

The book emphasises the struggles of Muslim women within the larger community. The reader learns how, through the establishment of their own community (by building a mosque in Edmonton and establishing the Canadian Council of Muslim Women), these women have reclaimed their distinct identity and have made a positive impact on their new society. What is missing is an account of the women's struggles in their intimate, domestic lives. Did migration change these women's self-images and expectations? Did it have a lasting impact on family dynamics and gender relations within the community? Regrettably, doors remain closed to these aspects of the life experiences of Muslim women.

*Reading Rights*, the second book, represents a commendable example of the active involvement of the Council of Muslim Women in the civic life of the larger community. The book provides source material in a very accessible language and form (using graphics and cartoons), aiming to answer the most common questions regarding the concept of rights. Various sections in the book provide a general guide to the law in Canada, including the areas of social life that are covered by the provisions of human rights legislation, employment-related rights, and laws regarding marriage and divorce. The objectives of the Guide, despite the fact that it covers a wide range of subjects, are quite modest, having in mind "ordinary women," as outlined in the preface and introduction. The goal is to educate and empower women - that is, to create an awareness about women's legal rights and when and how to go about asserting one's legal rights. Unfortunately, often these rights are not discussed with specific references to the laws. The book, however, contains a useful list of other sources of information and a list of women's organizations in Canada should the reader need to seek information on specific subjects covered in the book.

## REFERENCES

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Haideh Moghissi  
York University

***Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship***. Leah Vosko. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000; 380 pgs; ISBN 080208334x; \$27.95.

It is over a decade since the now-defunct Economic Council of Canada's 1990 report *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: Employment in the Service Economy* alerted Canadians to an important set of changes in the labour market. Since the 1980s, the postwar norm of full-time, full-year jobs, each with its own career ladder, has become increasingly less common, while self-employment, part-time and temporary work together have come to account for the majority of new jobs. Leah Vosko's *Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship* affords an in-depth analysis of one of the "new" forms of precarious work - the temporary help industry (THI).

In fact, Vosko argues, this form of employment relation is not new. Before governments began to lay the basis for the "standard employment relationship" that became the normative postwar model, private employment agents played an important role, especially in intermediating the flow of immigrant labour. When national and provincial governments, spurred on by the International Labour Organization (ILO), took steps to prohibit or at least to regulate their operation, however, the typewriter companies began to carve out a special niche in the labour market, as suppliers of native born, female clerical workers. Conditions in the postwar era were ripe for the expansion of the THI. On the one hand, the establishment of collective bargaining rights and the development of social insurance systems helped to establish the "standard employment relation" as the norm for many male workers. On the other, the postwar ideology of domesticity provided a ready supply of workers prepared to accept temporary positions.

As that postwar order began to crumble in the 1970s, the THI began to change its role, from supplier of "stopgap labour" to purveyor of "staffing services." This expanded its sectoral and occupational reach to include scientists, lawyers, computer programmers, nurses and managers, as well as the clerical workers of "Kelly Girl" fame. With this shift the industry has also changed its gender composition, growing to include male as

well as female workers. In addition, it offers a wider (but highly polarized) range of incomes and benefit packages. Nevertheless, Vosko argues, the THI retains a markedly "feminized" character. The casualization of employment typical of this sector "means that more forms of employment resemble 'women's work,' not only the types of employment relationships that women are normally confined to and/or the type of employment contracts to which they are often subject...but also the inferior conditions of employment that women frequently face related to both their presumed role in social reproduction and their 'presumed' status as 'secondary' breadwinners" (162).

The THI employment form, its terms and conditions, are richly documented in chapters four and five. In chapter seven, moreover, Vosko shows how the THI has become implicated in the broader shift from the "welfare" to the "workfare" state (Peel municipality's "Workfirst" program, launched under the Harris government's Ontario Works Act). These developments are set in relation to the global onslaught against the Keynesian-Welfare form of state. Yet Vosko is clear in her rejection of Margaret Thatcher's dictum, "There is No Alternative." Just as countries varied in response to earlier efforts by the ILO to establish that "labour is not a commodity," so too in the era of "globalization" have their responses to the casualization of labour differed. She documents the way a variety of the Organization For Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries - and, within Canada, the province of Quebec - have sought to mitigate this trend. It is thus not surprising that her conclusion tackles the question of "what is to be done" head on. Here Vosko is less concerned with reforms to social insurance systems that would counter (rather than exacerbate, as Canada's Employment Insurance Act has done) the spread of precarious work, than with new forms of unionization. This is certainly consistent with a theoretical thread that runs through the book - the need to assert, against the grain of capitalism, that "labour is not a commodity." Yet it also reflects her underlying understanding that the most important form of empowerment comes from the ability to organize and act collectively.

This book thus offers a richly textured feminist and socialist analysis of a very important set of developments. It is a superb example of

contemporary political economy, locating an apparently "new" trend in a broader historical perspective, deploying a range of methodological tools to probe its contemporary functioning, and, through careful policy analysis, reminding us that the rapid expansion of the THI is not the "natural" outcome of "globalization" or "postindustrialism." Rather it results from (reversible) political decisions. Vosko also begins to show us how to do good political economy in an era when the "national" is no longer the primary political locus - when the local and the global have gained a new prominence. Her approach is exemplary in that it works simultaneously at the supranational (ILO), comparative national, provincial and local levels.

## REFERENCES

*Good Jobs, Bad Jobs : Employment in the Service Economy: a Statement.* Ottawa : The Council, 1990.

Rianne Mahon  
Carleton University

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*A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood.* Kim Anderson. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2000; bibliography; reference list/biographies; 320 pages; ISBN 1-896764-27-4; \$19.95.

In *A Recognition of Being*, Kim Anderson explores the gender traditions of various First Nations, explains how these female-centered or gender-balanced societies became patriarchal as a result of colonization, and suggests approaches to reconstructing a Native female identity for the twenty-first century. Her text builds on a body of writing that includes Laguna writer Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Tradition* and Métis writer Janice Acoose's *Iskwewak. Kah'Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*. Anderson takes the realities described by such texts as a framework and provides a model for the rebuilding of an indigenous female identity, one that takes both past traditions and contemporary practices into account.

In her first chapter, Anderson explains who