Mabel F. Timlin, 1891-1976: A Woman Economist in The World of Men

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ABSTRACT

Mabel Timlin, FRSC (1891-1976), was the first woman full professor of economics in Canada. During her long career at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, she developed a new interpretation of Keynesian economics, published books and articles on economic theory and immigration policy, and taught and influenced hundreds of students.

RÉSUMÉ

Mabel Timlin, FRSC (1891-1976), fut la première femme professeur d'économie au Canada. Durant sa longue carrière à l'université de Saskatchewan, à Saskatoon, SK, elle a élaboré une nouvelle interprétation de l'économie Keynésienne, a publié des livres et des articles sur la théorie de l'économie et sur la politique de l'immigration, et a enseigné et a influencé des centaines d'étudiants.

Writing about Mabel Timlin has become, for me, part of a dynamic process of discovery.[1] It began nearly twenty years ago when, as a middle-aged graduate student of the history of science, I read *Zinger and Me* (1979), Jack McLeod's academic spoof about students and faculty from the University of Saskatchewan's Department of Economics. The book included passages about a woman named Timmie (Dr. Mabel Timlin, a Professor of Economics) and praised her scholarship, teaching, and impact on her students. The author recounted her various escapades. For me at the time, this amusing and sometimes "wild" woman professor did not seem quite real.

I found her again, a decade later, while doing research on women scientists at the University of Saskatchewan Archives. The archivist assured me that Dr. Mabel Timlin, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, was indeed real. I learned that she had a long career at the university. I was shown numerous large acid-proof boxes of her papers, took a cursory look at their content and became fascinated. There were many stories to tell about her, but writing in detail about a woman economist was not something I felt ready to undertake.

As an historian of science, I had been interested in Canadian women scientists in a variety of fields, had already done labour-intensive archival research across the country, but, up to that time, had not found another woman scientist on whom such extensive documentation was available. I asked that certain letters and her *curriculum vitae* be photocopied for my files. Friends in Saskatoon encouraged me to tell her story. The prospect of researching Mabel Timlin's life was exciting, and I asked for more archival material to be sent to me. On subsequent trips to Saskatoon, I talked to several of her students who became economists. I corresponded with and talked to her first secretary. With each interview, I liked more and more the person emerging from this research. Intelligent, strong-minded, warm, human, poor, single, a pioneering theorist going against the grain of Canadian economic theory, this silver-haired, chain-smoking woman became an important part of my historical work on Canadian women and science.

Who was this person, the first woman full professor of economics at a Canadian university, who had made major contributions to the fields of economic theory and immigration policy and also left a lasting impact on her students and colleagues? Although a detailed treatment of her complex

character and many-faceted relationships is beyond the scope of this essay, I will explore some of her ideas while situating her life and work within the context of Canadian economics and women academics of the 1920-1960 period.

In 1951, Mabel Frances Timlin became the first woman in the social sciences to be elected Fellow of the very male, conservative Royal Society of Canada (RSC). This meant that she was a well-known scholar who had male supporters in powerful positions - as nominations for fellowship needed the recommendation and signature of three Royal Society Fellows. The election was significant because, in post-World-War-Two Canada, there were few women fellows of the RSC, and the only ones in the sciences were geologists Alice Wilson (1938) and Madeleine A. Fritz (1942), plant pathologist Margaret Newton (1942) and astronomer Helen Sawyer Hogg (1946).

At the time of her election, Mabel Timlin was sixty years old. A late bloomer by modern standards, she became well known for her book *Keynesian Economics* (1942) based on her doctoral dissertation "Keynesian economics - A synthesis" (1940). In "Canadian Contributions to the Discipline of Economics Since 1945" (*Canadian Journal of Economics*, 1968), Harry G. Johnson wrote that *Keynesian Economics* was the first Canadian work during World War Two to establish "a Canadian claim to competence in ... pure theory ...a remarkable personal achievement which extended the Keynesian model by replacing the long-term interest rate by an analysis of the structure of interest rates and its role in the general equilibrium of the system" (131).

What led her to this field of study? According to Myra H. Strober and Barbara B. Reagan ("Sex Differences in Economists' Fields of Specialization," *Signs*, 1976), the "decision to enter a particular field ... [is] the culmination of a series of earlier decisions ... [during which] the individual faces ... opportunities (or barriers)" (304).

In the western world, occupational segregation for women has taken two forms. Hierarchical segregation keeps them on the lower echelons of the occupational hierarchy of a field, while lateral segregation channels them into "women's work:" that is, occupations considered suitable for them.[2] Mabel Timlin's training as a teacher was typical of what was considered suitable for educated women in the early twentieth century. Her determination to improve her financial position *and* find meaningful academic work in an area where few women had worked before was related to her personality and the unique opportunity available in a small, congenial, provincial university department.

Mabel Frances Timlin was born in Forest Junction, Wisconsin, on December 6, 1891, one of four children of Sarah Halloran and Thomas Edward Timlin. Although the family was poor, they were a "two-newspaper-a-day" family and the children were well read. Apparently she developed an early interest in economics and could say "free trade" and "free silver" before she could say "Mama" and "Papa." She attended school in Wisconsin Rapids and Port Edwards, Wisconsin, trained as a teacher at the Milwaukee State Normal School, 1910-12, and taught school in Wisconsin while planning to "go out west." After her parents' death in 1916, she answered an ad for teachers in rural Saskatchewan and moved to Canada as a landed immigrant. Did she think that Canada needed more people, or was she simply looking for a more lucrative post? She knew that with its sparse population in the Prairie provinces, Canada had good job opportunities for hard-working individuals. Mabel Timlin was one of them, and she lived the rest of her long life in her adopted country.

Mabel Timlin taught school briefly in Bounty, Saskatchewan, before moving to Wilkie, a place with a population of about one thousand. Although the pay was better than in the U.S. ($780 per year), she had to watch the pennies pretty closely. Teaching in rural schools in Canada was not different from similar positions in the United States, and she realized that she did not want to spend her life as an elementary school teacher. From the few letters available from the period, it is clear that a perfectly glorious visit to Saskatoon (a city then of thirty thousand inhabitants) in the spring of 1918 strengthened her resolve to move there. There was a shortage of office personnel, and

Mabel Timlin learned that she could improve her earning power after three months' study at the Saskatoon Business College ($900 a year to start and $1,140 after three months). Her decision to leave the countryside was fuelled by the dilemma caused by the marriage proposal of a homely but decent young man she did not care for. So, at age twenty-seven, she embarked on another stage of her life.

While enroled at the Saskatoon Business College, Mabel Timlin taught English and other subjects in night school, mainly to immigrants. By 1920 she was teaching shorthand and typing in the Business College. A year later, she became Secretary to Dr. John Rayner, the Director of the Department of Agricultural Extension at the University of Saskatchewan. According to her former students Shirley and Duff Spafford, her intention was to obtain a degree while working at the University. She remained at that institution, though in a variety of capacities, until her retirement in 1959.

Mabel Timlin completed her first degree while working full-time as a secretary. She had originally wanted to study economics, but became critical of the economics-political science department and decided to pursue an English degree and read economics on her own. She graduated with a BA, Great Distinction in 1929, became Secretary in charge of the administration of correspondence courses and, in 1930, a reader in economics. Thus she joined a handful of women who taught at the University of Saskatchewan (Hilda Neatby, History, and Myrtle Melburn, Biology). There was also a small group of women who taught economics at Canadian universities, such as Lily A. McCullough (MA), Assistant, Political Economy, University of Manitoba (1917-24); Doris Lee (BA, MA UBC), Assistant, Department of Economics, Political Science and Sociology, University of British Columbia (1925-28; as Mrs. Lazenby, 1928-46); and Adelaide Moss (1900-1982, later Sinclair, BA Toronto, MA LSE) and Irene Biss (b. 1907, later Spry, BA Cambridge, MA Bryn Mawr) who began lecturing at the University of Toronto in 1927 and 1929 respectively.

While the position of reader no longer exists, at the University of Saskatchewan from 1920 to the 1940s, a reader was "anyone who is engaged for the reading of papers or assignments including Correspondence papers."[3] This was what thirty-nine-year-old Mabel Timlin undertook in addition to her administrative duties. The work was onerous, but satisfying, though the long working hours left no time for research. As she wrote to K. A. Buckley in 1958, her institutional position was anomalous precisely because it "*combined* administrative and academic duties ... [and her] exact status was never ... defined" (September 23). All this did not deter her from wishing to pursue graduate studies. Intellectually curious, ambitious and poorly paid, she enroled in the PhD program at the University of Washington in 1932, while working full-time. She did most of her graduate work during the summer months, though she spent the winter term in 1934, as well as the 1939-40 academic year, at the University of Washington.

During the 1930s, most Canadian economists were of the "Toronto School" of economic history: that is, graduates of the University of Toronto and therefore influenced by Harold Innis who, with W. A. Macintosh, was the originator of the Staple Theory. By contrast, Mabel Timlin, conscious since childhood of the importance of money and struggling like so many others during the Depression, turned her attention to theories of employment, interest and money, and the practical application of such theories. Her association with American economists gave her a "more math based and cosmopolitan" perspective than those held by the Toronto school economists and she had become interested in Keynes' ideas on employment, interest and money, while a graduate student. As an open-minded person, she found the General Theory "both intellectually fascinating ... and hopeful" for humanity.[4]

Mabel Timlin completed her dissertation "Keynesian Economics - A synthesis" in 1940, then spent the following two summers, hosted by Harold Innis at the University of Toronto, reworking it. *Keynesian Economics* (University of Toronto Press, 1942) was well received, though not necessarily understood, by her contemporaries. Typically,

while she produced a theoretical work based on Keynes' ideas as well as those of Oscar Lange, Bertil Ohlin and others, she grounded it by considering "its application to the world we know"(1). According to T.K Rymes, one of her objectives was to "marry the shifting equilibrium of her Keynesian model with that of the economics of growth, in particular, population in which she was to take much interest in her later work."[5]

Mabel Timlin showed sensitivity to the distinctions between what could be accomplished through the self-regulating mechanism of the market and what is tolerable within a society. She wrote:

> there are value judgements and value systems outside economic value systems as such which may prescribe ends to which the economic value systems may be asked, within the limits of possibility, to conform. The *mores* of a community may ... refuse to tolerate a condition of chronic unemployment or may object to the degree of inequality in the distribution of real income which the free play of economic forces within the existing institutional framework brings about. If such a community is also one whose *mores* call for maximum freedom for the human personality under the hereditary institutions of liberalism, the problem for the economic theorists is the reconciliation of these various ends. (181)

Clearly, she recognized the challenges economists faced when trying to reconcile the competing values of individualism with collective needs. She focused her analysis on J.M. Keynes' critique of the classical liberal model of economics which had important policy implications. Classical economic theory believed in the self-regulating nature of the market, e.g. unemployment would not exist if the price paid to labour was correct; therefore the existence of unemployment was an indication that the wages were too high and that lowering wage rates would solve unemployment. Classical economists also argued that investment decisions were directly related to the interest rates, so that when businesses failed to invest, this indicated that interest rates were too high and should be lowered. By contrast, J. M. Keynes showed in his analysis that high levels of unemployment and low levels of interest could persist simultaneously and indefinitely, even if wage and interest rates declined sharply and rapidly.

Mabel Timlin discounted the tendency of an economy to automatically adjust to equilibrium. She focused, instead, on the problems inherent in arriving at a properly monetized economy. She wrote that:

> ... lack of foresight and the variable nature of human psychology and expectations may keep an imperfectly monetized economic system running from low levels of employment to levels more or less high with no inherent tendency to reach the combination of values which gives a stable equilibrium. (181)

Stability, for her, depended on solving the problem of arriving at the correct "complex" of interest rates. This is especially important because she seemed to foresee a problem which could arise in reconciling full employment with inflation - an issue most followers of Keynes did not recognize at the time. She was, however, well aware that experiment was needed to arrive at interest rates which would encourage investment and full employment, but would not cause inflation.

Mabel Timlin concluded her book by writing:

> If it be given that the character of population and other changes leave the underlying conditions such that the establishment of full employment at real wage-rates recognized as socially desirable is possible under the existing framework of institutions, the paramount problem for the managing authority is the establishment of a complex of interest rates which is neither higher nor lower than, nor different in internal relationships

> of long and short rates from, the structure to be allied with equilibrium conditions. Because of the lack of human foresight, the only way to reach such an end would appear to be by a policy of trial and error, directed in the first instance to diminishing the range of fluctuations in the levels of output and employment and to bringing them down to those prescribed as socially tolerable. (184)

Keynesian Economics was favourably reviewed in a variety of journals, such as *Economica* (by G.L.S. Schackle in 1943). G. Haberler, in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* (1944), praised its "novel exposition of the General Theory ...," but remained critical of some aspects of her analysis. He wrote that while the book would be too difficult to become an undergraduate textbook, it "will be useful as collateral reading in graduate courses" (104). In the "Foreword" to the second printing of *Keynesian Economics* (1948), L. Tarshis praised the author's open mind and integrity and wrote, "Dr. Timlin's notion of shifting equilibrium is richer than commonly presented" (xiii). He suggested that the book "deserves serious study" and reading it "should stimulate others to emulate her" (xviii). Fifty years later, in "Economic Historiography in the 1950s: The Saskatchewan School" (unpublished paper, 1998), Robin Neill wrote:

> what is distinctive in Timlin's treatment of the subject is a repeated assertion that the theoretical functions representing the economic system could not be taken to be stable; and that the instability of the functions was a consequence of the instability of the information environment in which economic agents functioned. (7)

During the 1940s and 1950s, Mabel Timlin published works on Keynesian theory and monetary and fiscal controls in Canada, welfare economics, and the relations between theory and practice in public policy (*Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 1945, 1946, 1949; *Economic Review* 1953). She also developed some of her ideas on immigration policy.

Given the political, social, and economic situation of the western world during the post-World War Two period, immigration and its control had become crucial issues. During the summer of 1949, in Ottawa, with assistance from the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and members of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, including Herbert Marshall, Nathan Keifitz, and Lukin Robinson, Mabel Timlin began to "examine the economic aspects of migration" for Hugh L. Keenleyside, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources. This resulted in two publications, "Economic Theory and Immigration Policy" (*Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 1950) and *Does Canada Need More People?* (Oxford University Press, 1951). Her Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association, in 1960, was more historical. Entitled "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896-1920," it was published in the CJEPS the same year.

In the first paper, she discussed "two types of optimum for an open economy" - foreign trade and synthetic (376) and considered immigration policy "only one aspect of the total economic problem" (381). She wrote, "if we turn to general economic theory for assistance in the discovery of the economic effects of migration ... we find that ... contemporary economic theory does not shed much *direct* light on the formulation of immigration policy" (377). She added:

> Since the process of migration only takes place over time, it would appear that economic theory must be taken as a general kit of tools to be used in the solution of specific problems within their empirical setting. It is within this frame of reference that we outline a few of the hypotheses suggested by theory and the quantitative studies which might serve these hypotheses. (378)

After discussing "The Relation Between

Immigration and Emigration," as well as the "Theory of Employment" and "Allocation of Resources," she wrote, "theory can outline for us the types of effects which could accelerate adjustment but quantitative analysis would be required to tell us whether the actual results under current circumstances would be likely to follow a desirable pattern" (381). She concluded her article with the following:

> At the policy level, quantitative analysis will usually be an indispensable adjunct to theoretical analysis...For dynamic situations there may be a greater number of models than grandmother had patterns for her tatting. Only through quantitative analysis can we hope to reduce them to a reasonable number for policy considerations. Theoretical models may provide aesthetic delight as intellectual construction, but without information they may be no more useful to policy formulation than one of grandmothers' antimacassars. (382)

In *Does Canada Need More People?*, Mabel Timlin presented a more detailed examination of "the economic aspects" of immigration and documented "how a host of external and internal circumstances govern Canada's power for absorbing immigrants" (xi). The original study was of "absorptive capacity," and she first discussed the differences between long-period capacity and short-period capacity. In a chapter on the "Inherent Difficulties in Long-period Projections," she dealt with Canada's economic relations with the world and asked, does Canada need more people? That is, she asked the questions, how "large a population should Canada have, and how fast should it be allowed to grow?" She stated that new "additions to the population are consumers of goods, though they also may be producers" and emphasized that "the degree of effects will always depend upon the economic relations which we are able to establish with the rest of the world" (38).

She further analyzed the "limits on absorption of immigrants [which] are set by economic circumstances, such as lack of transportation and housing facilities" (40), and introduced the "Principles of Selection and the Rate of Absorption." She stressed the "possibility that pressure groups endeavouring to cut off the inflow of immigrants may cut it below the ideal rate and hasten the development of adverse economic conditions," and added, "Legislation may operate to reduce the inflow of immigrants even when the intention is clearly to admit them in larger numbers"(43). Her former student Isabel Anderson believes that Timlin accepted "the exclusionary character" of Canada's immigration policy as a given, but argued that exclusion "could not be justified" on economic terms.[6] Timlin wrote:

> There is a characteristic of Canadian legislative methods which makes the Immigration Act much more flexible in practice than American laws can be.... [This] permitted Canada to draw up and execute, even before international agreements had been concluded, the plan by which Canada admitted, from April 1947 to 31 March 1949, some 64,860 displaced persons, considerably more than any other country outside Europe, not excepting the United States. (44-45)

She then analyzed short-period absorptive capacity and employment and the relations between immigration and emigration. In the chapter "A Dynamic Theory of Population for Canada," she re-evaluated the various approaches discussed earlier in her book to "re-estimate their usefulness for Canadian policy formulation in the fields of population and immigration"(88). She dealt with innovation, increasing population and standard of living, and external economic relations. She also touched upon special factors in Canada, such as under-utilized natural resources and low population densities which "increase costs for certain industries and hold back their development or expansion" (103-04). She felt that the "various dynamic influences which must be considered in the formulation of population and immigration

policy ... are connected directly or indirectly with our external relations" (107).

In the last chapter, she considered the "effects of a larger population" on both the "economic structure and prosperity of Canada" and called for more research about the "causal connections between immigration and emigration," consumption patterns, and structure of labour and equipment, among others (122-23). In conclusion, she wrote:

> world reconstruction will be achieved on a basis which favours rising standards of living for all only if *all* nations choose their policies in such a manner that their separate and individual actions favour a better allocation of the resources of the world....for Canada unlimited immigration is neither politically possible nor necessarily desirable. But *freer* migration than we have known for most of the past twenty years, and trade policies favouring continuation of large-scale movements of goods in international trade, may both be elements as favourable to Canada's future as they are favourable to the future of the world. (123)

Although her mandate was to consider only the economic, and not the social and philosophical, aspects of migration, Mabel Timlin paid only lip service to her mandate. While she professed to "pass over the ethical consideration that might be urged at a time when practically all other peoples except the Americans have lower standards of living than Canadians have. Such questions must be settled by the community, not by the economist" (36), she did not neglect the human factor. This is particularly striking when she a) wrote that "the quality of immigrants...has a relationship to both short-period and long-period absorptive capacity. If there are enough candidates to permit the positive selection of high-quality immigrants, the very character of these immigrants raises our absorptive capacity for them," and b) discussed the need for modern workers to "shift from job to job, occupation to occupation, even from industry to industry." She added, "It seems likely that in the world ahead the ability to make such adjustments may be very important to individual national economies, and that our absorptive capacity for immigrants will be related to the ability of the newcomers to make these adjustments" (48-49). In the following, she further deviated from her mandate:

> There is another aspect which cannot be neglected. Absorptive capacity, in relation to the actual process of absorption, will depend not only upon the quality and flexibility of the incoming stream of immigrants but also upon the quality and flexibility of the communities and occupational groups into which they enter. If these ... are sufficiently tolerant, intelligent, and emotionally mature to realize that it is not necessarily wrong to be different, the relationships developed in communities and plants will favour both economic absorption and social assimilation. If Canada, as a country has such characteristics, the nation will be strong enough to modify, in the newcomers or in their children, the traits that are inconsistent with its own national culture; and at the same time to enrich itself by adopting or adapting to itself the artistic and technological contribution brought to it from older cultures. (50)

Evidently, she never forgot that emigration/immigration is about people and their lives, not only about natural resources, expanding industries, and interest rates.

In her third work on immigration policy (1960), Mabel Timlin dealt with the 1896-1920 period during which "policy shifted from one at least theoretically *laissez-faire* to the selective policy inherent in the *Immigration Act* in 1910" (517). She traced the increasingly exclusionary immigration policy of Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, 1896-1905, as well as the changing attitudes of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Sifton favoured the "idea of the agricultural immigrant as the only good

immigrant" (518) and since immigrants from Asia in the late nineteenth century "came neither to settle on prairie homesteads nor to stay permanently in Canada, they belonged to a class of whose entry Sifton disapproved"(519).

Limited emigration from the European continent, combined with large scale movement of people from England, British India, Japan and the United States led to tensions, particularly in British Columbia. By 1908, law, "theory and practice had all been altered to make effective controls possible .... The document which finally expressed the new philosophy and practice was the Immigration act of 1910" (529-30).

To the best of my knowledge, it was in this paper that Mabel Timlin first dealt with racial tensions and racial issues. Like many other liberals of her generation, she not only minimized the extent of racism in Canada, but was unaware of systemic racism. She felt that Laurier's conviction, "that although racial prejudice did exist in Canada, it was comparatively mild where it was not exacerbated by economic difficulties consequent upon the differences in wages asked by the ... [Canadian] population and the immigrants," was oversimplified, though still true. "What the differences in race did was to permit certain ugly influences to transmute a labour question into a racial question, and to give the resulting prejudices a life which lasted longer than the emergencies which fostered them" (530). About Canada's contemporary "problem," she wrote:

> It is a tragic fact that the differences in standards of living which have characteristically linked immigration to economic and political troubles in Canada are allied with racial differences....What the old liberal ideals give us with respect to migration as well as other policies is not a set of prescriptions for immediate action by individual nations with open economies but rather a blueprint of heaven for the world as a whole .... [the] way to paradise in migration as in other matters appears to lie along the path of negotiations and mutual adjustment .... It is a difficult way .... For the small nation in particular, it is hardly to be found through the simplicities of general equilibrium theory, marginal productivity economics, or political theories of natural rights. (531-32)

Mabel Timlin's last publication was "The Social Sciences: Retrospect and Potential," published (together with a study by Albert Faucher) in *The Social Sciences in Canada* (1968). The authors were asked by the Social Science Research Council of Canada (SSRCC) in 1964 to provide studies "of the complex of institutions and sources of support for social science research in Quebec and in Canada as a whole" (iv).

Timlin's report made it clear that the social sciences had long been neglected in Canada and that there had been "an almost universal frustration" concerning the lack of financial support and the short-term grants available to scholars (25). She compared the structure and policies of the Canada Council with its American and Dutch counterparts, proposed a new financial and institutional structure for the social science research in Canada and presented an innovative solution (which was not accepted): that funding for both social science and humanities research should be "financed indirectly through the budget of the Royal Society of Canada" (133). She concluded that:

> Under-support or fear of the social sciences is a sign of immaturity in a society. A mature society trusts and supports its scholars and in turn will find them responsible .... [if] the society is one which has also a concern for and an understanding of both the nature of justice and the conditions which can create equality of opportunity for human beings, it will be able in its decision-making to utilize the services of its social scientists in a manner which improves the quality of life. (136)

In addition to her writings, Mabel Timlin left a legacy as a teacher, mentor and friend. She

first met a large number of university students, almost all from Saskatchewan, when she became a reader in Economics in 1930. Later, as a classroom lecturer, she was to influence young women and men for more than a quarter century. She provided them with a high standard of instruction and pushed them to work hard, but did not particularly mentor female students. Together with her colleagues Vernon Fowke and George Britnell, she provided what Dr. Ken Rea, another former student, called the "Saskatchewan experience." This consisted of "identifying promising kids and equipping them to take on the forces of eastern exploitation (and giving them the confidence to withstand the disdain of their peers in the metropolis, be it London, Chicago, or Toronto)." Her students and colleagues were her family - she could be "enormously supportive, but also demanding to the point of being intrusive."[7] Her students remained devoted to her throughout her long life, turned to her for advice, shared their joys with her and celebrated her achievements.

Indeed, in spite of a life of incredibly hard work, there was much to celebrate. Mabel Timlin secured a professional position during the Depression and had an almost male-stream career in later life. During the 1930s and early 1940s, when good positions were rare for women in general and not available for those who were married, she retained her university position as a reader, obtained her doctorate, and advanced in her chosen field. Intelligent, attractive, vivacious and parsimonious, she was a career woman and remained single.

On the surface, her career improved considerably after 1940. With the doctorate in hand and a well-regarded first book on economic theory, her advancement on the academic ladder was unusually swift, particularly for a woman. She was appointed Assistant Professor in 1941, Associate Professor in 1946, and Full professor in 1950. She retired as *professor emeritus* in 1959. Her salary was, however, below par at a time when academic salaries were poor and, because of the Depression, those who did not lose their positions had to face salary cuts.

Was Mabel Timlin a feminist? It is not clear whether she considered herself one. She showed no inclination to give up her work for any man, was proud of her own achievements in a man's world, was aware of the lack of opportunities for women in academe, the implications of low pay for women's pensions, and the difficulties of making ends meet as a single woman. Although she was not an "active feminist," her letters detailed the difficulties and disadvantages of being an older, single woman in academe and referred to the "continual sacrifices" in her personal life. These included financial sacrifices and quality of life issues (she lived in student housing for many years and did not own a house until after retirement).[8]

Apart from the financial difficulties, we still know little about her personal life, but from the interviews about her, it is clear that by the time she became reader, in 1930, she had no interest in romantic relationships. Her close friends included Bernadine Bujila and Margaret Cameron (French), Marion Evans (from the registrar's office), as well as George Britnell and Vernon Fowke, her colleagues in economics.

Mabel Timlin's correspondence with economists such as Harold Innis, George Britnell, and Burton Keirstead, as well as a long letter she wrote to University of Saskatchewan President J. W. T. Spinks (1961), provide details of the difficult working conditions, low pay and personal anguish about the future she had often faced. Her financial reserve was so low after nearly a decade of graduate school (including several periods of unpaid absence from the University of Saskatchewan), that though she was asked to apply for the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 1943, she deferred her application until 1944. Later, she turned down several invitations (including one from Harold Innis) to become a visiting scholar, and refused seemingly attractive job offers from the University of Toronto and other universities. She loved being in Saskatoon, and greatly enjoyed being a member of a small department where, as she wrote to a colleague in 1948, "my present program ... is nearly ideal."[9]

So Mabel Timlin remained at a relatively small provincial university where she had found, and helped maintain, a congenial working

environment. Although she suffered financial hardships, she had a lively intellectual and social life. Having made her name with *Keynesian Economics* at age fifty-one, she received a number of prestigious fellowships, honours, and awards, such as the Guggenheim Fellowship (1945-46), election to the Royal Society of Canada (1951), and the Canada Council Special Senior Fellowship of $8,000 (1959-60). She was the first woman Vice President (1953-55) and President (1959-60) of the Canadian Political Science Association, and a member of the executive committee of the American Economics Association (1957-60). She was a consultant to the Federal Commission on Prices (1950-51) and the Royal Commission for the Saskatchewan River Development (1952). The University of Saskatchewan conferred on her an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws in 1969. In 1967, she was awarded Canada's Centennial medal, and in 1976, she was named to the Order of Canada.

Contemporary economists recognize Mabel Timlin's contributions to Keynesian economics, though some of them find it hard to understand why she changed her research interests to immigration and public policy. But why should she have restricted her work to the area she explored in her thesis, first book and several articles? I consider the change of research fields as a positive move, rather than a failure. It reflected her inquiring mind, scholarly interests and social concerns. An intelligent, warm human being as well as an eminent scholar, she contributed in a variety of ways to her adopted country and humanity.[10]

ENDNOTES

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2. On occupations segregation in science, see my "'Women's Work' in Canadian Chemistry," *Canadian Woman Studies* 13, 2. (Winter 1993): 43-46; "Women's Work in Geology: An Historical Perspective on Gender Division in Canadian Science," *Geoscience Canada* 21, 3 (1995): 139-141; "Les femmes dans les sciences au Canada: Y-a-t-il une division sexuelle du travail?" pp.1-15 in Lucie Dumais and Veronique Boudreau, eds. *Femme et Sciences*. (University of Ottawa Press, 1997).

3. J.S. Thomson, Memo to Deans and Heads of Departments, 28 January 1946. Presidential papers II B-17 (1), Arts and Science (1944-46), University of Saskatchewan Archives (hereafter USask. archives).

4. Shirley and Duff Spafford, conversations with the author; A. E. Safarian, quoting Shackle, 1943:260, in "Biographical Notes," in M. F. Timlin, *Keynesian Economics* 2nd. ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1977), v.

5. T. K. Rymes, "Mabel Timlin and Keynesian Economics," in *A Tribute to Mabel Timlin, Canadian Women Economists Newsletter*, November 1995: 7.

6. Isabel Anderson to author, June 16, 1998.

7. Ken Rea to author, 26 May 1998.

8. Mabel F. Timlin to George Britnell, 14 November 1945. USask archives. Isabel Anderson believes that "Timmie was ... a 'Blue Stocking'" but not an "active feminist," though she "believed in feminism." Isabel Anderson to author, 24-25 June 1998.

9. Mabel F. Timlin to Burton Keirstead, 30 April 1948. USask. archives.

10. See for instance, Robin Neill, *A History of Canadian Economic Thought*. (Routledge, 1991), 158, 174; Robert Dimand, "How Keynes Came to Canada: Mabel Timlin and Keynesian Economics." Paper presented at the Canadian History of Economics Association Meeting, June 1998, Montreal; T. K. Rymes, Ibid.; M. G. Ainley, "Mabel Frances Timlin, FRSC (1891-1976)," *A Tribute to Mabel Timlin. Canadian Women Economists Newsletter*. November 1995, 1-4.

Mabel Frances Timlin, 1917 and 1940, University of Saskatchewan Archives.