

From a new book

# A woman's guide to work

Cape Breton freelance writer and broadcaster Susan Perly has just published a forty-eight page book entitled **Women and the Law in Nova Scotia**. It is an introduction to all aspects of federal and provincial law which affect women — marriage, divorce, support, maternity, sex, crime, political and human rights, day care, work and others. It is written in a straightforward, non-technical style, and provides basic information which all women in Nova Scotia should know. Most of the book will also be valuable to women in the other Atlantic provinces. Copies of the book may be obtained from Resource Education Project, Box 847, Middleton, N.S. Price is 30 cents.

## You get paid less

Women who work at the same jobs as men almost always get paid less. Across Canada, this is true in jobs which pay hourly, weekly, or monthly, in traditionally male jobs, in traditionally female jobs, in jobs from assembly line work to university teaching. For example:

Hourly rates across Canada in 1973:

	female	male
fish cutter	\$1.64	\$2.13
sewing machine operator (women's clothing)	2.30	3.31
laundry presser	2.12	2.59

(A 50 cent an hour difference in wages means \$1000 a year difference in over-all salary.)

Weekly rates in Halifax in 1973:

Senior accounting clerk	\$121	\$163
Class 'B' retail sales clerk	71	129

Despite women's growing awareness that they have been, and continue to be paid less than men for doing the same or similar work, despite Human Rights legislation and a Labour Standards Code, the gap between male and female salaries gets wider every year.

## The gap grows

The gap between male and female salaries across Canada:

	in 1967	in 1972
clerical	\$1,925	\$2,807
sales	3,804	5,796
service	2,594	4,581
transportation & communication	2,080	4,033

**The law has not made a dent in reversing this trend; women's position at work is relatively worse now than it was ten years ago.** An employer can't pay a woman less than a man for doing "substantially the same work, performed in the same establishment, the performance of which requires substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility and which is performed under similar working conditions."

This law is virtually impossible to enforce. The word "substantially" is very ambiguous. It could be fairly easy for an employer to show how 'substantially' different the work or responsi-

For every woman who becomes a telephone line worker, how many become telephone operators?

Women in Canada are:

97% of typists,
95.3% of telephone operators,
93.7% of nurses,
80.1% of elementary teachers,
82.2% of bank tellers and cashiers, and only:
7.7% of doctors,
4.1% of lawyers.
3.1% of dentists,

In fact, women now hold a smaller percentage of professional jobs than they did in 1911.

Of all women working in Canada in 1974 63.5% were in clerical, sales or service jobs. Only 2.7% of women working were in management jobs. Remarkably, that's a smaller percentage than were in management jobs in 1962 (3.7%) or 1972 (4.2%).

One of the most important trends in the labour force is the great number of married women entering the workplace. Across Canada, in 1964 married women made up 51.1% of the female labour force. By 1974, married women were 57.1% of the female labour force.

Fewer women are employed in this part of the country than in provinces such as Quebec, Ontario or British Columbia. But fewer men are employed here too. The tight economic conditions, the movement of people and industry in and out of the region keeps work life insecure and constantly in flux.

There are some legitimate reasons for paying one worker more than another: experience, more training, skills, or responsibility. These should be the criteria for deciding differences in pay.

There are very few jobs that absolutely need one sex or another to fill them. Two examples are sperm donor or wet nurse. There aren't many others.

In the United States, two categories for which the workers' sex is a bona fide occupational qualification have been adopted: 1 Authenticity: actresses, bunny girls, models for clothing, jobs needing 'sex appeal'. 2 Community standards of morality and decency: washroom attendants, fitters for clothing, security guards who might be asked to search women.

Employers keep women out of jobs for personal reasons, and because of irrational prejudices. An employer might think that if the other employees are mostly men, they will resent a female employee. Or the customers or clients might object. They might want to stick with tradition where a job has 'always' been held by a man. The job may involve heavy physical labour, late night work, work in isolated areas, or unpleasant surroundings. The job may involve travel alone or with members of the

by Susan Perly  
have to work to help support a family; their husband's income is not enough. This is especially true in the Maritimes.  
Myth: Women don't work for very long, they leave for marriage and children.  
Fact: Women rarely leave work just for marriage, although women leave temporarily to have children. Many women would continue to work if they could find adequate day care.



Cheryl Lean

Myth: Women are absent from work more than men.

Fact: The percentage of men and women taking time off from work is about the same. Women take shorter, more frequent times off. Men take fewer periods off than women, but take them for longer.

## Equal pay for work of equal value

The wage discrimination which women face is built into a structure which puts women and men into different jobs. Traditionally 'male' characteristics have been given a higher value in our society. So man who lifted heavy cartons of delicate instruments got paid more than the woman who assembled the instruments. Equal pay for work of equal value means an employer assesses the value to him of the work each person does. For example, how seriously would a worker's error affect the whole operation, how much training does she need, how many people does she supervise.

In 1951, the International Labour Organization, of which Canada is a member, supported a resolution calling for equal pay for work of equal value. Canada finally ratified it in 1972, which means this country supports the principle and should be taking action to enforce it legally. Nothing has been done.

## Wages for housework?

When a woman marries, she in a sense contracts to marry a household as well as a man. As legal wives, women gain the right to be supported and they are in turn expected to supply domestic services.

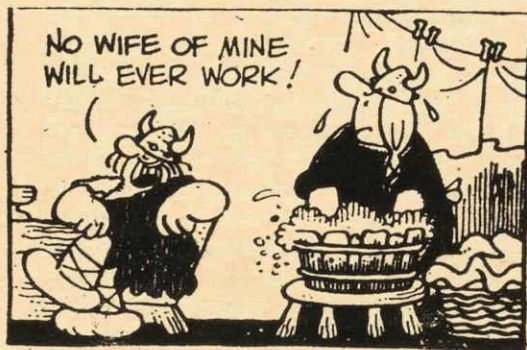
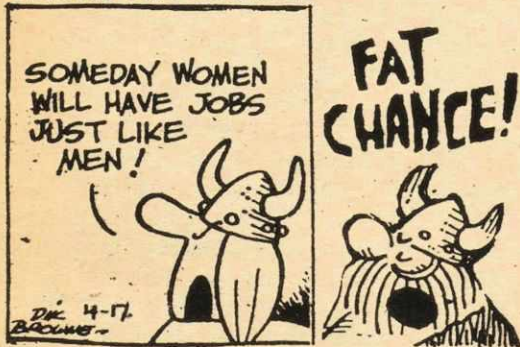
A husband's support is a form of payment, but in our present economy work which isn't directly paid in cash has far less status than paid work. Many women feel their housework should be legally recognized by making them salaried workers.

Unpaid housework already has an important social value in our economy. Women keep the present and future labour forces fed, clothed and cleaned. Men can better survive the burdens of their work precisely because they have wives who take care of the house and the children. And when the economy needs extra workers, women at home provide a handy source of extra labour.

Women perform socially useful work, yet it is done in a socially wasteful way. Housework is rarely done in the actual time needed; a day's work runs as long as the day itself. There is no beginning or end to the work: sparkling floors soon muddy, made beds and ironed shirts rumple, tasty meals become piles of dirty dishes. And the work is drawn out, punctuated by continual family crises.

In all logic, to recognize the work women do at home as vital to our economy work would mean to make it more efficient, for example, to

## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



bility was. Also, a woman has to be working in the same establishment as a male. Many women workers are segregated into 'female' jobs and can't directly compare their work with that of a man.

In the past few years more women have been trained for, and entered into, jobs traditionally held by men: carpentry, engineering, truck driving, telephone repair work.

These efforts are important in breaking down employers' resistance to hiring women for certain jobs. But, most women workers are in the same kinds of jobs they were in 50 years ago.

A Nova Scotia report in 1929 showed that women worked in the personal service sector, the clerical sector, and the lower paying jobs in manufacturing. Professional women were mostly teachers and nurses. Not much has changed.

opposite sex. The employer may think a job needs qualities which he sees a belonging to only one sex: for example, women are tactful, men aggressive. None of these reasons are legitimate reasons for refusing a woman a job.

## Myths about working women

Job training for women, application forms for work, pay scales, maternity leave, and day care policies are determined largely by popular myths about women and work. Some of them are:

Myth: Women are not serious workers. Their attachment to the labour force is only temporary.  
Fact: In 1971, nearly half the women in the Canadian labour force were wholly or partly supporting themselves or others. Many women have to work; they are divorced, widowed, single, separated. Also, many married women