

domestic prisons; women grasp the reality of a universal consciousness, the sisterhood of which we already have primitive but profound adumbrations" (p. 208).

The analysis of the problems is a compelling one, and the indications of where we might look for solutions are, on the whole, both persuasive and appealing. I remain troubled by only one problem; but it is, I think, a significant one. I am not persuaded that reproductive labour can bear the full weight of female self-realization. Too much seems to be excluded from its scope. The genuine and valuable creativity, and the need for self-esteem, of the women who do not, whether by choice or by chance, ever produce children, is difficult to place within this domain where reproductive labour is the primary creator of value. So, too, is the life and work of women both before and after (and often also during, but apart from) their child-nurturing activities. In order to have a full integration of persons into a world of cooperative human interaction, we must avoid thinking in terms which make the childless perceive themselves as 'other.' It would be an unhappy solution which would replace old dualisms with new ones: dualisms whose evaluative implications would lead to the devaluation of lives in which reproductive labour has no place.

O'Brien might well respond that we should not strive to universalize; that we are only too familiar with the results of a prolonged struggle to do just that. Piecemeal solutions may be the best we can offer: optimally, they will ultimately converge to form a whole. But if we are not to universalize, we must still make space for those who stand outside the central focus of our new evaluative structures. Their numbers are increasing as effective contraception makes reproductive labour into a matter of genuine, rational choice. We must allow that it can be a good choice, either way.

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A Working Majority. Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong. *Ottawa: The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1983.*

Reproductive Hazards at Work. Nancy Miller Chenier. *Ottawa: The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1982.*

In *A Working Majority*, Pat and Hugh Armstrong's goal is to let women speak for themselves about their working lives. The result is a useful, occasionally depressing, but consistently interesting antidote to the statistical analyses which have so frequently represented women's labour force participation. The authors, working with five researchers, interviewed 65 women who held a wide variety of jobs in five provinces. The jobs these women work are 'women's jobs'—the 'bad' jobs such as waitressing, bank clerking, factory work and so forth and not the prestigious, professional careers that a much publicized minority of women have managed to attain. Although the authors briefly review the general features of women's labour force participation in Canada, it is these interviews (which are extensively excerpted throughout the book) which are used to examine and illustrate the structure of women's work and the nature of the work process.

The resulting book is an extremely comprehensive discussion of a wide variety of work-related issues: hours, unions, job tenure, unemployment, relations with fellow workers, the impact of technology, health hazards, sexual harassment, etc. In each instance, women workers relate their personal experiences. Not only are the issues brought into the realm of 'real life', but also important details are highlighted. For example, in the section, "Unemployment Insurance: 'You have to fight for every cent you get'", women discuss the frustration and humiliation of struggling to maintain their benefits qualification. Under "Health Hazards: 'The whole place is dangerous'", women talk about psychological as well as physical hazards; for example, the single

mother who works all day knowing that she cannot be contacted by her children since she is not allowed to receive calls at work. "In *An Average Day at Work: 'It's very monotonous'*", women describe the boredom, lack of control and demanding pace that characterize their normal day.

Throughout the book, the authors are sensitive to important differences amongst women workers. In particular, they never lose sight of the large and growing number of women who work part-time and who are especially vulnerable to exploitation. They also distinguish between the minority of women who are unionized and who tend to be much better off than the non-unionized majority. In short, the authors present the complexities and contradictions of women's paid work experience. Women express pride in their work, enjoyment in their work situation, but also talk about the onerous, long hours of work both 'at work' and at home. Despite their hard work, these women have only 'very modest ambitions' and still feel they must worry about the future.

The reader is left wanting and needing to know more about these women and about the connections between these diverse issues. While not enough detail is provided to understand the women as discrete individuals, there is not enough information on the group as a whole. Since their population is not a statistically representative sample, the Armstrongs are intentionally vague in their discussion of the overall interview results. Terms such as 'some', 'most', 'many' are routinely used to describe the research findings (how many is 'many?'). It would seem preferable to discuss in detail, as they do, the methodology and its limitations, and then include, at least, a somewhat more precise discussion (using, for example, approximate fractions) of response patterns. The statistical appendix, which is very interesting and which would be a useful introduction to the book, does provide more general support for the Armstrongs' basic

argument that women paid workers have not 'come a long way.' Finally, it would be useful to have a more detailed framework with which to organize and connect the various work-related issues.

The authors conclude with a number of useful practical suggestions. Clearly, efforts to unionize women workers are crucial and unions need to concentrate on providing more protection for women workers, particularly part-timers. There is a need for improved labour codes, better child-care facilities, pension reform, enforced health and safety regulations and effective sexual harassment legislation. The government and employers need to be prodded to improve the structure of work for both women and men. Researchers, as the Armstrongs ably demonstrate, can help set the stage so that women themselves 'acting together can alter their daily working lives.'

Nancy Miller Chenier's *Reproductive Hazards at Work* provides precisely the kind of accessible, focussed research which will also help women (and men) work toward improving their working conditions. As Chenier makes clear, more and more workers—both men and women—face a variety of hazards on the job which threaten their reproductive health. Chemical hazards (such as vinyl chloride), physical hazards (such as ionizing radiation and VDTs), biological hazards (such as chicken pox) and psychosocial hazards (such as stress) may jeopardize fertility, sex drive, fertilization, fetal development and so on. The personal and societal costs are substantial.

At present, with, for example, the proliferation of unexamined chemical products, with the lack of information and adequate research, workers and particular communities (Love Canal) are serving as involuntary research subjects. Efforts to protect the reproductive health of workers have been directed almost exclusively at women workers and have often been used to exclude women from 'unsafe men's jobs' while ignoring the hazards in 'women's work' and ignoring the reproductive health hazards men face.

Chenier points out that there is a tremendous resistance to confronting workers' health issues. Employers cite the enormous cost of research and workplace redesign. Yet, Workers' Compensation Acts fail to adequately address reproductive health issues and legislative and policy directs are a 'jurisdictional jungle.' Scientific research has been slow and cautious in supporting worker-generated observations and industry-financed experts have been shown to be incompetent, careless and even dishonest. Much of the progress that has been achieved has been won by workers, particularly unionized workers, who directly confront health hazards as well as discriminatory protective policies.

While justifiably critical of present conditions, Chenier acknowledges recent accomplishments. The 1978 establishment of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety signalled national recognition of health and safety concerns. However, clearly much remains to be done. While pregnant women are offered life-style counselling (don't smoke, etc.), their daily working conditions are ignored. More research and information are needed and that information—medical tests, environmental testing, government research, inspection reports, etc.—needs to be widely disseminated. Workers need the right to refuse work 'without fear of penalty and without extensive legal or medical advice prior to action.' More generally, Chenier argues that our society must commit itself to safe working conditions for all workers and must work to achieve this not by molding the worker to the job (for example, the exclusion of 'fertile' women workers) but by molding the job to the worker (for example, mechanical redesign). Chenier's book will clearly be a valuable resource in this struggle.

Both *A Working Majority* and *Reproductive Hazards at Work* are important contributions to understanding and improving women's experience in the paid labour force. Rooted in issues that directly impinge on women's lives as paid

workers, they provide information on overall patterns as well as concrete suggestions for action. While much remains to be learned and much is yet to be done, each of these books will serve as a valuable reference to researchers and to women workers.

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Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age.
Joanna Rogers Macy. *Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1983. Pp. 178.*

Uneasiness about nuclear war has been a part of my life for more than three decades. In school in the United States, we had duck-and-cover drills. In Japan in 1960, at a United States airbase where my then-husband worked at an illegal intelligence installation, they briefed us: when the missiles come, run to the steam tunnel chambers. Don't go back for your kids, you won't make it. Next I lived in Nebraska near SAC headquarters, then San Francisco. From one prime target to another. An American experience, I thought. When I immigrated to the safety of Canada, I left it behind.

But there is no safe place. We are all affected by that knowledge. And so we should be. As Helen Caldicott points out in "*If You Love This Planet*", if we don't feel horror and grief at the imminent destruction of all we know and love, we are insane and need help. Most times, we bury our feelings because we feel impotent to avert nuclear holocaust and can't bear the fear of it. What Joanna Macy's work offers us is a way to transform our paralysis and powerlessness.

Empowerment workshops such as those described by Macy help us to acknowledge our despair and helplessness in the face of the destruction of all life on our planet. Through accepting and experiencing our despair, we can free ourselves from it. Alone we are impotent. Sharing