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## WOMEN IN CANADA

Since the Second World War, great changes have taken place in Canada. The population has been growing rapidly because of a high birth rate (the seventh highest in the world and the second highest among developed countries) and because of large-scale immigration. Each year, Canada has become more industrialized, and this has resulted in a steady movement of people into the cities. Though fewer Canadians are today engaged in agriculture, the production of food, especially wheat, Canada's main agricultural export, has increased because of improved mechanized methods of farming.

High employment and high wages, combined with a good supply of consumer goods, have produced a society in which the majority of the people has achieved a middle-class status. Compulsory and free elementary education for boys and girls and such social security measures as Family Allowances, old-age pensions and unemployment insurance have also had a levelling effect on Canadian society.

Canadian women have been particularly affected by this rapid revolution from a pioneer agricultural society into an urban middle-class society. The pattern of their lives has also been changed by new factory techniques and by labour-saving devices for the home.

### On the Farm

Country life is not as lonely or as arduous for Canadian farm wives as it was a generation ago. Rural electrification has brought light, running water and an automatic washing machine into most farm homes. The telephone, radio and television have brought women into touch with the outside world as never before. The improvement in roads and the greater use of snow plows in winter have enabled them to visit neighbours, go to church, attend meetings of the Women's Institutes and other social gatherings, as well as to do their shopping in what were once distant villages or towns. Nevertheless, many farm wives still buy the family clothing and household furnishings out of the illustrated catalogues issued by the mail-order divisions of several large department stores.

The diversity of Canada's geography makes it impossible to generalize about the way farm women live. Although the country has a small population (19,102,000 on January 1, 1964), its territory is the second largest in the world. It stretches 4,000 miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and in the North borders on the Arctic Ocean. This vast area includes mountains, rocky wooded areas populated only by mining communities and trappers, large tracts of timber, small farms and the type familiar to Europeans, wide prairies where the growing of wheat and other cereal crops is big business, and rolling foothill country given over to the raising of cattle.

In the East (Quebec, the Atlantic Provinces and Ontario), "mixed farming" on small holdings is usual and the farm wife still performs the traditional chores of growing the vegetables, feeding the chickens and collecting the eggs. "Egg money" is one of her time-honoured sources of private income.

On the other hand, on the prairies of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, farms ranging from 300 to several thousand acres are often entirely mechanized, so that the farmer's wife need do little more out-of-door work than she would if she lived in the suburbs of an urban community. The same is true of the wife of the man operating a big cattle ranch in the foothill country of Alberta. When times are good, many Western farmers and their wives travel during the winter months or move into town until it is time for spring seeding.

Of course, the many women living in the far North or in sparsely-populated parts of the country lead a restricted social life, especially in the winter; but, because of the radio and the aeroplane, they are no longer cut off as in the past.

### City Housewives

An ever-increasing number of Canadian women now live in towns and cities. Many young married couples occupy a small apartment in "centre town" during their first years of marriage until they have saved enough money for the down-payment on a house, usually in the suburbs. Home ownership is important to family security as well as to social prestige. Often, when the family has grown up, older couples move back from the suburbs to a city apartment.

The average Canadian house has four or five rooms and is either detached or semi-detached. In a climate where heating is needed for eight out of the 12 months, the cost of fuel is an important item in the budget, so that most Canadian homes have small rooms and are only two storeys high. In recent years, "ranch-style bungalows" and "split-level" one-and-a-half storey houses have become popular, even though they cost more to heat.

As of May 1963, 98.7 Canadian housewives out of 100 had electricity; 82.6 per cent had either gas or an electric cooking stove; 90.9 per cent had a furnace that burnt gas, coal or oil; 94.2 per cent had an electric refrigerator; 86.8 had an electric washing machine; 92.4 had running water; 96.3 per cent had a radio and 89.8 per cent television; and 87.3 per cent had a telephone.

Most Canadian women do their own housework and look after their own children. The cook-general and nursemaid have practically vanished from the scene, and those few who do remain demand such high wages that few housewives can afford to employ them. As a result, even business girls living alone in apartments do their own domestic chores, perhaps with help of a weekly cleaning woman, as do the mothers of large families in every walk of life. Visitors from other countries are often surprised to find that the wives of many cabinet ministers, top civil servants and highly-paid executives do their own housework. In some cases, women wishing to entertain rely on persons paid by the hour to cook and serve a meal or cater for a reception.

The "baby sitter" has taken the place of the nursemaid of the past. High-school and college students of both sexes, older women or housewives, who want to earn a few dollars a week without being tied down, will visit a house to stay with the children when their parents go out. Many "baby sitters" are only willing to sit in the livingroom reading, doing lessons or watching television.

Others, for an extra wage, will wash dishes, mend and sometimes cook and take over for a week-end. In most cities, a home-maker's service is available in case of illness, and visiting nurses will also come to the house when necessary.

The housewife's job has also been made easier by the "shopping centre". Even quite new suburban communities are now being served by specially-built centres which usually include a self-service food store, a bank, a hair-dressing salon, a dry-cleaning business, a drugstore, and often a branch of a big department store. Such centres usually have large parking lots, which means that many housewives need rarely go into the heart of the city.

The shopping centre has become a social meeting place, rather like the village well in Asia or the back fence in small towns, at which busy women talk together for a few minutes. This is particularly true of the cash-and-carry chain store, where the shoppers themselves select the merchandise they want to buy. A large variety of food is carefully packaged and displayed on convenient shelves in these "super-markets". Wire express wagons, often with a seat for a baby, are supplied at the door. Women wheel them round as they help themselves to cereals, canned goods, frozen fish and vegetables, milk, cheese, and a great variety of cake and biscuit mixes. Large meat-counters hold all cuts of meat already weighed and wrapped in cellophane, but butchers are also in attendance to supply special demands. Improved storage and transportation methods make it possible for Canadian housewives to have a supply of fresh vegetables and fruits throughout the year.

### Voluntary Organizations

Canadian women are making a great contribution to the life of the country through membership in voluntary organizations. Many farm women belong to the Women's Institutes, which are affiliated with the Associated Country Women of the World. The Women's Institutes were started in Canada by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, of Stoney Creek, Ontario, who felt that farm women could help themselves to be more efficient wives and mothers by getting together to study nutrition, hygiene and home economics. For many months, she travelled about the country lecturing to small groups of women. The idea caught on and spread not only to every part of Canada but to 40 other countries. In 1964, there were 4000 Women's Institutes in Canada with a membership of 75,000 women.

City housewives often belong to such organizations as church bodies, parent-teacher groups, reading clubs or service clubs which require members to do voluntary work for the community every week. Many women who do not belong to a service club register with a volunteer bureau run by the Council of Social Agencies; in due course, they are placed where their particular skills can do most good. Canadian volunteers are busy taking case histories in hospitals, driving crippled children to clinics, doing group work in the YWCA, assisting in Red Cross blood-donors' clinics, and helping with group work activities and a score of other projects. Women also earn money for worthwhile projects by putting on bazaars, running second-hand clothing stores and organizing charity balls and theatrical entertainment. Every year, an army of volunteers canvass for social and service agencies dependent on public subscriptions for support.

The National Council of Women, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the University Women's Clubs and the Canadian Association of Consumers are highly efficient pressure groups that can be credited with persuading the federal, provincial and municipal governments to bring in many needed reforms.

## Education

Every year, in increasing numbers, Canadian women are achieving a higher education. In 1962-63 the percentage increase in the enrolment of women was 15.4 per cent while the increase in the enrolment of men was only 7.7 per cent. In spite of this continuing trend, male undergraduates and graduate students in Canadian universities greatly outnumber their female counterparts. (In 1963, undergraduate enrolment was 36,955 women and 95,997 men. Graduate students numbered 8,436 men and 1,276 women.)

## At Work

Most Canadian women expect to work when they finish their formal education. In this century there has indeed been a dramatic increase in the number of Canadian women who hold paid jobs. In 1911, only 13 per cent of the people in the labour force were women; today 28 per cent are women, the increase being chiefly due to the fact that there are more job opportunities for women. The increasing complexity of production processes has meant that craftsmen have been replaced by machine operators, many of them women. Changed factory techniques have also enabled women to do work which was once too heavy for them. The growth of record-keeping and other office jobs has also provided more openings. Perhaps most important of all, women have so proved their worth during two world wars that prejudice against hiring them is rapidly disappearing.

Today, Canadian women are doing practically every job on the list of the National Employment Service. For example, women are now aviators, veterinarians, morticians, lumber "jills", trappers and welders. Furthermore, their main occupations have changed greatly over the years.

Fifty years ago, the majority of women workers were employed as seamstresses, milliners or domestic servants. Today, women at work are concentrated in the following occupations: typists and stenographers, 97 per cent; nurses, 96 per cent; teachers, 70.7 per cent; service occupation, 58 per cent; household workers, 96 per cent.\*

## Married Women at Work

The "average" Canadian woman marries when she is 23 a man who is three years her senior. She will have an average of 3.8 children. Very often, particularly in towns and cities, the young wife continues to work "until the baby comes". Unless there is grave financial necessity, most Canadian women prefer not to take paid jobs outside the home while their children are of pre-school age. Every year, however, more and more "mechanized" households have helped make it possible for women to work both inside and outside the home. By 1964, half the women in the labour force were married. The greatest number of working wives are between the ages of 45 and 64; they are women whose children are at school or have grown up and left home.

## Working Conditions

In general, both men and women are protected by the same laws on minimum wages, maximum hours, unemployment insurance, holidays, vacations, workmen's compensation and fair-employment practices which forbid discrimination on grounds of race, colour, religion or

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\* (For further details see: OCCUPATIONAL TRENDS IN CANADA, Report II, 1963, Department of Labour.)

national origin. There are, however, some health and safety welfare provisions which apply particularly to women workers. For example, women working in factories are required to wear a suitable head covering to prevent their hair from catching in moving machinery. In all provinces, women are prohibited from working underground in mines. In the Province of Quebec, women are prohibited from working in abattoirs and in factories where there are poisonous fumes or where explosives are handled. In British Columbia and Manitoba, restrictions have been placed on the weights women may lift.

There is considerable diversity in labour laws as, under the British North America Act, the written part of the Canadian Constitution, most labour legislation comes under provincial jurisdiction.

By and large, though the working woman is now recognized as making a great economic contribution to Canadian society, women are still paid less than men, often enough when they perform work of comparable value. This is partly the result of the tradition that women are found in the less well-paid occupations, partly owing to the fact that they are less active in unions than men, and partly because the majority of them are unorganized white-collar workers. This situation has been improving slowly in recent years. More unions demand equal-pay clauses in their contracts. Eight provinces and the Federal Government have passed equal-pay laws. Women have received equal pay for equal work in the Civil Service and in the Armed Services.

It is still true that women find it difficult to achieve executive positions and are often passed over when promotions take place. This can usually be accounted for by their own attitude toward their work: many women fail to obtain the training they need or perhaps do not work as hard at making a career for themselves as a man does because they expect to marry and look on a job as a temporary stop-gap.

In 1954, the Federal Government set up a Women's Bureau under the Department of Labour. The Bureau is now engaged in research on the needs of women workers and the social implications involved in the increased number of married women working outside the home.

### Citizenship

Canadian women have full citizenship rights. When a Canadian woman marries an alien, she retains her Canadian citizenship. An alien woman marrying a Canadian citizen and legally admitted to Canada is eligible for citizenship after one year's residence.

### Legal Rights

Single women have the same legal rights as men in every part of Canada.

In nine of the ten provinces, the civil law is based on the Common Law of England. There are minor legal variations in each province, but in all of them a married woman has full legal rights. She may enter into contract, administer her own property and keep her own earnings. She and her husband have equal rights and obligations for the care, custody and discipline of their children.

Until 1964, the status of married women in Quebec was different from that obtaining in the other nine provinces. There is a historical reason for this. The Treaty of Paris, signed in Britain in 1774, guaranteed the French-speaking people living in what is now the Province of Quebec the right to keep the civil law under which they had been governed for over 200 years when they were members of a

colony of France. In 1866 these laws were codified into the Civil Code of the Province of Quebec. In the following year, the British North America Act gave exclusive jurisdiction of property and civil rights to the provinces.

Under the Quebec Code, a married woman suffered under legal incapacities which made it necessary for her to get her husband's signature in order to appear in judicial proceedings, give, accept, sell or dispose of property during her lifetime (though she could dispose of it by will without authorization or consent), and enter into contracts or obligations.

In 1964, these and other antiquated incapacities were removed, thanks to a bill passed by the Quebec Legislature. This bill was introduced by a woman, a Minister-without-Portfolio, Madame Claire Kirkland-Casgrain, a young lawyer with three small children, who in 1961 became the first woman ever to be elected to the Quebec Legislature. In her maiden speech, she promised to fight until married women in the French province received the same rights as those enjoyed for so long by women in the other nine provinces. When she was elevated to Cabinet rank, she spent many months getting public support for her bill before successfully steering it through the all-male Legislature.

### Politics

Canadian women have had the right to vote and hold public office since 1919. (The Province of Quebec did not give women the franchise until 1940, though the Federal Government and the other nine provinces had done so 21 years before.)

In 1964, there were six women in the Senate (Senators are appointed by the Prime Minister). Four women were elected to the 265-Member House of Commons in 1962. Three of them belong to the Liberal Party: Miss Judy LaMarsh, a lawyer, Dr. Pauline Jewett, a professor of political science; and Mrs. Gordon Konantz, a volunteer social worker. One is a member of the Progressive-Conservative Party - Mrs. Jean Casselman, the daughter of a former Cabinet Minister and the widow of a Member of Parliament whose former constituency she represents.

Many Canadian women serve on school boards and city councils. A number are reeves and mayors. The best known is Miss Charlotte Whitton, three times elected Mayor of Ottawa, the National Capital.

Canadian women have also distinguished themselves in the Armed Services, the Civil Service and as members of Canadian delegations to the United Nations General Assembly and to other international conferences.

Canadian women make a great social and cultural contribution through the voluntary work they do in a wide variety of organizations.

The National Council of Women, the Women's Institutes, the Federation of Professional and Business Women's Clubs, the Federation of University Women and the Consumers Association of Canada have over the years made Governments aware of the needs of women. They are in large part responsible for the present high status and equality enjoyed today by women in every part of Canada.