

\$1600-\$1700 per year. For a family with an income of less than \$9,000 the government will subsidize part of the cost. This of course helps some, but not nearly enough.

Consider this. The 1975 poverty line for the average Canadian family of four in a city the size of Halifax was \$8,422. So if, for example, it takes two breadwinners to earn \$8,300 they will receive some government subsidy for daycare. But it will still cost them \$1,056 a year to put two children in a daycare centre — provided there is a centre to put them in.

The high cost of daycare diminishes the economic benefits of working for the woman, to the point where it often hardly seems worth it. It also forces alternate child care arrangements which many times are substandard.

#### Makeshift Child Care Arrangements

Many women share similar problems. In 1975 there were about 10,000 children under 5 years of age whose mothers

worked here in Nova Scotia. Yet there were accommodations for only about 1,200 children in publicly subsidized daycare centres. Who cares for these children while their mothers are away? Most children are looked after by relatives, friends, neighbours and hired babysitters, often under makeshift conditions.

The following report about a low-income family with one child illustrates the problems working mothers and their families face: "Both parents work in shifts. The mother sleeps during the day, the father is out to work, and their child of three is left to roam the house alone. The neighbours say that the little girl spends most of her days in the window, watching the activities in the neighbourhood..." It can't be said that this mother doesn't care about her child; she just has no alternatives.

And what happens when a child gets sick? In most cases, the mother has to stay home from work. Because of these

kinds of circumstances, working mothers with young children are considered "unreliable" workers. Worse yet, when a mother has to stay home to look after her sick child, she usually loses her wages and maybe even her job. So that badly needed, low-paying job which is hard enough to get is harder still to keep if you are the mother of young children.

#### Our Double Workload

Despite the fact that more married women are working outside the home, new ways of organizing housework have not been introduced. Each woman must still do housework each day for her individual family.

Since the total family income of most working women is low, many of the modern convenient appliances are out of their reach. Two people must work to buy even the required appliances such as fridge and stove.

Contrary to public opinion, then, work in the home has not decreased very much. Therefore women with families who work outside the home really have two jobs - one that they are paid very little for and one that they are not paid to do at all.

#### Women Are In The Workforce To Stay

Most of us work out of necessity: because of a low family income.

Most of us have low-paid, low-skilled jobs because we are considered a source of cheap labour!

Being forced to do cheap labour cheapens the labour of our male co-workers which contributes to the old game of dividing workers from each other. Men really have nothing to gain from our more meagre wages. They can improve their own conditions only by also helping us win our fight for better jobs and for equal pay for equal work.

So it is clear that we are forced to work and we don't work for "pin money". Most of us are eager to join our male brothers in the workforce. It widens our horizons and makes us understand the common problems that all workers face in their struggle against profit-hungry bosses.

The fact that we women also need our own organizations to press for daycare, maternity benefits, job security, and more equal treatment on the job is for the good of us all. Together we hope to overcome the enforced conditions which keep men and women apart and to forge a new fighting spirit of common solidarity.

[Pat Connelly, Joyce Conrad and Sharon Stolzman are all members of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre.]



# 1400 laid off in Trenton We can't live on promises

by David Gutnick

Trenton as well as the rest of Pictou county has a long history of industrial development. Shipbuilding, mining, and heavy manufacturing have generated much employment during this century and the latter decades of the last. Today, the Hawker-Siddeley Railcar Plant stands in mute testimony to that fact.

Hawker-Siddeley, of England, is an international heavy manufacturing empire with more than 98,000 employees in over 200 separate companies around the world. Besides the Trenton plant, which employs at peak production upwards of 1700 persons, the Company owns the largest shipbuilding and repairing facility in the Maritimes—the Halifax Shipyards.

Ability to produce does in no way guarantee production however. Since late October 1976, the work force in the plant has been greatly reduced in various stages as work along the assembly lines and in the assorted shops was completed. Machinery that could be used in manufacturing goods, needed for the well-being of people lies idle while highly skilled workers with years of experience in a certain trade walk the streets. Much can be attributed to a lack of planning and well reasoned foresight on the part of Hawker-Siddeley and its major customer, the Canadian Government.

#### SITUATION REMAINS GRAVE

Despite a recent work order by the Federal Government for 688 boxcars, the situation in Trenton remains grave. "Simply because," J.K. Bell, longtime trade unionist and

Secretary-Treasurer of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour argues "688 boxcars won't keep the men working for much longer than three months. Once the order is filled it will be another long wait...perhaps as long as six months." And even after this nothing remains sure.

Even before the contract announcement was made, Leo McKay, a former employee at the steelworks and now Executive-Secretary of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour was vocal in his pronouncement on the plant's future. "If we receive let's say, those three thousand boxcars promised to us in December when we visited the Federal Transport Minister Otto Lang, we still must remember that all they are doing is advancing an order. The government has only so many boxcars they want built and what ever they give us ahead of time is only coming off the other end. When we finish with this group there is no assurance that there will be more work to do. And, because there exists that possibility, it means shutting down all over again." Other trade unionists are equally concerned. Financial-Secretary for the Local representing the Trenton workers United Steelworkers #1231 Earl MacKenzie says that, "the six-hundred and eighty-eight boxcars will ensure jobs for only one half to two thirds of the available workforce, that is, over a seventeen week production period, six to nine hundred people will have work while the rest remain jobless."

#### FAMILY HARDSHIPS

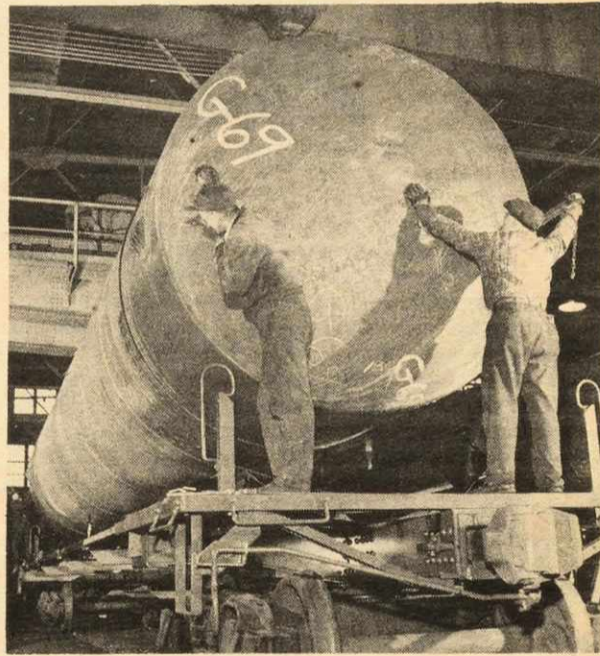
Official government statistics calculate unemployment in the province at 9.9 per cent. Unofficial statistics peg it much higher, perhaps twice as high. And these figures in no way fully explain the urgency of the situation. The cost of unemployment in the Trenton area, as indeed all areas where unemployment exists, can only be explained in terms of lost opportunities, lost incentive, and family hardships.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour has for many years been fighting for labour's interest in this province. It has been Bell's responsibility to negotiate with the government and private industry in an attempt to hammer out of them commitments conducive to the well-being of workers. It is not an easy task given the unplanned and chaotic pattern of Nova Scotia's growth. "The effects of such anarchy—because that's what it is—are multifold" says Bell.

"Whenever business slumps, and it's been doing that more and more frequently in the last fifteen years, working people suffer. It's not the Hawker-Siddeley owners or major stockholders who have their comfortable lives upset when profits dip. What sort of system do we have that can kick skilled workers with thirty and thirty five years of seniority in the steel industry on to the street without any security for themselves or their families?"

#### INVENTORY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Bell pulls no punches about what is happening in



Trenton. "It's another example of how some huge company is out to make a fast buck. And as soon as the profit-taking slows from a gallop to a trot...they leave and don't give a tinker's damn about the mess they've left behind."

In an attempt to combat the deteriorating and dismal prospects facing Trenton, the NSFL has organized what it calls the Inventory Support Program. The programme is a list of recommendations drawn up by organized labour with the expressed purpose of forcing government and private industry into a position where they would recognize their immediate and long term responsibilities to both the employees and the community.

Knowing as well as they do that private companies and their government allies have failed to demonstrate a liking for labour's interests, the workers in Trenton have been unified in fighting back. According to Earl MacKenzie, the support could not be better. "On October 14, the National Day of Protest, we had 100 per cent agreement among our people to go out. That same feeling is present now."

It is clear from the events in Trenton that a program to distribute work is only a short term solution to a major problem. Private industry will not consent to any program that harms its opportunity at profit. Thus it is only through concerted efforts that organized labour will be able to bring about a planned economy and all the benefits that accrue from it.

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