusion were broken down Asian women could be accepted into the labour movement along with Asian men, but they faced the same sexist practices reinforcing the marginality of their labour, as other women.

The effect of cheap female labour on the wages and job opportunities of white male labour was also a concern of the labour movement, particularly during periods of high unemployment. It is not coincidental that the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council discussed the inadequacy of women's wages during periods of high unemployment -- just prior to the First World War, in the early 1920s, and during the early 1930s -- when male workers were most vulnerable to cheap labour competition (see VTLC Minutes, 1900-1939). As one woman worker remembered, women were not usually viewed as a threat to white male jobs in the same way as Asian men. While there was considerable overlap in the jobs performed by white and Asian men, women were usually confined to traditional women's jobs. Women were sometimes used to replace men during periods of economic depression, however, and this fueled campaigns to exclude married women from the

labour market. Even during periods of economic depression, the labour movement did not respond to cheap labour competition by agitating for equal pay for women (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/30/1).[73] Instead, the labour movement pressed for protective legislation to limit the hours of labour and provide a minimum wage for women. When legislation proved ineffective, the organization of women was advocated in order to enforce minimum wage legislation.

The unionization of working women was endorsed as a prerequisite to a strong labour movement, although during most periods there was little active attempt to organize women. The inclusion of women in the labour movement, however, meant little more than supplementing the labour goals defined by the male labour movement. Differentiation between cheap female and more costly male labour was embedded within labour demands and union contracts. Issues of specific concern to women, such as equal pay, child care, and female suffrage, were not priorities on the labour agenda. Support for equal pay for equal work occurred only during the First World War (and later during the Second World War) as a way to maintain high male wages and protect men's jobs when the war ended. The small number of married women in the labour force contributed to the absence of agitation for child care within the labour movement. Yet there were enough working women with children to necessitate the establishment of the city creche linked to a labour bureau for domestics (see VCA, Helen Gregory MacGill Files, MSS 270). In the 1930s the Women's Labour League, which had reformed into the Mothers' Council, organized childcare for unemployed women seeking work (see SFUA, W.L.H.P.,

Tape 013/062/1). For some women shift work was a common strategy, leaving husbands at home with the children when their wives were at work, and other women took in boarders and laundry and sewing at home (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tapes 013/58/1 and 013/33/1). Like equal pay, child care did not become an issue within the labour movement until after the Second World War. Support for women's suffrage, as we have seen, was rejected by parts of the labour movement as a red herring distracting workers from the centrality of the class struggle. When the labour movement did support women's suffrage it was in accordance with 'maternal feminism' and not the equality of women as citizens. The organizational inclusion of women into the labour movement had little or no effect on practices pursued by the labour movement in Vancouver. Strategies reinforced the dependence/subordination of women within the labour market and, at the same time, their dependence within the family by entrenching a sex segregated labour market.

Sexist practices within the labour movement were linked to the centrality of the struggle for a male 'family wage'. A 'family wage' precluding the necessity of most women having to enter the labour force was considered the long term solution to the problems facing the working class family. A 'family wage' adequate for a man and his dependent wife and children was a feature of socialist and labour reform politics during this period. As Kealey (1984) and Sangster (1985) have pointed out in their studies of the Socialist Party of Canada and the Communist Party of Canada, respectively, socialists assumed that the independence of women under socialism would be assured by an adequate male 'family wage', that would allow women to marry by

choice rather than by necessity. If there was one issue on which socialists, labour reformists, bourgeois political parties, middle class reform groups, and the state agreed, it was that domesticity was the appropriate sphere for women. This general agreement on the division of spheres between the sexes meant that, unlike marginalized Asian workers, women were not treated more equitably when upsurges in socialist ideology occurred.

The practices of the Vancouver labour movement took place within the context of the conjuncture of patriarchal family relations and capitalist relations of wage labour. Men were, and were expected to be, the primary breadwinners in the family unit, responsible for supporting their wives and children. In light of this the adoption of a strategy seeking wages adequate to support a family made sense, but it ignored the fact that many women supported dependents, and that many men did not. The 'family wage' strategy might have made more sense if it was related to the support of dependents rather than to gender. Support for differential wages between married and single men was contrary to a tradition of pay for the value of work performed. Differential wages between men and women, on the other hand, were already legitimated by traditions of different types of male and female work, rationalizations about the different quality of their work, and was supplemented by the social definition of men as breadwinners and women as dependents regardless of the reality of the situation of individual workers. Moreover, support for a male 'family wage' reinforced male domination over wives and children within the family through economic control. If the 'family wage' were ever completely institutionalized it could reduce the

economic needs driving women into the labour market, reduce cheap female labour competition without increasing women's economic independence, and maintain male dominance in the labour market and the home. Family wages were never completely institutionalized, however, so while male wages remained much higher than women's, male wages were not high enough to keep wives and daughters out of the labour market. Instead, gender segregation and a cheap female labour surplus were entrenched as characteristics of the labour market.

A strategy of equal pay for equal work would have been more effective in securing a higher standard of living for the working class by eliminating reserves of cheaper labour. A strategy of equality among male and female workers would have threatened male domination within the home, however, and challenged the prevailing views of women's proper sphere within the home. Women's domesticity was embedded within gender relations throughout society and underlay practices in the labour movement. There was a contradiction, however, between an ideology that posited female domesticity as the appropriate role for women and the realities of a working class family; wages were often insufficient for supporting a family and tenuous employment required that other available wage earners enter the labour market. [74] In the context of the dependence of women within the family, female workers formed a cheap, marginal pool of wage labour which potentially threatened the already insufficient wages of male workers with cheap labour competition. Male 'family wages', the exclusion of married women in preference to male employment during periods of depression, and the general

indifference to the conditions facing women workers so long as neither male workers' wages nor the morality or health of future wives and mothers was imperilled, were all products of the tension between accepted gender ideologies and the realities of women's work under capitalism. Rather than challenging the dependent status of women upon which cheap female labour was premised, the practices of the labour movement entrenched a gender segregated labour market that maintained women's dependence within the family and the economy.

The practices of the labour movement further entrenched low wages for women, restricted job opportunities, and limited female access to monopolizable skills, all of which reinforced the economic dependence of women on men. The marginal position of women in the labour market made union organization difficult, and her domestic responsibilities hampered political activity through demands on time and the impermanence of women's wage labour. Female workers, not unlike Asian workers, provided a source of cheap, politically marginal, relatively docile labourers that employers used to break strikes and to weaken the labour movement in Vancouver. In turn; the existence of women workers as cheap, politically marginal and relatively docile workers, few of whom were active in the labour movement, reinforced patriarchal views that women could not understand the principles of the labour movement and were not in fact men's equals.

There was a dialectical relationship between the sexist practices of the labour movement, the low level of women's participation in the labour movement, and the relative docility of women workers within the workplace. The militance of female

workers was facilitated by periods of social and economic crisis that radicalized the working class as a whole. Even during periods of more active participation in labour conflicts, however, the equality of women as workers and citizens was not re-evaluated by organized male workers. Some women began to re-evaluate their position, however, and increasingly demanded equal treatment with male workers during the 1930s.

The structuration of working class politics was not defined solely by men, although the political and economic dominance of men was part of the structural context and part of the political making of the working class. As we have seen, many working class women played an active role in Vancouver labour politics, but they were a minority. The conjuncture of women's dependence within the family-household system and the capitalist labour market affected the involvement of women in labour politics. Not only did patriarchal relations affect the conditions faced by women in the workplace, but it also affected the attitudes that women had toward their wage labour. Women expected wage labour to be short-term, and it was in most cases. This sense of impermanence prevented many women from participating in trade unions to improve their conditions of labour. As one woman recalled, "it was women's own attitudes that kept many women out of the labour market and out of unions" (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/30/1). There is no reason to assume that working class women rejected society's definition of womanhood as primary nurturer within the family. Indeed, it was often the tension between the expectations of women within the home and the reality of their conditions of wage labour that produced conflicts for working

class women. Women's participation in labour politics was not necessarily at odds with defining their priorities in terms of their families, however. As Weppler (1971) has pointed out, strike activity among married women was often explained by their primary role within the family, the need for more money to feed and clothe their children. As Weppler (1971:40) points out "she was not challenging her culturally-imposed role of child-rearer, but only attacking social obstacles to the effective fulfillment of this role."

Female participation in labour politics was not facilitated by the practices of the male labour movement, in spite of its stated objective of organizing women workers. As women writing to The Western Clarion argued, the labour movement made no attempt to educate women as to their specific conditions of 'servitude', men did not stay home with the children to allow their wives to attend political meetings, and women were channelled into the auxiliaries to organize social functions rather than other political activities (see The Western Clarion, September 12, 1908 to November 14, 1908). If women did take an active role in labour politics they faced being accused of "neglecting our homes and pining for outside glory" (see The Western Clarion, November 14, 1908:4). The labour movement placed contradictory demands on working women. The dependent status of women precluded an equal role in the labour movement. Labour strategies were predicated on maintaining women's primary domestic role. Yet women were expected to become 'class conscious' socialists and trade unionists. Female workers were expected to be fully committed to the goals of a labour movement

predicated on the inequality of women as workers, wives, and citizens.

Several women who were active in the Vancouver labour movement before the Second World War commented on how male domination affected women in the labour movement. It was acknowledged that women "fared better" in unions with large numbers of female members. Women were still unequal to men in these unions, however, with lower pay and less input into union politics. One woman felt that women were simply used by male unions to increase membership and that women workers were not really represented by their unions (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/58/1). Even in unions like the Laundry Workers and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, women's leadership roles were restricted to local positions and regional leaders were always men (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tapes 013/27/1 and 013/30/1). Many women agreed that assumptions that a woman's proper place was in the home, that women only worked if they had to, and that women should not take jobs away from men, affected the treatment they received as female workers in the labour movement (see W.L.H.P. Tapes 013/30/1; 013/33/1; 013/58/1; and 013/62/1).

Women spoke of the support they received from male workers during strikes. This was particularly true for women who were involved in the waitresses strikes of the 1930s. Other workers joined their picket lines and provided food for the women, and taxi drivers gave female pickets free rides home in the evening (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/27/1). Jurisdictional conflicts also occurred that were linked to attempts to exclude women from men's jobs. There were conflicts between the Bartenders' and the Hotel

and Restaurant Employees' Union, for example. Bartenders attempted to exclude the employment of women as cocktail waitresses (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/58/1). Up until the 1930s, the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union had endorsed prohibiting white women from working alongside Asian men on 'moral' grounds without regard to its economic impact on working women. In 1937 Vancouver City Council prohibited the employment of white women in Chinese-owned restaurants, in spite of the high unemployment rate among women. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union did not support the city council position; in fact by this time the union advocated organizing Asian workers, but it was the Mothers' Council and the Women's Labour League who supported the affected waitresses in their fight with city hall (see The People's Advocate, September 24, 1937:1; and October 15, 1937:6). Female workers had the active support of male workers during labour conflicts, but at other times women's interests remained secondary to the interests of male workers.

As a result of working within labour organizations dominated by men, some working class women began to agitate for equal treatment with their male co-workers. Beginning with demands for suffrage on the basis of equality, and not because of the positive characteristics of women's maternal instincts, some female workers, like Helena Gutteridge, called for sexual equality as a foundation for successful labour politics. During the depression of the 1930s, with the extension of labour politics into communities, working class women in Vancouver began to actively define the political agenda through their activities.

Women's activities in the politics of unemployment did not

pose the same kinds of contradictions between their role as family nurturer and their role as wage labourer. The context of the struggle was not limited to the workplace and isolated from the home. The links between home and wage labour were politicized, and women placed issues of family welfare in the forefront of unemployed politics. Women focused on the greater needs of children and pregnant women and demanded that women and children have these needs met in their own right. Organized unemployed women demanded equal relief for all men and women regardless of marital status or sex. Women did not lobby for jobs for men, they lobbied for jobs for everyone who needed a job and, failing that, adequate relief for all. Organized unemployed women rejected the centrality of a male-based family relief rate during the 1930s. At the same time, striking waitresses successfully incorporated equal wage demands in their union for the first time.

The contradiction between a patriarchal ideology that defined women's sphere within the home supported by a male breadwinner, and the realities of massive unemployment that provided no breadwinner and often no work at all for destitute men or women, contributed to the radicalization of women workers. As women became more active in unemployed politics, in trade unions and in strikes, the contradictions between their dependence within the family and their desire for political and economic equality became sharper. The struggle for women's 'right' to work, relief, equal pay, and political equality during the 1930s reflects a developing feminist consciousness among working class women. The more actively women placed their issues on the political agenda,

asserting their equality as workers, wives, and citizens, the more effect working class women had in redefining sexist labour strategies.

It should not be surprising that feminist working class practices did not advance very far in the period prior to the Second World War. Indeed, it is arguable whether women have moved very far toward equality during the post-war period, in spite of the growth of feminist consciousness among women. The political activities of working men and women were, and are, products of the structures of inequality that define their lives, and the strategies adopted by workers to transform those structures. The structure of the family-household system not only subordinates women to men, it is the locus of the transmission of gender-identity. Since any real equality of women as workers, as wives, and as citizens involves the transformation of gender roles and the family structure, such a task cannot be accomplished by the labour movement in isolation, even if the need for change were recognized. During the 1930s a growing number of women in the Vancouver labour movement were just beginning to recognize that the inequality of women as workers, as citizens and as wives is fundamentally linked. By actively placing demands for female equality, regardless of marital status, on the political agenda of the labour movement, they challenged the centrality of patriarchal relations in working class practices.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions:

Working Class Politics, Racism and Sexism in Vancouver

As this study has shown, the practices of workers in Vancouver helped to structure the relations between men and women, and whites and Asians, in ways that usually reinforced the subordination of women and Asians in the labour market and in civil society. Insofar as men and women made their own history, it was in the context of the social relations structuring their lives. Patriarchal and ethnic relations of domination and subordination were constitutive features of capitalist social relations in British Columbia. Ethnic and gender divisions in labour politics were products of the structures of inequality that defined workers lives, and, at the same time the practices of workers were instrumental in defining, reproducing, and occasionally challenging, the subordination of women and Asians within the working class.

The politics of the Vancouver working class reflect the heterogeneity of the conditions experienced by workers. The labour movement in Vancouver, as in all capitalist societies, emerged out of the struggle over capitalist control in the workplace and the political sphere. Male, female, white and Asian workers did not receive equal treatment in the labour market, by the state, or in civil society. The material realities of working class life included relations of white domination and Asian subordination, and male domination and female subordination that, to a large extent, defined conditions of work and wages, and the nature of citizenship rights within civil society. It is

little wonder, then, that working class politics were structured by ethnic and gender relations.

. This study suggests that Marxist approaches which posit the a priori primacy of class relations for defining political practice are inadequate. Capitalist practices in British Columbia were neither colour blind nor sex blind. The relationship between class and ethnicity, and class and gender, is best understood in terms of the historical development of a colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal society. The Canadian working class was formed through immigration, with an ethnic hierarchy of white domination and Asian subordination as a constitutive element of class formation. Asian workers were organized into the lowest sectors of the British Columbia working class through capitalist employment practices, state immigration policies and other discriminatory laws, and a racist ideology of Asian inferiority; products of the history of British colonialism and uneven capitalist development. In addition, the historical conjuncture of capitalist and patriarchal relations in Canada resulted in women's dual relationship to the class structure, as both dependents of men within the family and wage labourers. The constitution of women as cheap labour was a product of the existing family-household system, a gender ideology that defined domesticity as appropriate for the female sex, capitalist employment practices, and state practices that reproduced the dependence/subordination of women to men. As this study has shown, the articulation of class and ethnicity, and class and gender, transformed the nature of working class experiences and profoundly affected the labour movement in Vancouver.

In many respects, the position of Asian male and white female workers in Vancouver was similar. Both laboured in low-paying, usually unskilled jobs; in fact, they sometimes worked in the same sectors of the economy, in domestic service, laundering, tailoring, restaurants, fish canning, and as farm labourers and shop clerks. Both received lower wages than white men for similar work. Both were denied political rights, and were subject to legislation limiting the areas or conditions of their employment. Both lacked the range of economic, political, and ideological resources available to white male workers. And both participated in the Vancouver labour movement from a position of relative weakness, and participated in labour conflicts much less frequently than white male workers. Finally, similar conditions facilitated labour militancy among Asian men and white women workers at the end of the First World War and during the depression of the 1930s.

The position of white women and Asian men and women in British Columbian civil society was, however, completely different. These differences affected the nature of the response by organized white male workers to cheaper Asian and female labour. Asian workers were defined as 'non-settlers' by the Canadian state, and their status within civil society was as 'foreigners' without civil rights. The conjuncture of the marginal economic and political position of Asian workers legitimated white workers' exclusion of a group of cheap labourers already defined as inferior by the state. The 'non-settler' status of Asian workers resulted in their definition as 'foreign' workers, rather than a part of the

bonafide working class. A pattern of ethnic divisions developed in Vancouver that centred on the inclusion or exclusion of Asian workers by economically and politically stronger white workers. Racist labour practices in turn reinforced the subordination of Asian workers in the labour market and in civil society. Practices of exclusion reflected a fundamental contradiction between white workers' subordinate role in the labour market, and their dominant role as members of the white community.

The economic and political marginality of Asian workers made the possibility of successful labour militancy much less likely for Asian than for white workers. For the most part, Asian labour militancy was hampered by the lack of economic and political resources, the exclusive practices of the white labour movement, and ghettoized ethnic communities that hampered the development of class consciousness. Contrary to much of the literature on British Columbia labour history, however, there was a thread of Asian labour militancy throughout the early 20th century. A brief period of considerable Asian labour militancy and union organizing occurred at the end of the First World War. It was facilitated by the shortage of labour, the cessation of further Asian immigration, the increased militancy of white workers, and the strengthening of socialist politics advocating inclusive organization with Asians. The severity of the economic-depression of the 1930s fostered even greater Asian labour militancy under the organization of the Communist-led Workers' Unity League and the organizations of the unemployed. During the 1930s, Asian workers began to place their own issues on the political agenda, an indication of their greater inclusion as equal members of the

labour movement compared to earlier periods.

The relatively weak economic and political position of Asian workers was such that without the cooperation and support of the white labour movement, Asians were unlikely to be successful in labour organizing. The exclusionary practices of the white labour movement reinforced the economic and political marginality of Asian workers, their relegation to cheap wage labour, and enhanced their threat to white workers. A necessary condition for bridging ethnic divisions was the redefinition of Asians as bonafide Canadian workers rather than 'foreigners'. The adoption of socialist politics, with its focus on class divisions and solidarity between all workers, facilitated inclusive practices by the white labour movement.

The Canadian state played an important role in the greater subordination of Asians, in comparison to other immigrants, by according Asians a unique 'non-settler' status. This set the context for the greater difficulty Asian workers had in attempting to improve their lives in Canada, reinforced the salience of ethnic communities in the lives of Asian immigrants, and intensified ethnic conflict within British Columbia. The articulation of class and ethnic relations within the British Columbian working class produced sharper ethnic conflicts than elsewhere in the country. In other parts of Canada, where Asian workers were far less numerous, ethnic conflicts occurred between immigrant English workers and cheaper, 'non-preferred' immigrants from Ireland and southern and central Europe (see Pentland, 1981; Avery, 1979, and Morrison, 1976). Ethnic conflicts in other parts of Canada did not result in prolonged exclusionary movements

against other groups of immigrants. Although 'non-preferred' in comparison to English immigrants, other Europeans were, unlike Asians, potential citizens. The virulence of anti-Asian activity within the white labour movement in Vancouver was similar, however, to what occurred in California and Washington, where Asian immigrants also formed an abundant pool of cheap 'non-citizen' labour (see Saxton, 1971; and Wynne, 1978). Ethnic relations were most salient in structuring Vancouver labour politics during periods of high unemployment and weak labour organization, when white workers felt most threatened by cheap, 'foreign' Asian labour. The salience of ethnicity was weakest during periods of intense labour militancy, when workers were making gains in the labour market, and when socialist politics stressed the unity of all workers in their struggle against capitalist oppression.

Although Asian workers were defined as 'foreigners' by the white working class, and in British Columbia civil society generally, there was never any question that the primary role of Asian men was to labour for wages. In contrast, female workers were defined primarily in terms of their role in the family-household system. Working women were the wives, daughters and sisters of working men, an integral part of white civil society. Women were not, however, men's equals, either as workers or as citizens. The relations of female dependence/subordination to men within the family were incorporated within economic relations and legal structures.

In contrast to the centrality of exclusion in racist labour practices, women were seldom excluded from labour organisations.

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Women were included in trade unions and political parties, but they were not included as equal members of the movement. Women were excluded from 'men's jobs', low women's wages and higher men's wages were entrenched in labour strategies and union contracts, and problems specific to female workers were usually ignored. When the Vancouver labour movement addressed the problems facing female workers they sought to maintain women's proper sphere through protective legislation and the institution of a male 'family wage'. These strategies emerged out of contradictions between a family-household system, with a male breadwinner and a dependent female domestic labourer; the economic realities of working class families that forced women into the labour market, and a gender ideology that defined domesticity as women's appropriate role. The male 'family wage' was designed to remove the economic necessity of women entering the labour market, reduce cheap female labour competition without increasing the economic independence of women, and maintain male dominance within the labour market and the family. Instead, a gender segregated labour market was entrenched; male wages were higher than women's, but were not high enough to eliminate the entry of many women into the labour force as reserves of cheap labour.

Successful labour militancy among women workers was hampered by their role as primary domestic labourers within the family, expectations that wage labour would be temporary, the denial of political rights, and their lack of economic resources. The lower involvement of women in the labour movement reinforced the view that women did not understand working class politics and were not

men's equals. Women were never absent from the Vancouver labour movement, but their participation increased considerably at the end of the First World War and during the depression of the 1930s, periods of increased labour militancy among all workers.

The redefinition of women as equal workers and citizens was a necessary condition for bridging gender divisions. The redefinition of women as equal members of the working class posed a fundamental threat to male domination within the home. As we have seen, even socialists did not question the assumption that domesticity was the appropriate sphere for women. Thus, unlike marginal Asian workers, female workers were not treated more equitably when upsurges in socialist politics occurred. During the depression of the 1930s, however, female workers began to demand equal rights with men. As women became more active in union struggles and the politics of the unemployed during the depression, the contradiction between their dependence within the family and their desire for political and economic equality became sharper. The struggle for women's 'right' to work, relief, and equal pay, regardless of marital status or sex, reflects a growing feminist consciousness among working class women that challenged the centrality of patriarchal relations in working class politics.

This study has only partially addressed the situation facing female Asian workers in Vancouver. Asian women, like white women and Asian men, were cheap, unskilled wage labourers. Asian women also performed 'women's work', but they were even more restricted in their areas of employment than were white women. Asian women were paid less than white women or Asian men. The conjuncture of

ethnic relations of subordination and patriarchal relations of subordination within civil society defined Asian women as 'foreign' wives and mothers. There were so few Asian women in the labour market that they were generally ignored by organized labour in the period before the Second World War. The labour movement was only concerned with the presence of Asian women in terms of their capacity to bear children and increase the Asian population. Had Asian women constituted a larger part of the labour force, we might expect that both the 'foreign' political status of Asian women, and the characterization of their primary domestic role within the family, would affect organized labour's response to female Asian workers and the latter's role in the labour movement.

The articulation of class and gender relations in early 20th century Vancouver was similar to patterns found in other parts of Canada and in other capitalist countries. A pattern of protective legislation for women, the struggle for a male 'family wage', and the unequal inclusion of women into the labour movement have been found in central Canada, the United States, Britain, and other capitalist societies (see Drake, 1984; Frager, 1983; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Matthaei, 1982; and Roberts, 1976). In Vancouver and elsewhere, predominantly male labour movements seldom challenged the relations of women's dependence/subordination within the family. The centrality of patriarchal relations in labour politics, however, was increasingly challenged as women became more active in the labour movement and attempted to place issues of female equality on the political agenda.

Ethnic and gender relations continue to affect the position

of women and visible minorities within the labour market and the labour movement in Canada. Although the 'rights' of citizenship are now extended to all regardless of ethnicity or gender, the subordination of women and visible minorities persists within civil society, and continues to underlie their segregation in low-paying, unskilled, non-union, and increasingly part-time jobs. Trade union practices, while no longer premised on explicitly racist or sexist ideologies about the inferiority of other workers or women's proper sphere, are constructed within a history dominated by white male blue collar workers. The domination of the labour movement by white men has shaped traditions of working class politics. Principles of seniority, for example, conflict with programs of affirmative action for women and visible minorities. Equal pay principles conflict with historical definitions of labour 'value' tied to 'male' and 'female' jobs. As a recent study has shown, labour strategies dealing with the current economic crisis continue to strengthen the position of male workers at the expense of female workers in a sex-segregated labour market (see Armstrong, 1984). These employment practices and labour strategies reflect the institutional racism and sexism that is a product of early capitalist development and working class struggles. The practices of Vancouver workers helped to define, reproduce and occasionally challenge ethnic and gender inequality in the labour market, in the labour movement, and in civil society, in ways that continue to structure class relations today.

Endnotes

1. Throughout this dissertation I have used the term 'white' rather than Euro-Canadian or Caucasian. I have followed this practices for two reasons. First, in order to stress the importance of the visual racial distinctions in the ethnic cleavages in British Columbia. Second, because 'white' was the term used during the period under study and referred to all people of European origin. Although 'Oriental' was the most frequent term used to describe Asians during the period of this study, I have used the term Asian rather than 'Oriental' because the latter was used in a derogatory, and not just a descriptive, manner.

2. The working class in British Columbia were not alone in their opposition to Asian immigration. Provincial politicians used the issue of Asian immigration as part of its conflict with Ottawa and passed several pieces of anti-Chinese legislation in the 1870s (see Munro, 1971). Evidence suggests that opposition to Chinese immigration was not based on widespread public agitation before the 1880s, however, when white workers began to demand the exclusion of the Chinese from the province. After the First World War, when more Chinese and Japanese began to move into commerce and farming, small businessmen also became active in the movement to exclude Asians from the province (see Roy, 1976, 1980a, and 1980b). However, from the 1880s through to the 1920s, when Chinese, East Indian, and Japanese immigrants were essentially excluded from further immigration, the working class in British Columbia was in the forefront of the anti-Asian movement.

3. The concept of structuration has been defined by Anthony Giddens as "the duality of structure, which relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency. By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems" (1979:69). The concept of structuration can be applied to social history, which attempts to explore the recursive character of class, as structure and social practices.

4. The concept of civil society used in this study is drawn from the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci wrote that "between the economic structure and the State with its legislation and its coercion stands civil society" (1971:208). The institutional forms of civil society include important areas of socialization such as the family, the church, and educational structures. Civil society is also the sphere in which political struggles for ideological 'domination' and 'leadership' occur, whether these be forms of class, ethnic or gender hegemony.

5. Thompson's rejection of the importance of the structural determinants of classes should be understood within the context

of the political debate he was engaged in with Althusserian structuralism. Thompson (1978) was concerned with what he considered the Stalinistic tendencies of Althusser's theories, and in rejecting structural determinism he stressed a form of voluntarism that tended to conflate class with class consciousness.

6. Ethnicity is used in this study as the generic term for relations of domination and subordination between groups defined socially as sharing a common ancestry based on perceived biological and/or cultural criteria (see Cox, 1959; Bonacich, 1972; and Hughes and Kallen, 1974). Ethnicity is used in preference to race in order to stress the socially constructed nature of ethnicity and racism. In contrast, theories of race are also used in biology and claim some scientific link with morphological categories which I wish to avoid.

7. Segmented and dual labour market theories emphasize that the differences in the nature of work, recruitment, control, mobility etc. in different spheres of employment actually constitute two or more separate labour markets, with women and subordinate ethnic groups confined to the 'secondary' or subordinate labour market. This study does not address changes in capitalist production and the labour process that have contributed to labour market segmentation in the contemporary period. It is concerned with the segregation of white and Asian workers, and male and female workers, in the labour force before the Second World War. This segregation sometimes took the form of different kinds of jobs in different sectors of the economy, and always involved different rates of pay for the same or similar work.

8. Barrett (1980) actually rejects the use of the term patriarchy because she claims it is used by too many people to mean many different things. The definition of patriarchy used in this study, hierarchical relations of domination and subordination between men and women, encompasses the concept of 'gender ideology' that Barrett uses in place of patriarchal ideology.

9. If this study were to include a comprehensive examination of Asian working class women and their politics in Vancouver, which it does not, analysis of the specific family form brought from China, Japan, and India, and the transformations in the family form once in Canada, would be essential to avoid the ethno-centrism of feminist theory. This is an area that requires serious research and could constitute a dissertation in itself. The family-household system discussed in this study refers specifically to the white working class, and is not claimed to reflect the situation for Asians.

10. The practices of working class Asian women are not addressed in this study to the extent that I would have preferred. Due to their extremely small numbers in the population and in the labour force, and the absence of reference to working Asian women in labour sources or ethnic histories, I have uncovered little about

the experiences of Asian women working in British Columbia during this period. I have been relatively successful in tracing the areas of wage-labour employment for Asian women, some oral histories of Chinese women have provided insights into their conditions of work and wages, and some evidence of their involvement in working class politics has been uncovered. However, I am aware that a fuller examination of their working lives can only be uncovered with a command of their languages which, unfortunately, I do not possess. I hope that in the near future someone better suited to the task will embark on a study of the history of Asian working class women in British Columbia.

11. Since this study has not addressed the situation of Asian working class women to a larger extent, it will not provide an historical case study to ground the discourse on the relationships between class, ethnicity and gender that many feminists of colour are currently contributing to.

12. For a comparison of the anti-Asian movement in British Columbia and the west coast of the United States, see Wynne, 1978. For a study of the role of the labour movement in the anti-Asian movement in California, see Saxton, 1971. Both studies show considerable parallels with events in British Columbia, especially the role of the labour movement in the forefront of the anti-Asian movement.

13. Native Indian labour was used in British Columbia in most kinds of unskilled labour (see Knight, 1978). However, it was only used extensively in the fishing industry and longshoring after Asian immigrants became plentiful. There is considerable reference to the undependable nature of native labour in the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. Asians were considered a better regulated labour force than natives, and were therefore preferable to Indians. In the 1902 Royal Commission native leaders gave testimony against Asian immigrants, complaining that the latter had usurped work that used to go to native labourers, especially casual seasonal labour that fishermen often used to supplement their incomes. The failure to tap the native labour force fully was most likely linked to the latter's ability to subsist without wage labour by recourse to traditional means of livelihood. Thus the pressures molding a population into 'dependable' wage labourers appear to have been less strong for the native population.

14. Immigrants from China, Japan and India migrated predominantly from peasant agricultural regions where capitalization of agriculture had begun to occur. These immigrants were men in search of wage labour necessary for the economic survival of their families. As low as wages were in British Columbia, they were markedly better than could be obtained in China, Japan or India, and, in conjunction with the false propaganda about the riches to be had in Canada, wage labour opportunities in North America stimulated a seemingly inexhaustible supply of workers from those countries. The Chinese who emigrated were mainly married, leaving their wives

and children at home. Few Chinese labourers were able to bring their wives into the country prior to the exclusion law in 1923, so family life was a rarity for working class Chinese in the province. Interestingly, Chinese women married to non-Chinese, or white, men were able to enter the country without paying the Chinese head tax, while those married to Chinese men were subject to the same immigration restrictions as their spouses (Labour Gazette, December 1903:542). In contrast to the Chinese, many Japanese immigrants were single young men. After the negotiation of the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' with Japan in 1908, many Japanese labourers began to bring wives into the country in what was known as the picture-bride system (see footnote 20). By the First World War, wives and families were an important part of the Japanese community. East Indian immigrants were also without their wives and children, forming a male community within the province (see Adachi, 1976; and Cheng, 1931).

15. Mine owner Robert Dunsmuir is the only employer interviewed by the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration who advocated granting the Chinese the political franchise and full citizenship rights. He suggested that this would put an end to the anti-Chinese agitation of white workers, thereby providing greater labour peace (128-130).

16. Earlier legislation was enacted against the Chinese by the British Columbia government. In 1874 the Chinese were disfranchised from provincial elections; in 1878 they were barred from public works; and in 1878 and again in 1884 special taxes against the Chinese were passed and later declared ultra vires by the supreme court. With the passage of federal legislation in 1884, however, Chinese immigrants became subject to the first discriminatory immigration law that was to be followed by exclusionary legislation 40 years later.

17. The 1901 Census records 14,885 Chinese and 4,597 Japanese in British Columbia. The Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, however, estimates that there were 16,000 Chinese and 6,000 Japanese in the province in 1902.

18. The immediate effect of the imposition of a \$500 head tax on Chinese immigrants in January 1904, was the virtual end of the immigration of Chinese labourers. Contracting companies were unwilling to invest \$500 in addition to the costs of passage to bring in Chinese labour. By 1908, however, the shortage of unskilled labour created by the legislation resulted in a relative rise in Chinese wages, and kinsmen were soon able to save enough money to bring relatives to Canada. Although the new Chinese immigrants were not indentured to contracting companies, the contract system of employment was well entrenched in the province, and they too sought employment through Chinese labour contractors in British Columbia. Thus by 1908 Chinese immigration had resumed again and Chinese labourers in British Columbia were no longer in such an advantageous economic position as they had been during the labour shortage (see Labour Gazette, September, 1908:298-299).

19. The 'problem' of Japanese immigration was dealt with more diplomatically by the Canadian government than was Chinese immigration because Japan was a world military and trading power with whom it was important to maintain cordial relations, while China was weak and divided under colonial rule (see Adachi, 1976; and Lyman, 1968).

20. Most of the Japanese labourers who came to British Columbia were young single men (unlike the Chinese who tended to leave wives and children at home). Many Japanese men married Japanese women through the picture-bride system, exchanging pictures and then marrying by proxy in Japan before bringing their wives to Canada. As Asian immigration became more and more restricted during the 1920s pressure was brought to end the free immigration of Japanese wives, who were not subject to any immigration restrictions, and resulted in the abolition of the picture-bride marriages (see Cheng, 1931).

21. For discussions of the history of East Indian immigration to Canada and restrictive legislation toward them, see Cheng, 1931, and Ward, 1978.

22. Chinese and Japanese immigration were covered under specific laws, thus neither group was subject to the requirement of \$200 upon landing in Canada. The law was designed to prohibit other Asian labourers not already covered under restrictive legislation from coming to Canada (see PAC, RG 76, File 23635).

23. In 1920 Japanese who had served in the Canadian forces during the First World War were granted the franchise. All other Asian residents, including citizens, waited until after the Second World War for the right to vote. Chinese and East Indian Canadians were awarded the franchise in 1947, while the Japanese waited until 1949 for the right to vote (see Craig, 1982).

24. The labour force statistics collected by the British Columbia Department of Labour are not a complete report on the labour force. Employer returns were voluntary, although encouraged by the department, and there is considerable variation in the number of firms represented in the returns each year. Furthermore, there are no statements by the Department of Labour about the proportion of firms that are reporting. Statistics were collected in 25 categories (including miscellaneous industries), but never covered service industries such as domestics, restaurants, or farm labour for example. Statistics collected by the Department of Labour are useful, however, to trace changing patterns of Asian employment in the province.

25. The political significance of reducing the proportion of Asians in the British Columbia labour market was considerable. In addition to the passage of minimum wage legislation to reduce Asian immigration in the lumber industry, the Hours of Work Act was also used to limit Asian competition with white workers. In 1923, for example, the eight-hour day was extended to the

ship-building industry so that "the orientals will not be in such an advantageous position in future to underbid 'white' yards" (see Labour Gazette, September 1927:930). The provincial government attempted to limit Asian employment in other industries through persuasion. As the Labour Gazette reported in December of 1924:

Letters have been written to several large employers of labour in the province, including railway companies; employment officials have been instructed to work toward the gradual elimination of Orientals in industry and to impress upon employers the advisability of this course; no opportunity has been lost by members of the Government, on the platform and in conversation, to urge that Orientals be replaced by whites. As a direct result of the activities of the Department of Labour, 2,070 Orientals were replaced by whites in 1922 (Labour Gazette, December 1924: 1024).

26. For a discussion of the opposition of capitalists to restrictive legislation against Asians, especially in sectors that were major employers of Asian labour, see Avery and Neary, 1977.

27. Ethnic cleavages in the labour market and in working class politics were not limited to distinctions between white and Asian workers. Natives were also marginal within the economy and conflicts between white and native workers also occurred, especially in the fishing industry. Moreover, southern and eastern European groups, particularly Italians and Greeks, tended to be restricted to unskilled labour, were also recruited as strikebreakers on occasion, and were sometimes the target of organized labour condemnation. That all 'whites' were not quite equal was clear from the testimony of the Vancouver Council of Women at the Royal Commission on Labour Conditions in British Columbia. They suggested that white women be prohibited from employment by or alongside "Asiatics, Greeks [or] Italians". The proposals put forward by the VTLC, however, used the term 'Caucasian' in a similar proposal and, when questioned, only endorsed legislation prohibiting the employment of white women by or alongside Asians (see PABC, GR 684, Box 2, File 1:9-24). Although ethnic divisions between workers of different European origins did exist, by far the strongest and most persistent ethnic cleavage in British Columbia was between white workers and the various Asian groups.

28. Pressure to continue to allow Asians to emigrate to Canada came from capitalists with interests in the railway, forestry, mining, salmon canning and fruit farming industries (see Avery and Neary, 1977; and testimony at the 1885 and 1902 Royal Commissions). The state succumbed to pressure from white workers and small businessmen and legislated immigration restrictions, although not before the needs of the labour market had changed (see chapter four). The exclusion of Asians was not, in any objective sense, in the 'interests' of the white working class. Indeed, as I have shown, it was a counter-productive strategy.

However, much of the white labour movement perceived Asian exclusion to be in their interests, and to that extent they were successful in pressuring the state to legislate such restrictions.

29. The first known strike involving Asians in British Columbia occurred when Chinese labourers in the Nanaimo coal mines struck for a wage increase in 1867 and again in 1878. Also in 1878, Chinese workers in Victoria staged a 5 day general strike against a special tax that the provincial government tried to impose on them (see Scott, 1975:196-197).

30. The 50 strikes listed in Appendix A represent strikes between 1900 and 1939 in the greater Vancouver area where the active participation of Asian strikers was recorded. There are instances of many other strikes where the involvement of Asian strikers was probable (especially in other lumber mill strikes in the early 1930s) but could not be verified. I have included 2 strikes of farm labourers in the Fraser Valley, which it could be argued fall outside of the greater Vancouver area (which I take to include North and West Vancouver, New Westminster, Burnaby, and Richmond, including Steveston). These Fraser Valley farms were more than likely in what is now Surrey. These strikes have been included because the labour force would have come from the Vancouver area for the short picking season.

31. It is impossible to tell whether further strike activity occurred within the Chinese and Japanese business sectors. Certainly if such strikes occurred they were not recorded in government statistics or in the white labour press. However, a careful reading of Chinese and Japanese newspapers, which unfortunately I am not equipped to do, might reveal more labour conflict within the ethnic business sectors.

32. The testimony of the Knights of Labour and individual workers at both Royal Commissions on Asian immigration consistently argued that Asians were a threat to the standard of living of white workers in British Columbia (see Royal Commissions, 1885 and 1902; and the discussion of immigration restrictions in chapter four). Support for the exclusion of Asian immigration was so strong that it formed a major plank of most trade unions and political parties that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in British Columbia. Both Paul Phillips (1967b) and Carlos Schwantes (1979) have argued that the presence of cheap Asian workers in the province contributed to the radical nature of the labour movement by providing white workers with a mobilizing focus.

33. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union (local 28) had several different names before the 1920s. The Cooks and Waiters' Union (which separated into the Cooks' Union and the Waiters' union in 1910 and then merged again in 1915) and the Waitresses' Union (which was a separate local before 1915) merged to form the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses' Union. Local 28 was renamed the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union in the early 1920s (see the

Minutes of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees Union, local 28, 1910-1939).

34. The percentage of the non-agricultural male labour force unionized in British Columbia was 7.1% in 1916, 10.5% in 1921, 11% in 1931, and 18.2% by 1940 (see Phillips, 1967a: 388).

35. The term socialist is used here to refer to all those who advocated the abolition of the capitalist economic system, by force or otherwise, and its replacement with some form of socialist society. The distinction between revolutionary and reformist politics is rooted in the debates in the Second International, with the latter accepting reforms to improve conditions facing workers as ends in themselves, and the former rejecting this position. Some socialists reject reforms altogether, while others view trade union politics as struggles politicizing the working class and alleviating the worst of their hardships before the overthrow of capitalism occurs.

36. It is difficult to assess the degree of support for the socialist position on Asian immigration among the white working class as a whole. Support for the Socialist Party of Canada did not necessarily mean support for its position on Asian immigration, since the activities of the party in the legislature supported exclusion even when their rhetoric did not. At the height of its popularity, the S.P.C. had approximately 3,000 members, most of whom were in British Columbia (see McCormack, 1977:68). In May of 1907, the Western Clarion claimed 3,000 subscribers in the province, increasing to 5,000 in 1912 (see Western Clarion, May 4, 1907:2; and July 27, 1912:3). Support for Socialist Party candidates at the polls indicates that socialist views had even wider support during this period. During the first decade of the 20th century, Socialist Party candidates fared better at the polls than did the labour reformists in the province. The peak of S.P.C. support was reached in the 1909 provincial election when the party polled over 11,000 votes and returned two M.L.A.s to the legislature (see Robin, 1968:101). Support for the S.P.C. subsided during the next decade in favour of labour reform candidates. The Socialist Party had accepted a 'no compromise' position on socialist strategy, or 'impossibilism', and alienated a large section of the working class of British Columbia through its rejection of trade unionism and immediate reforms as political goals (see Phillips, 1967a:129-134; and Johnson, 1975:1-50). The S.P.C. did not endorse trade union strategies, but many of the most prominent leaders of the VTLC were members of the S.P.C., although the practices of the Labour Council did not often reflect this socialist influence on the issue of Asian immigration (see McCormack, 1977:62).

37. The Western Federation of Miners was the first union to suggest including Asians within its ranks during the 1903 strike of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees against the Canadian Pacific Railway. The W.F.M. leadership advocated organizing Chinese miners to prevent them acting as

strikebreakers during the C.P.R. strike. It appears that efforts to organize the Chinese did not go beyond suggesting this course of action, however, and the Dunsmuir mines were reopened with Chinese labour (see Bennett, 1937:115-120; and Phillips, 1967b:37-41).

38. The growth of revolutionary socialism throughout Europe in the years between 1917 and 1921, under the influence of the Third Communist International but certainly not contained within it, has been well documented (for example see Bertrand, 1976; Landauer, 1959; and Lindemann, 1974). The common features of the conjuncture of economic and political crises in most countries following the disruption of the war produced mass support for revolutionary socialist politics and union organizing and then a conservative backlash which, in the most politically unstable countries, generated fascist regimes in Italy and, ten years later, in Germany. The situation in Canada was by no means as extreme as that witnessed in Italy and Germany, but the roots of war, inflation and depression were common.

39. Bercuson (1978) has argued that the syndicalist ideology of the One Big Union, with its industrial organization and emphasis on the general strike as a political strategy, made it a completely impractical vehicle for advancing the struggles of labour unions in British Columbia. No doubt the ideology and structure of the O.B.U. contributed as much to its rapid disappearance as it had to its emergence.

40. In 1905 the W.F.M. merged into the International Workers' of the World (I.W.W.), which also, on occasion, advocated organizing Chinese workers (see Bennett, 1937:40-42). When the O.B.U. formed in 1919 the I.W.W. joined that organization. Thus there was some continuity between industrial unions and a more progressive position on Asian workers in the province, although there is no indication that Asian workers were members of any of these organizations in Vancouver before the period of the O.B.U. No other white trade unions in British Columbia even advocated the organization of Asians in the period prior to the First World War.

41. There are conflicting reports on the numbers involved in this strike. Documents in the Strikes and Lockout Files, (PAC, RG 27, Volume 327, Strike 188) cite figures ranging from 450 strikers to 2,000 strikers. The Labour Gazette reported the lower of the estimates (see October 1921).

42. The membership of the VTLC dropped from 12,000 in 1918 to 6,000 in 1920, and to a low of 4,200 in 1921. By the late 1920s its membership was growing again, increasing to 8,100 in 1926, and to 15,000 by 1930. During the same time period the reported union membership in Vancouver as a whole was 15,459 in 1918, dropping to 9,690 in 1920, and 7,815 in 1921, and rising to 12,820 in 1926 and 16,138 in 1930 (by which time most Vancouver locals were again members of the VTLC) (see Phillips, 1967a: 389).

43. The Federated Labour Party (FLP) was formed as a broad coalition of reformist and socialist groups in 1918. The program of the party included the securing of labour reform legislation and the "collective ownership and democratic operation of the means of wealth production" (see Phillips, 1967b: 71). Throughout the early 1920s the Federated Labour Party managed to maintain relations both with the O.B.U. radicals and the international trade union movement, and was the only unifying force in British Columbia labour politics during this period. The Federated Labour Party affiliated with the Canadian Labour Party (CLP) when it formed, under the auspices of the Trades and Labour Congress, in 1921. Also in 1921 the Workers' Party of Canada (WPC), later the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), formed under the auspices of the Third Communist International (see Phillips, 1967b: 89-91). Factionalism within the Canadian Labour Party, and between it and the Communist Party, led to the formation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) merging together some groups from the Federated Labour Party and some from the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) in 1926. This new party was also heavily influenced by socialists, and would form the nucleus of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) founded in 1932. Johnson (1975:394) has argued that "an unbroken thread runs through the history of the B.C. left, from the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Canada, beyond the SPC through the FLP and ILP-SPC, and into the CCF".

44. Phillips (1967b:99-100) argues that the VTLC's withdrawal from the Canadian Labour Party was spurred by the platform of Oriental enfranchisement, but that the real issue was the factionalism within the party, and the rejection of the Communist influence within the CLP. This seems likely since the Federated Labour Party had endorsed equal rights of citizenship for all allowed to live and work in British Columbia, including Asians, as early as 1924 (see British Columbia Federationist, June 20, 1924:2).

45. The Workers' Unity League and the National Unemployed Workers Association were much more active in their attempts to organize Asians within their ranks than the O.B.U. had been. Although both groups proclaimed the need to organize all workers together, the Communist organizations in the 1930s actively tried to get Asians involved by supporting issues that specifically confronted Asians, for example the lower relief rates for Japanese families, the contract labour system in the lumber industry, and the discrimination against single unemployed Chinese men.

46. Following the directives of the Third Communist International to abandon separate Communist unions and infiltrate the international unions, the Workers' Unity League unions merged into the international unions (organized in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council and the Trades and Labour Congress at the national level) in 1936. Splits between socialist and labour reformists in the labour movement continued, but there was much greater cooperation within the labour movement in the province in

the late 1930s than previously.

47. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation formed in 1932 and was, during the 1930s, socialist in orientation. The socialists in the province were more or less equally split between the C.C.F. and the Communist Party (declared illegal in 1930 and operating under the name the United Front) (see Phillips, 1967b:108-109). However, the Communists had a stronger base within the organized unemployed than the CCF, and the CCF fared better at the polls than the Communists during this period (see also footnote 49).

48. Although there was considerable reference to the problems of single unemployed Chinese men in the newspapers of the organized unemployed, single Japanese men were not mentioned. Given the large number of Japanese families in Vancouver it is probable that single unemployed men were cared for within Japanese families. The problems of unemployment facing Japanese families were addressed by the organized unemployed. The few Chinese families in the province at this time provided no source of support for unemployed Chinese men during times of high unemployment.

49. Political support for the CCF was considerable. In the provincial election of 1933 the CCF won 31.3% of the popular vote, and elected 7 members to the legislature; in contrast the United Front (CPC) won only 1.2% of the vote. In the federal election of 1935, the CCF again won a third of the popular vote in British Columbia and elected 3 members to Ottawa (see Phillips, 1967a:107; and 1967b:109).

50. Cohn (1986) has documented the role of the C.C.F. and the Communist Party in supporting the Japanese internment during the Second World War.

51. See Karl Marx, Capital Volume 1 (1954), for a discussion of the commodity form of labour power and the appropriation of surplus labour for the production of surplus value.

52. The notion of 'super-exploitation', where one group of workers faced greater exploitation in the labour market than another (producing more surplus value either through longer hours or lower wages, or both) has featured prominently in Marxian approaches to class and ethnicity (see Bonacich, 1980; Cox, 1959; Oppenheimer, 1974; Reich, 1971; and Szymanski, 1976).

53. There were considerable differences between the Chinese and Japanese communities in British Columbia. One of the most significant differences was the absence of family life among the Chinese, except for a few merchants. By the 1920s women and children were a common part of the Japanese communities, whereas among the Chinese the ratio of men to women was 38 to 1 (see Cheng, 1931:205-206). The Japanese community was often more aggressive in its attempts to gain political equality within Canada, and became more integrated into western traditions than

the Chinese during this period. In addition, there was considerable animosity between the two communities, which was heightened after the Japanese invasion of China in 1937 (see Adachi, 1976; Cheng, 1931; Lyman, 1968; and Sien, 1971). For both Chinese and Japanese workers, however, ethnic links were essential for providing social services unavailable from the white community. Given the contract labour system, moreover, the ethnic community was the locus of economic contacts, whether through labour contractors or within ethnic businesses.

54. Chan (1980) has argued that the characterization of Chinese immigrants as temporary 'sojourners' is incorrect, and that the Chinese were as committed to making Canada their homeland as any other immigrants. Other evidence indicates, however, that many immigrants expected to work for a short period of time and return home to the families they left behind (see Knight and Koizumi, 1976; and Wickberg, 1982). It is probably true that many other labourers emigrating to Canada came with exactly the same intentions, and in this regard Asian immigrants may have been little different from other immigrants. However, Asians also faced many other obstacles to integration into Canadian society that adversely affected their involvement in working class politics.

55. The employment distribution of men and women in Vancouver is recorded slightly differently in the 1911 and 1931 Census. In 1911 the Trade and Finance sector is recorded according to occupation, saleswomen, office employees etc. In 1931 Trade and Finance is recorded according to retail sector, rather than specific occupation. Similarly, in 1911 the Professional sector records specific occupations within the educational, health and legal professions, such as nurses, teachers, and stenographers, whereas the 1931 Census does not record occupations within each professional area separately. There can be little doubt, however, that the vast majority of women working in Trade and Finance in 1931 continue to be saleswomen and office clerks, or that those in the health profession are predominantly nurses, in education predominantly teachers, or in law legal secretaries rather than lawyers (see Census of Canada, 1911, Volume V; and 1931, Volume III).

56. Oral history tapes of Chinese and Japanese British Columbians are available in the Public Archives of British Columbia (PABC). The oral histories of Chinese women referred to in this chapter are found in Tape 3706, an interview with Nellie Chu, conducted by N.J. McCallum and Katherine Roback, and Tape 4126 (1-13), interviews of ten Chinese women born in the province between 1895 and 1924, conducted by Tamara Adilman.

57. Japanese women were involved in a strike in a Vancouver fruit and vegetable Cannery in July 1926 (see Labour Gazette, Volume 337, July 1926), in a strike at a hop farm in the Fraser Valley in September 1933 (see Labour Gazette, Volume 356, September 1933) and in another strike at a Fraser Valley hop farm in September of 1935 (see BC Workers' News, September 27, 1935).

58. The minimum wages listed in Table 6.10 apply to women over 18 years of age with experience. A minimum wage was also set in the fishing industry, but it explicitly excluded fish canning, thereby only covering women engaged in processing fresh and dried fish (see Appendix, Minimum Wage Act, Annual Report of the Department of Labour, British Columbia, 1932).

59. Apparently waitressing in restaurants and teahouses was not considered entirely respectable for Chinese women because it meant waiting on men who were not part of a woman's family. In addition, some women working in teahouses were in fact prostitutes (see Adilman, 1984).

60. The Vancouver Council of Women presented a report at the Royal Commission on Labour recommending legislating minimum wages for women. The minimum wage that the Council recommended was actually \$7.50 per week, although they argued that a woman could not live on less than \$10 per week for a "bare living without any other expenses at all". Presumably the Vancouver Council of Women felt that a more conservative recommendation would be more likely to become law, and thus improve the wages of many women even if the minimum wage fell short of a 'living wage' (see PARC, GR 684, Box 2, File 1:1-13).

61. The 43 strikes listed in Appendix B represent strikes between 1900 and 1939 in the greater Vancouver area where the active participation of women was recorded. There are other strikes, especially in factories, where the involvement of women is possible but could not be verified. I have included three strikes of farm labourers in the Fraser Valley which it could be argued fall outside of the greater Vancouver area (which I take to include North and West Vancouver, New Westminster, Burnaby and Richmond). These Fraser Valley farms were most likely in what is now Surrey, and is now also part of Greater Vancouver. These strikes have been included because the labour force would have come from the Vancouver area for the short picking season.

62. Although the Barbers' Union excluded Asians and women from membership, black barbers were admitted. The acceptance of black barbers was clearly related to the situation in the United States, and did not result from the presence of an appreciable number of black barbers in Vancouver.

63. Maternal feminism is the term applied to the feminism of suffragettes who based their arguments for the vote not on questions of equality, but on the basis of the positive moral influence that women would have on society. This positive influence was rooted in the maternal nature of women, their role as care-taker and nurturer.

64. For a more detailed discussion of Minimum Wage Legislation see chapter six.

65. Helena Gutteridge was actively involved in Vancouver labour

politics from the time she arrived in British Columbia from Britain in 1911 until she died in 1960. In addition to her activities within the suffrage movement and the trade union movement, Gutteridge became the first woman alderman in Vancouver in 1937, when she was elected as a C.C.F. candidate (see Walsh, 1983; and Wade, 1980).

66. In the end a separate woman's column was not initiated by The Western Clarion (see Kealey, 1984).

67. Campbell (1980) has also pointed out that many issues relating to working women, including unemployment relief and child care, were viewed in terms of charity rather than the rights of working women or working class families. The labour movement did not take up issues of child care for working mothers, and such child care as did exist was organized by charities for destitute mothers. The first Creche or Day Nursery was established in the west end of Vancouver in 1910 by the Associated Charities (see VCA, Helen Gregory MacGill Files, MSS 270).

68. The Women's Labour League was established by the Communist Party of Canada in the 1920s, and attempted to bring working women and working class wives into the Communist movement. The organization of women and attention to women's issues were subordinated to the primary emphasis on class oppression, and reflected a concentration on the maternal family role of women. The Women's Labour League received a low priority within the party, and had more success organizing married women than single working women (see Sangster, 1985).

69. It is unclear which organizations actually financed the women's hostel in Vancouver, or even if more than one hostel existed. The city relief office referred unemployed single women to the hostel(s), but did not finance it. During this period the city refused to issue relief to any single unemployed women.

70. The labour movement's response to the entry of large numbers of women into the labour force during the Second World War corresponded to that witnessed during the First World War. As the labour shortage increased, married women were encouraged to enter the workplace, and women entered 'men's jobs' once more. The issue of equal pay was endorsed to maintain existing wage scales. A similar movement to remove women, especially married women, also took place at the close of the war. According to Bannerman, Chopik and Zurbrigg (1980:307), civil service restrictions obliging employees "to resign unless they were self-supporting, originally imposed in 1921, was lifted during World War Two, but it was reinstated near the war's close in 1944" when 7,000 women were laid off.

71. See chapter five for a discussion of the inclusion of Asians in the politics of the unemployed. It is difficult to document the participation of Asian women in conflicts over relief. Cases of successfully winning relief for Japanese families and, on at

least one occasion, a Chinese family, most likely occurred with the participation of Asian women. Some Japanese families were organized within the Block Committees and Neighbourhood Councils, but the participation of Chinese families is unknown. Moreover, there is no record of single Asian women taking part in unemployed politics, although it is possible that some were involved.

72. In the period between the First and Second World Wars the strength of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union was in the cafes in the Vancouver area. A former business agent for the union estimated that in the 1930s the union had about 42 union cafes, and a membership of 500 to 600 workers, the majority of whom were waitresses (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/52/1). The majority of the union cafes were in working class neighbourhoods, and were referred to as "class B" restaurants. In the 1920s and 1930s it was easier to organize in these restaurants, and to win support from customers during labour disputes, than to organize in the "class A" restaurants (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/58/1). In contrast, by the 1950s the union began to gain a foothold in the hotel industry and the larger "class A" restaurants in the hotels. As membership in the hotels increased the manpower needed to police the contracts in all the small cafes receded, and unionized cafes soon disappeared (see SFUA, W.L.H.P. Tape 013/52/1).

73. The oral history accounts used in this chapter are all part of the Women's Labour History Project that was conducted in Vancouver in the summer of 1979 by Sara Diamond. The project consists of taped interviews with 40 women and three men active in the British Columbia labour movement from the First World War through to the 1940s. The tapes are housed in the Simon Fraser University Archives.

74. The middle class basis of the ideology of the nuclear family and its contradictions with the realities of working class, deserted, divorced, single and gay women is discussed by Barrett (1980) and Barrett and McIntosh (1982).

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1924-1934	<u>The Labor Statesman.</u>
1932	<u>The Lumber Worker.</u>
1937-1939	<u>The People's Advocate.</u>
1931-1934	<u>The Unemployed Worker.</u>
1902-1920	<u>The Western Clarion.</u>
1909-1911	<u>The Western Wage Earner.</u>

Appendix A

Strikes involving Asian workers in the Greater
Vancouver area, 1900-1939

1900-1916: 12 strikes

- 1900 (July): strike of about 8000 salmon fishermen for higher prices in the lower Fraser River; included 2000 Japanese; after 3 weeks the Japanese began fishing; unsuccessful.
- 1901 (July): strike of about 8000 salmon fishermen for higher prices on the lower Fraser River; included 3000 Japanese; after a few days the Japanese began fishing; unsuccessful.
- 1901 (August): strike of Chinese cannery workers in New Westminster who had the contract for the cannery, to force the dismissal of white workers; successful.
- 1903 (January): strike of 150 sawmill workers in New Westminster resisting changes in the foreman system; involved 100 Japanese and 50 white men; successful.
- 1903 (May): strike of Japanese sawmill workers in New Westminster to protest overcharging for supplies by the Japanese 'boss'; successful.
- 1903 (June): strike of factory woodworkers in Vancouver for a 9 hour day (currently 10) and a wage increase; strike involved 5 factories and 147 men (38 men were white, the rest were Asian); unsuccessful.
- 1903 (July): strike of 4100 salmon fishermen on the lower Fraser River; included 1200 Japanese; the Japanese accepted the canners offer; unsuccessful.
- 1905 (January): strike of Japanese sawmill workers in New Westminster against a reduction in wages; successful.
- 1906 (November): strike of Chinese laundry workers in New Westminster for a wage increase; successful.
- 1909 (February): strike of 100 East Indian sawmill workers in New Westminster to protest withholding of wages by the East Indian 'boss'; successful.
- 1913 (August): strike of 2000 salmon fishermen, led by the Japanese, against a reduction in prices; unionized Japanese were unable to keep the majority of Japanese from fishing; unsuccessful.
- 1916 (May): strike at a sawmill in New Westminster, included Japanese and white men, for a wage increase; successful.

1917-1921: 12 strikes

- 1917 (July): strike of 800 shingle mill workers, involving 600 Chinese and 200 white men, in 52 shingle mills in Vancouver and New Westminster; strike for an 8 hour day and a wage increase; involved the Shingle Weavers' Union (white) and the Chinese Labour Association; unsuccessful.
- 1917 (November): strike of Chinese workers in a Vancouver factory after the assault of a Chinese worker by a foreman; Chinese victim was compensated; successful.
- 1918 (April): strike in a sawmill in New Westminster for an 8 hour day with 10 hours pay; involved Chinese and Japanese workers; successful.
- 1919 (March): strike of 1200 shingle mill workers, 800 Chinese the rest Japanese and East Indian, in 50 mills in the lower mainland and the coast; against a 10% wage reduction; Chinese Shingle Workers' Association was formed; strike successful.
- 1919 (June): Asian workers, especially those in the lumber mills, participate in the Vancouver Sympathy Strike with the Winnipeg General Strike.
- 1919 (June): Asian workers, especially those in the lumber mills, participate in the New Westminster Sympathy Strike with the Winnipeg General Strike.
- 1919 (October): Chinese shingle mill workers in Vancouver strike for a wage increase; unsuccessful.
- 1919 (November): Chinese vegetable hawkers in Vancouver strike against a rise in the city license tax; unsuccessful.
- 1920 (April): Chinese shingle mill workers in New Westminster strike for a wage increase; white workers strike in solidarity with the Chinese; successful.
- 1920 (May): strike of 450 seamen in Vancouver harbour and the coast; includes Japanese firemen and Chinese cooks on the ships; seeking a wage increase, improved conditions (successful), and union recognition (unsuccessful).
- 1921 (April): strike of 81 Japanese sawmill workers in Vancouver against a wage reduction; involved the Japanese Workers Union; unsuccessful.
- 1921 (September): strike of up to 2000 shingle mill workers, mainly Chinese, in at least 15 mills in the lower mainland; against a wage reduction; Chinese Shingle Weavers' Union involved; successful.

1922-1930: 6 strikes

- 1925 (May): strike of 1000 salmon fishermen on the lower Fraser River against price reduction; includes a few hundred Japanese; successful.
- 1925 (June): strike of 35 Chinese seamen in Vancouver harbour for higher wages; unsuccessful.
- 1925 (September): strike of 1000 salmon fishermen on the lower Fraser River for a price increase; includes a few hundred Japanese; successful.
- 1926 (July): strike of 175 fruit and vegetable canners in a Vancouver cannery for a wage increase; one-third of the strikers were Japanese women, the rest white women; unsuccessful.
- 1927 (September): strike of 1000 salmon fishermen on the lower Fraser River against a decrease in prices; includes a few hundred Japanese; successful.
- 1929 (October): strike of 42 Chinese shingle mill workers in New Westminster against increased rent for company houses; unsuccessful.

1931-1939: 20 strikes

- 1931 (September): strike of 600 sawmill workers in New Westminster, Asians and whites, against a wage reduction and other conditions; successful.
- 1931 (September): strike of 195 sawmill workers in New Westminster, Asians and whites, against a wage reduction; unsuccessful.
- 1932 (March): strike of 25 Japanese pin boys in a Vancouver bowling alley against a wage reduction; unsuccessful.
- 1932 (July): strike of 50 shingle weavers in Vancouver, Asians and whites, against a wage reduction; successful.
- 1932 (July): strike of shingle mill workers in New Westminster, whites and Asians, against a wage reduction; successful.
- 1932 (August): strike of shingle mill workers in New Westminster, whites and Asians, to reinstate Chinese fired after a successful strike the month before; successful.
- 1932 (August): strike of 100 sawmill workers in Vancouver (all Chinese except for 6 white men), for a wage increase; successful.
- 1932 (August): strike of 50 men, whites and Japanese, in a Vancouver sawmill for a wage increase and reinstatement of fired Japanese strike organizers; temporarily successful (mill later closed down).
- 1932 (September): strike of 100 shingle mill workers in New Westminster, involving white, Japanese and East Indian strikers, for a wage increase; unsuccessful.

- 1932 (September): strike of 37 shingle mill workers in Vancouver (28 were Chinese) demanding the dismissal of the night foreman; unsuccessful.
- 1932 (November): strike of 190 sawmill workers in New Westminster, including whites, Japanese and East Indians, for higher wages; unsuccessful.
- 1933 (August): strike of 50 white and Asian shingle mill workers in New Westminster for a wage increase; successful.
- 1933 (September): strike of 1200 hop pickers in the Fraser Valley, 250 Japanese and 950 white men and women; demanding a wage increase, better living conditions; successful.
- 1935 (February): strike of white and Chinese shingle mill workers in Vancouver against a wage reduction; successful.
- 1935 (June): strike of 500 salmon trollers in the Gulf of Georgia, including some Japanese, seeking a price increase; successful.
- 1935 (August): strike of 32 Chinese and white shingle mill workers in New Westminster for a wage increase; successful.
- 1935 (September): strike of 1500 hop pickers in the Fraser Valley, involving Japanese and white men and women; demanding a wage increase, better living conditions; unsuccessful.
- 1936 (May): strike of 2000 lumber workers, Asian and white, in mills and logging camps throughout the coast; seeking wage increases (which some won) and union recognition (which none won).
- 1936 (June): strike of 270 salmon fishermen on the lower Fraser River (200 of whom were Japanese), in sympathy with a fishermen's strike on the upper Fraser River.
- 1937 (December): strike of Chinese shingle mill workers in New Westminster against a wage reduction; unsuccessful.

Sources: Canada, Department of Labour Strikes and Lockout Files, 1907-1939 (PAC, RG 27); Labour Gazette, 1900-1939; The Western Clarion, 1903-1920; The B.C. Trades Unionist, 1908-1909; The Western Wage Earner, 1909-1911; The British Columbia Federationist, 1911-1925; The British Columbia Labour News, 1921-1922; The Labour Statesman, 1924-1934; The Unemployed Worker, 1931-1934; The B.C. Worker's News, 1935-1937; The People's Advocate, 1937-1939; The Chinese Times (translations), 1914-1939; The Lumber Worker, 1932; and Gladstone and Jamieson, 1950.

Appendix B

Strikes Involving Women Workers in the Greater
Vancouver area, 1900-1939

1900-1916: 10 strikes

- 1902 (November): stike of Vancouver and New Westminster (female) telephone operators, (male) linemen and repairers for shorter hours, better pay, and union recognition; successful; operators earn \$20 to \$30 per month (6 to 8 hour day), while linemen earn \$18 to \$19.50 per week.
- 1903 (June): strike of male and female laundry workers in Vancouver for a wage increase and refusal to work with non-unionists; small wage increase won.
- 1906 (February): strike of 34 telephone operators and 20 (male) electrical workers in Vancouver and New Westminster for a closed union shop; unsuccessful; strikers replaced.
- 1907 (August): strike of 12 female fruit pickers in the Fraser Valley for a wage increase; successful.
- 1909 (March): strike of Vancouver tailors, 4 men and 3 women, refusing to work overtime without pay; piece rate instituted instead of hourly wage; strikers join the Tailors' Union.
- 1909 (October): strike of 45 tailors, including 13 women, in 32 firms in the Vancouver area; stike for wage increase; successful; male tailors win an increase from \$18 to \$20 per week; women work as piece workers, and win a 10% increase in piece rate; members of the Tailors' Union.
- 1913 (March): strike of 10 waitresses at the Ritz Cafe in Vancouver over the use of abusive language by male non-union cook; strikers are all members of the Waitresses' Union; unsuccessful, strikers were replaced.
- 1913 (August): strike of 21 garment workers in Vancouver, 12 of whom were women, for a 48 hour week with 54 hours pay; won 50 hour work week; all joined the Tailors' Union.
- 1915 (April): strike of 28 cloak and suit makers in Vancouver, including 19 women and girls, seeking regular working hours, higher wages and a union shop; all demands granted.
- 1916 (November): strike of 60 factory shoe makers in Vancouver, including 19 women (45 other workers remained at work), seeking a wage increase; a Christmas bonus was won; Boot and Shoe Workers' Union formed.

1917-1919: 10 strikes

- 1917 (March): strike of women laundry workers in Vancouver, to resist lowering of hours and wages (from 52 to 48); successful, previous conditions were restored.
- 1917 (April): strike of over 200 sugar refinery workers in Vancouver, including 40 women, for a 20% wage increase, union recognition, and reinstatement of a co-worker; only a 10% wage increase was granted to the men, nothing to the women workers; men earn \$4.80 for a 12 hour day, women earn \$1.50 to \$1.80 per 9 hour day; strike lasted 3 months and only half of the strikers returned to work after it was over.
- 1917 (October): strike of 12 waitresses at McLeod's Cafe in Vancouver seeking a wage increase, shorter hours, 1 day off in 7; strike began when 2 waitresses were fired for belonging to the Waitresses' Union; a settlement was reached in February with a \$10 minimum wage (per week), 8 hour day and 6 day week; but strikers had already been replaced.
- 1917 (November): strike of 179 butchers and meat cutters in 2 Vancouver plants, including 14 women; strike for a wage increase and shorter hours; 10% increase and time and a half for overtime won; members of the Butchers and Meat Cutters' Union.
- 1917 (November): strike of women laundry workers in Vancouver; 2 women were fired for trying to enforce the factory act (8 hour day); they were rehired; several weeks later 7 more women were fired; strike unsuccessful.
- 1918 (August): strike of 50 hotel and restaurant employees at the Hotel Vancouver, half of whom were women, for a wage increase and shorter hours; wage increase won; waiters earn \$36 a month, 55 hours a week; chambermaids earn \$22.50 a month, 50 hours a week.
- 1918 (September): strike of 290 laundry workers at 7 laundries in Vancouver, 236 strikers were women; for a wage increase and shorter hours, seeking \$12 minimum weekly wage for women (now \$8 to \$18) and \$24 minimum weekly wage for male drivers (now \$20 to \$30); only 2 firms agreed to the demands, 5 others hired strikebreakers; the strike was called off in December.
- 1919 (June): women workers participated in the Vancouver sympathy strike with the Winnipeg General Strike.
- 1919 (June): women workers participated in the New Westminster sympathy strike with the Winnipeg General Strike.

1919 (June): strike of 445 telephone employees in Vancouver, including 325 female operators, stayed out after the sympathy strike with the Winnipeg General Strike; male workers returned to work without discrimination but the company demoted women supervisors and senior operators who had struck, so both the men and women continued on strike, seeking no discrimination, until the middle of July; all were members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; unsuccessful.

1920-1930: 2 strikes

1926 (May): lockout of 6 union waitresses at a cafe in Vancouver; employer refused to pay new union scale; unsuccessful.

1926 (July): strike of up to 250 women at a Vancouver fruit and vegetable cannery, one third of the women were Japanese, the rest were white; strike for a wage increase in the piece rate; unsuccessful; 11 women were fired, strikebreakers were hired, and the rest were threatened with dismissal so they returned to work.

1931-1939: 21 strikes

1931 (February): strike of 11 waitresses in 2 Vancouver restaurants against a 20% reduction in wages; the Good Eats Cafe agreed to demands; the Boston Cafe replaced the strikers; 10 other restaurants withdrew a proposed wage reduction before the strike, but these employed primarily men; all members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union; waitresses received \$10 a week strike pay.

1931 (April): strike of 15 tailors, including 8 women, at 2 Vancouver tailor shops against a 10% wage reduction; successful; wages 91 cents an hour for (male) tailors, 63 cents an hour for (female) finishers, and 55 cents an hour for (female) helpers, all with a 44 hour week; members of the Tailors' Union.

1931 (June): strike of 2 men and 1 woman at a Vancouver tailor shop against a wage reduction involved in the change to a piece rate system; unsuccessful, strikers were replaced.

1933 (March): strike of 53 Vancouver tailors, including 34 women, for a wage increase and union recognition; outcome unknown.

1933 (August): strike of 9 employees of a Vancouver restaurant, including 4 women, for higher wages after a series of wage cuts; unsuccessful, strikers replaced; current wages: cooks \$26, waiters \$10, and waitresses \$8 per week (seeking \$36, \$12 and \$12 respectively).

- 1933 (September): strike of 1,200 white and Japanese hop pickers at a Fraser Valley Farm; included 700 men and 500 women striking for a wage increase and improved conditions in the Japanese camp; successful; organized under the W.U.L.
- 1933 (October): strike of 35 box factory workers in Vancouver, including 15 women, in resistance to a new system of operation; unsuccessful; no union involved.
- 1934 (April): strike of 93 male and female hopfield workers in the Fraser Valley, for increased wage and improved conditions; compromise won, wage increase from 20 to 25 cents an hour and abolition of the contract labour system.
- 1934 (August): strike of up to 80 (white) women in a Vancouver salmon cannery for a wage increase and reinstatement of co-worker; successful; organized under the W.U.L.; support from fishermen and Japanese and Chinese shoreworkers.
- 1935 (September): strike of 1,500 white and Japanese hop pickers in the Fraser Valley, two-thirds of whom were women; striking for a wage increase and better conditions; unsuccessful; strikers threatened with eviction.
- 1936 (August): strike of 29 waitresses and 1 waiter at the Melrosé Cafe in Vancouver, for a wage increase; successful 7 minute sit-down strike; waitresses earn from \$12 to \$14 a week; members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union.
- 1936 (September): strike of 12 waitresses and 2 waiters at the Trocadero Cafe in Vancouver for union wages; successful; waitresses earn \$12 to \$14, bussgirls \$10 per week; members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union.
- 1936 (December): strike of 200 workers, including 40 women, at the Burn's Meat Plant in Vancouver; strike started after 25 union members were fired, seeking reinstatement of co-workers and union recognition; strikebreakers hired; strike drags on until the spring, an enquiry recommends reinstatement of employees but the company refuses; unsuccessful.
- 1937 (February): strike of 6 waitresses at the Crescent Cafe in Vancouver (run by a Chinese man) for union wages; successful; waitresses earn between \$12 and \$14 per week; Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union organizes the strikers.
- 1937 (April): strike of 3 waiters and 1 waitress at the White Lunch Cafe in Vancouver; strike for the reinstatement of a women organizer and for union wages; successful, reinstatement and union recognition won but union wages are not won; members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union.

- 1937 (July): strike of 26 employees of the Hotel Georgia, including 6 waitresses, for a wage increase and union recognition; successful; members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union.
- 1937 (July): strike of 8 waitresses at Scott's Cafe in Vancouver for a wage increase and union recognition; successful; members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union.
- 1937 (September): strike of cooks, waiters and waitresses at the Hudson Bay Restaurant in Vancouver; strike over the firing of a cook with 20 years service; successful in only 20 minutes.
- 1937 (November): strike of 7 waitresses at the Royal Cafe in New Westminster; sit-down strike for the reinstatement of a fired union waitress; successful; members of Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union; (although union members these workers do not receive the union scale, waitresses earn only \$9.50 per week for 8 hours, 6 days).
- 1938 (November): strike of bakers in Vancouver (19 men) began in November and dragged on until the spring; in February 10 female bakery workers joined the strike to force the company to accept an arbitration award handed down in October.
- 1939 (April): 105 workers at a Vancouver shoe factory, including 27 women, struck against a 10% wage decrease; unsuccessful, plant closes and reopens with reduced staff; workers attempting to unionize.

Sources: Canada, Department of Labour Strikes and Lockout Files, 1907-1939 (PAC, RG 27); Labour Gazette, 1900-1939; The Western Clarion, 1903-1920; The B.C. Trades Unionist, 1908-1909; The Western Wage Earner, 1909-1911; The British Columbia Federationist, 1911-1925; The British Columbia Labour News, 1921-1922; The Labour Statesman, 1924-1934; The Unemployed Worker, 1931-1934; The B.C. Worker's News, 1935-1937; The People's Advocate, 1937-1939; Bernard, 1982; and Rosenthal, 1979.

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