Female Labour Force Participation:

Recently in Canada as elsewhere, more and more women are entering the labour force. The question is why? The most prevalent answer to this question is that women choose to enter the work force either because they are bored at home or because they want to supplement their husband's income in order to buy "extras." A second answer is that women work outside the home because they need to; they and their families need the money. This paper examines the conditions under which Canadian women participate in the labour force and argues that in general women work outside the home not out of choice but rather out of economic necessity.(1)

The Entrance of Married Women into the Labour Force

In the average family in Canada the family's existence has been maintained by the husband's wage. His wage is expected to buy the necessary amount of commodities converted by the housewife into the family's subsistence. If the husband's wage is insufficient to buy the commodities necessary to meet a reasonable standard of living which exists in Canadian society then the housewife has two alternatives to prevent the family's standard of living from declining. She can intensify her labour in the home by cooking more, that is, using fewer of the more costly prepared foods; mending rather than buying new things; shopping more carefully; and generally trying to stretch her husband's wage. Secondly, she can seek employment outside the home if jobs are available.

An increasing number of married women are taking the second alternative. In

Choice or Necessity?

1931 the participation rate of married women was only 3.5%. The 1941 Census showed only a slight increase to 4.5%. The percentage more than doubled in 1951 to 11.2% and doubled again in 1961 to 22%. By 1971 the percentage of all married women participating in the labour force had risen to 37%. (See Table 1)

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Table 1

Female Labour Force Participation, Census Years 1931-71(1)

Year	Participation rate				Married women as a per cent(2) of total women in labour force
	Married %	Single %	Other %	Total %	
1931	3.5	43.8	21.3	19.3	10.0
1941	4.5	47.2	17.3	20.3	12.7
1951	11.2	58.3	19.3	24.1	30.0
1961	22.0	54.1	22.9	29.5	49.8
1971	37.0	53.5	26.5	39.9	59.1

1. Statistics from the 1931 Census are for the age group 10 and over. Statistics from the 1931-51 Censuses are for the age group 14 and over. Statistics from the 1961 and 1971 Census are for the age group 15 and over. Figures exclude those on active military service; Newfoundland is included from 1951 on; the Yukon and Northwest Territories are not included.

2. Including permanently separated.

Sources: DBS, 1961 Census, Advance Report N.AL-1 (Catalogue No. 94-500).

Table from: Spencer and Featherstone, 1970, p. 12, and Statistics Canada, 1971 Census, Vol. III, Catalogue 94-706, Table 14, Catalogue 94-774, Table 8.

This increase of married women has altered the composition of the female labour force. By 1961 married women made up a larger proportion of the female labour force (49.8%) than single women (those never married, 42.3%) although they comprised a lesser proportion than single, divorced and widowed women combined (single and other categories, 50.2%). However, by 1971 the percentage of married women (59.1%) had increased to the point where it was greater than the combined percentage of single, divorced and widowed women in the labour force. (See Table 2)

It should be noted that the "married" category in these official statistics includes both married women who are living with their husbands and those who are separated. Since our interest is in married women living with husbands it is important to deduct those women who are separated from their husbands and need to work by virtue of being the only breadwinner. The Census provides a count of married women who are living with their husbands in the labour force. In 1961, 42.3% of the labour force was composed of women who had never married, 44.9% of married women living with their husbands, and 12.8% of widowed, divorced and separated women. In 1971, 33.4% of the female labour force was composed of women who had never married, 54.7% of married women living with their husbands, and 11.9% of widowed, divorced and separated women. Therefore, today more than half of the Canadian women working are married and living with their husbands.

When the housewife takes a job outside the home it means an increase in the cost of maintaining the family. For example, there will be the cost of day care or babysitters if there are young children in the family. Items such as more clothes, transportation and laundry reflect the costs of working while an increased reliance on prepared foods and labour-saving devices is likely to occur as married women fulfil their household obligations in a shorter time. These added costs must be met by the housewife's wage. There is a trade-off between the increased cost of the family's subsistence re-

Table 2

Marital Status of Women in the Labour Force, Canada(4)1931-71(1)

Marital Status	1931 No.	(10+) %	1941(2) No.	(14+) %	1951 No.	(14+) %	1961 No.	(15+) %	1971 No.	(15+) %
Single	537,657	80.7	665,623	79.9	723,433	62.1	746,310	42.3	1,018,815	33.4
Married(3)	66,798	10.0	105,942	12.7	348,961	30.0	877,794	49.8(5)	1,803,870	59.1
Other	61,335	9.2	61,237	7.4	91,927	7.9	139,758	7.9	230,478	7.5
Not stated	69	-	38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total(4)	665,859	99.9	832,840	100.0	1,164,321	100.0	1,763,862	100.0	3,053,100	100.0

1. Statistics from 1931 Census are for age group 10 and over. Statistics from 1931-1951 Census are for age group 14 and over. Statistics from 1961 Census are for age group 15 and over.

2. Not including persons on active service.

3. Including permanently separated.

4. Including Newfoundland (1951 on) but not Yukon and Northwest Territories.

5. Married women who were living with their husbands and working numbered 791,685 or 44.9 per cent of the female labour force in 1961; and 1,669,580 or 54.7 per cent of the female labour force in 1971.

Sources: Occupation and Industry Trends in Canada, 1901-1951, DBS, Table 9
DBS, 1961 Census, Advance Report No. AL-1 (Catalogue No. 94-500), Table 2.
DBS, 1931 Census, Vol. VII, Table 55; Table 26.

Table from: Canada Dept. of Labour, 1965, p. 21: and Statistics Canada, 1971 Census, Catalogue 94-706, Vol. III, Part 1, Table 14.

sulting from the housewife working outside the home and the additional income her employment brings in. (Seccombe, 1975) However, it would not make economic sense for her to work if only an equal exchange between lost domestic labour and the housewife's wage took place. What occurs is that the extra cost of maintaining the family, which results from the housewife's working outside the home, is lower than the wage received. Thus it is economically advantageous for a housewife to enter the labour force.

Housewives have a small portion of their wage left after costs are deducted yet women's wages in Canada have declined relative to men's wages over the years. MacLeod (1972: 41), conducting a trend analysis for the period 1946-68, compared male and female earnings in manufacturing industries. He concluded that:

> On the whole no improvement has been made over the 22-year period examined. Although pay ratios have risen. . . in certain industries which showed significant improvement. The situation is as stagnant as a polluted river. The consistency of the pay differentials is particularly interesting in view of the large increases in the number of women working and the technological advances which have opened up new kinds of jobs and produced major changes in the

nature of work performed in most, if not virtually all industries. Between 1967 and 1972 the dollar difference between women and men full-time workers' salaries increased in every occupation. (See Table 3) For example, in 1967 the difference between women's and men's salaries in clerical occupations was $1,925 and in 1972 it was $2,807. The average annual earnings of male employees in clerical occupations increased by $2,221 from 1967 to 1972 compared with $1,339 for women. MacDonald (1975: 4) concludes that, "Women who work full-time in Canada earn on the average about 60% as much as male full-time workers." Moreover, she states that, "The gap in wages and salaries between women and men is increasing--in all the provinces, and anyway you look at it." (also cf. Gelber, 1975)

Table 3

Average Earnings[a] of Women and Men Full-year Workers[b] by Occupation[c] in 1967 and 1972, Showing Dollar Differences Between the Years, Canada

Occupation	Salary Increases 1967 to 1972		Differences between increases in men's and women's salaries
	Women	Men	
Managerial	$3176	$4600	$1424
Professional and Technical	2292	3183	891
Clerical	1339	2221	882
Sales	1479	3471	1992
Service	779	2766	1987
Transportation and Communication	1167	3120	1953

Occupation	Difference Between Men's and Women's Salaries	
	1967	1972
Managerial	$5052	$6476
Professional and Technical	4294	5185
Clerical	1925	2807
Sales	3804	5796
Service	2594	4581
Transportation and Communication	2080	4033

a. Earnings include wages and salaries and net income from self-employment.

b. These are workers who reported having worked 50-52 weeks.

c. Individuals were classified according to their job at the time of the survey; individuals who were not in the labour force at the time of the survey are excluded. Some occupations that were incomplete for one sex, or that were not comparable between 1967 and 1972 are not shown in the table.

Source: Canada, Dept. of Labour, Women's Bureau, 1975b, Table 6, p. 70

When the earnings of female and male full-time, full-year workers are compared for 1971 we do indeed find that women earn only 59% of what men earn. (See Table 4) This is the same ratio that existed in 1961 indicating that the gap has not narrowed. When all female (including part-time) and male wage earners in 1971 are compared the gap increases. In 1961 women earned 54% of what men earned but by 1971 this had declined to 50%.

The gap between female and male wages is sometimes explained as resulting from the occupational segregation of women. Gunderson (1976) examined what the overall ratio of female to male earnings would look like if females had the same occupational distribution as that of males while retaining their own earnings within an occupation. On this basis, he found that "the ratio of female to male earnings would be approximately .54 which is less than the actual ratio of .59 for full-year, full-time workers."

Adjusting for differences in occupational distribution by sex does not by itself raise the ratio of female to male earnings. For the broader occupational groupings (i.e., those of Table 4), occupational desegregation would not reduce the wage gap unless accompanied by more equal wages within each occupation. (Gunderson, 1976: 122) Gunderson also estimated what female earnings would be if women were paid according to the pay structure for males. He found that:

> Paying both sexes according to the male pay structure would raise female earnings for 60% of male earnings to 93%. The remaining 7% is due to differences in age, marital status, education and residence between males and females. (Gunderson, 1976: 126)

If the overall price of female labour has declined relative to the overall price of male labour then it cannot be a higher wage which explains why it makes economic sense for a housewife to work outside the home. Why is it, then, that a woman has a small amount of her wage left after she deducts the extra cost of maintaining the family which results from her going out to work? The explanation is found in the fact that productivity in the industrial sector has risen significantly relative to productivity in the domestic sphere; that is, a woman has to work many hours in the home to produce the equivalent of what she could produce in one hour in the industrial sector. Since this is the case a woman can earn enough to replace her lost domestic labour and still have a small portion of her wage to use for her family's general needs. This explains, of course, why women choose to enter the labour force rather than remain at home and intensify their home labour, since the economic rewards for choosing the first alternative are greater.

Table 4

Ratio of Female Earnings to Male Earnings,[a] All and Full-Time Wage Earners, By Occupation, Canada, 1961 and 1971

Occupation	1961 Census[b]		1971 Census	
	All Wage Earners	Full-year[c] Full-time	All Wage Earners	Full-year[c] Full-time
Manager/Professional[d]	.46	.56	.49	.56
Clerical	.61	.74	.59	.67
Sales	.35	.45	.34	.49
Service	.47	.47	.37	.50
Primary	.43	.60	.38	.47
Blue collar[e]	.53	.59	.47	.53
Other	-	-	.47	.55
All occupations	.54	.59	.50	.59

a) Earnings figures are for wage and salary earners and exclude self-employed in unincorporated business. 1961 and 1971 ratios are not strictly comparable. In 1961, wage and salary data were collected, with fine breakdowns to the income level of $12,000, with an open-end class of $15,000 or more. For calculating averages, all incomes of $15,000 or more were given the value of $15,000. This means that, for occupations that had incomes of $15,000 or more, the averages are too low. The groups most likely to be affected are the managerial and professional. In 1971, actual earnings were collected, so that the same bias does not exist in 1971 data.

b. 1961 occupational groupings are based on the 1951 Census categories and are not directly comparable with the 1971 figures, which are based on the CCDO groupings (see notes to Table 4.8 in Gunderson).

c. Worked 49-52 weeks for 35 or more hours per week.

d. 1961 figures are an unweighted average of the ratios for managers and professional and technical, used because the two groups had approximately equal numbers in 1961.

e. 1961 ratios are a weighted average of the ratios for transportation and communication with craft, production, and related workers. The latter ratio was weighted by three to reflect the fact that there were approximately three times as many craft, production, and related workers as transportation and communication workers. 1971 figures consist of CCDO occupations 81-95, which include crafts, production, transportation, communication, and construction workers.

Sources: 1961 data are derived from Sylvia Ostry, The Female Worker in Canada (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968), Table 16. 1971 data are from special 1971 Census tabulations from Statistics Canada. Table from: Gunderson, 1976: 121.

Productivity of Industrial versus Domestic Labour

Although the productivity of domestic labour has increased in absolute terms it has fallen behind the productivity of industrial labour.(2) The Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report (1970: 34) says,

> Comparison with much earlier studies suggests that hours spent on housework have not decreased as much as one would expect in a technological age. The question therefore arises whether or not housework has been influenced by the same forces of technological change that have transformed and continue to alter the rest of the economy.

The answer to that questions is that housework has not been influenced by the same forces of technological change that have altered the rest of the economy. This is because domestic labour has no direct relation with capital. Domestic labour is not paid a wage, is not part of variable capital, and does not create surplus value: therefore, the capitalist has no interest in increasing its productivity. Within industrial production, on the other hand, any increase in the productivity of labour increases surplus value, raises profits and gives one capitalist a competitive advantage over another.

The result has been that new technology and new ways of organizing and dividing labour have been introduced into industrial production to increase productivity while the domestic labour process has advanced only to the extent that new technology is introduced into the household via commodity consumption. Also women can accomplish their household work in less time, given that many of the services once performed by domestic labour are being displaced or altered by the state and by the production and service sector of the capitalist economy. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report (1970: 34-35) describes this phenomenon:

> Mechanization of the old processes of spinning, weaving, cutting and sewing has transferred the manufacture of clothing from the home to the factory. Commercial laundries have taken over much of the cleaning. Truck-gardening, canning, freezing and pre-cooking have lessened the importance of the home in the production, preservation, and preparation of food.
>
> Other functions, which had stayed in the home, have been greatly a altered. Meal preparation has been changed by the introduction of a wide variety of appliances. New quick-freezing techniques for fresh food, along with improvements in canning and pre-cooking techniques and the addition of chemical fortification to foods, make it possible for the family to eat varied and nutritious meals with much less preparation in the home.

The advance of technology and the rising productivity of labour in the industrial sector have lowered the cost of many consumer goods. The lower cost has put them almost within reach of the majority of people. At one time only the wealthy could afford these products and they were considered by most people to be a luxury. However, as more goods are produced in a shorter time, mass consumption of these goods becomes an imperative for the ongoing capitalist system. New needs are created among the population so that the greater amount of goods produced have a ready market. These needs are created partly through psychological means by way of advertising but mainly through not developing alternatives or through encouraging the erosion of existing alternative ways of doing things. For example, the automobile is a necessity and not a luxury if an adequate public transportation system does not exist. In the household, refrigerators and stoves are no longer luxuries. Most households in Canada today find it necessary to have a stove and refrigerator. (See Table 5)

Table 5

Percentage of Canadian Households Surveyed that had Certain Household Equipment, 1948-1968*

Item	1948	1953	1958	1963	1968
Hot and cold running water	-	62.57	73.50	84.86	90.97
Gas or electric stove**	48.49	62.73	76.66	87.24	94.03
Mechanical refrigerator	29.26***	66.33***	86.24***	94.20	97.44
Home freezer	-	2.22	8.17	17.66	29.16
Electric washing machine	59.21	76.38	84.28	86.81	83.57
Vacuum cleaner	32.02	48.01	60.94	72.45	-
Electric sewing machine	-	23.43	36.30	49.03	-
Gas or electric clothes dryer	-	-	-	21.60	36.79
Automatic dishwasher	-	-	-	2.08	5.08
Floor polisher	-	-	-	-	51.01

* Does not include households in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, or on Indian reservations.

** Includes piped and bottled gas and oil or kerosene.

*** Includes both gas and electric refrigerators. The number of gas refrigerators, however, dwindled rapidly, so that their exclusion from the statistics after 1958 probably makes little difference.

\- No statistics available.

Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Household Facilities and Equipment. Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1948, 1953, 1958, 1963, and 1968. Cat. no. 64-202.

Table from: Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. Report, 1970: 34.

According to the 1941 Census, at that time half of Canadian households had no installed baths or showers and 45% of households had no inside toilets. (Podoluk, 1968) Few people would question the necessity of these facilities today. Podoluk (1968: 184) states:

> Other examples of items that might be considered necessities of the 1960's are consumer durables such as television sets or automobiles. When television sets first became available in the early 1950's only the middle and upper income classes could afford them; currently, families who do not own television sets appear to be those residing in parts of the country still not reached by television stations, or families who can afford television but consider it a status symbol not to own one.

By the late 1960s even welfare budgets recognized that expenditures on television ownership should not disqualify recipients from receiving assistance.

As capitalism develops what was once a luxury for a few becomes a necessity for the majority. Women are not working for labour-saving devices which are luxuries or "extras." They are working for necessities (which must be constantly replaced as a result of planned obsolescence) that cannot be purchased by one wage and in most cases are just beyond the second wage (note, for example, the rise in the use of credit).(3)

The Economic Necessity for Married Women to Work Outside the Home

Evidence that married women need to work outside the home can be found by examining several Canadian studies dealing with women in the labour force. In 1955-56, for example, the Canadian Department of Labour conducted a survey of married women working outside their homes in eight Canadian cities.(4) One of the aims of this survey was to discover why these married women were working. Why they were working became apparent when they considered the husband's income alone and then his income combined with that of his wife. (See Table 6) When considering the husband's income alone only 14% of the families would have had at least $4,000 to live on. However, when the wife's income was also considered half of the families (51%) had incomes of $4,000 or more.

In 1954, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 43% of all non-farm families, whether there was one income or more, were in the "$4,000 and over" group (Canada, Department of Labour, 1958).(5) With the husband's income alone the families in this survey would have been well below a cross section of Canadian urban families in income; but with the addition of the wife's income these families compared favourably with others. According to the authors of this study, "The extreme importance of the economic motive in keeping these married women at work outside the home is one of the most outstanding findings of this survey" (Canada, Department of Labour, 1958: 48).

In 1961, data on husband and wife family income distribution again con-

Table 6

Married Women Working: Percentage Distribution by Husband's Income and by Combined Incomes

Amount of Income ($)	Husband (%)	Combined (%)
Under 2,000	24.9	8.0
2,000-2,999	21.8	12.3
3,000-3,999	29.6	17.0
4,000-4,999	10.5	20.2
5,000 plus	3.5	31.0
Unknown or not applicable	9.7	11.4
TOTAL	100.0	99.9

Table from: Canada, Department of Labour, 1958: 42.

firmed the importance of wives' earnings. Half of all husband-and-wife families (including those with wives that work outside the home and those with wives that do not) had incomes of $5,000 or more. (See Table 7) In families where the wives did not work outside the home, 45% had incomes of $5,000 or more. In families where the wives did work outside the home, almost two-thirds (64.8%) had incomes (including the wives' earnings) over $5,000. However, when the earnings of the wives are excluded, only slightly more than one-third (36.1%) of those families with working wives have incomes over $5,000. Removing the wives' earnings results in an income distribution which is lower than that of families with non-working wives. It would appear,then, that husbands in families with non-working wives have higher incomes than husbands in families with working wives.(Podoluk, 1968: 133) Married women whose husbands have low incomes clearly have strong economic incentives to find employment outside the home.

Again in 1971 data show that the lower the family's income (excluding the wives' earnings) the greater the likelihood that a married women will work outside the home. Table 8 shows that almost half (47%)of the women whose family income is less than $3,000 (excluding wives' earnings) participate in the labour force. As

Table 7

Percentage Distribution of Husband-and-Wife Families by Size of Family Income, Including and Excluding Earnings of Wives

Income Group	All Families With & Without Wives Working	Families Without Wives Working	Families With Wives Working Including Their Income	Families With Wives Working Excluding Their Income
Under 3000	19.1	22.0	10.4	22.6
3000-4999	30.9	33.1	24.9	41.3
5000-6999	24.7	22.5	31.3	14.4
7000-9999	15.8	13.0	24.0	17.7
10,000+	9.4	9.4	9.5	4.0
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average income	$5839	$5652	$6387	$4739
Median income	5000	4677	5894	4308
Families (number)	3,357,386	2,427,062	830,324	

Source: Unpublished data, 1961 Census of Canada.

Table from: Podoluk, 1968, Table 6.6, p. 132.

Table 8

Labour Force Participation Rates of Married Women, Husbands Present, by Family Income Excluding Wives' Earnings

Family Income Excluding Wives' Earnings	Participation Rate of Wives
$2,999 or less	47%
$3,000-$5,999	44%
$6,000-$8,999	44%
$9,000-$11,999	38%
$12,000-$14,999	33%
$15,000 or over	27%

Source: Special 1971 Census tabulations from Statistics Canada.

Table constructed from: Gunderson, 1976, Table 4.3, p. 101.

the family income (excluding wives' earnings) rises the economic need for married women to work outside the home decreases and so does their participation in the labour force.

In summary, then, between 1951 and 1971 the participation rate of married women in the labour force more than tripled. It is the married women whose husbands earn the least that are most likely to be working outside the home. The question is do these women work to get the "extras" that their husbands' income will not buy? Or are they working because their husbands' wage can no longer buy what is necessary to maintain the family at a reasonable standard of living? The evidence points strongly to the latter explanation: married women work in order to maintain the family's economic position.

The Department of Labour's publication Women at Work in Canada: 1964 (1965: 6) indicated that many women were working out of need:

> Since the thirties the level of living of the population, including the "real" incomes that sustain it, has risen remarkably. The standard of living - that level at which people feel they are comfortably off and not deprived of anything important - has increased also; the availability of a wide range of consumer goods has assisted in the latter process. Yet a considerable proportion of male wage-earners, in fact the majority, do not earn the $6,000 or so per year that is necessary to move consumption much beyond food, clothing, and shelter. For many Canadian families, however, the earnings of the wife added to those of the husband just succeed in bringing total income up to a fairly comfortable level.

According to Johnson (1974) there has been a growing disparity between rich and poor workers since 1951, despite the rise in per capita income. This disparity has contributed toward the restructuring of family earning patterns. Multi-earner families have increased enormously since 1951 until by 1971 almost two-thirds (64.9%) of all Canadian families had more than one income recipient. (See Table 9)

The Armstrongs(6)(1975) have convincingly argued that married women's "earnings supplement the family's in-

come, thus helping the family maintain its financial status in spite of the increasing disparity for individuals in general." (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1975: 22) They illustrated the growing inequality in individual income distribution between 1951 and 1971. Over this 30-year period it was found that all individuals with income, all wage earners, and all unattached individuals with income in the lowest three quintiles (lowest three-fifths of the population) received a decreasing share of the total income. At the same time the top two quintiles received an increasing share. The top two-fifths of wage earners increased their share of the total income from 65.3% in 1951 to 69.8% in 1971. A corresponding decline was experienced by the other three-fifths of the population so that by 1971 two-fifths of all wage earners earned 70% of the total income while the remaining three-fifths earned 30%. (See Table 10)

Table 9

Percentage Distribution of Families by Number of Income Recipients, 1951-1971

Number of Income Recipients in Family*	1951**	1961**	1971
None	0.4	0.5	0.3
One Recipient	57.0	53.2	34.7
Two Recipients	29.7	34.7	47.6
Three Recipients	8.7	8.6	11.6
Four Recipients	3.0	2.4	4.3
Five or More Recipients	1.1	0.6	1.4

* Excludes unattached individuals.

** Excludes families with one or more farmers.

Sources: Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Income Distributions (Cat. 13-529), Table 14; Canada, Statistics Canada, Income Distributions by Size in Canada 1971 (Cat. 13-207), Table 25.

Table from: Armstrong and Armstrong, 1975, Table VIII, p. 382.

Table 10

Percentage Distribution of Total Income by Quintiles, 1951-1971

Year	Lowest Quintile	Second Quintile	Third Quintile	Fourth Quintile	Highest Quintile
All Individuals					
1951*	3.2	9.2	17.4	25.2	45.0
1961*	3.1	8.9	17.2	26.0	44.8
1971	2.0	7.2	15.5	26.0	49.2
1971**	2.3	9.2	15.8	25.8	45.8
Wage Earners					
1951*	4.2	12.0	18.6	25.0	40.3
1961*	3.7	11.7	18.7	25.6	40.3
1971	2.3	10.1	17.8	25.8	44.0
Unattached Individuals					
1951*	2.7	8.9	16.1	25.8	46.6
1961*	3.1	7.8	14.8	26.6	47.7
1971	2.9	8.0	14.9	25.8	48.5
1971**	3.3	9.2	15.8	25.8	45.8
Families					
1951*	6.1	12.9	17.4	22.4	41.1
1961*	6.6	13.5	18.3	23.4	38.4
1971	5.6	12.6	18.0	23.7	40.0
1971**	6.4	13.5	18.5	23.8	37.8

* Excludes farm income.

** Represents income after income taxes, but no other taxes, have been removed.

Sources: Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Income Distributions (Cat. 13-529), Tables 9 and 12; Canada, Statistics Canada, Income After Tax, Distributions by Size in Canada, 1971 (Cat. 13-210), p. 16.

Table from: Armstrong and Armstrong, 1975. Table VII, p. 381.

In comparing the distributions of incomes among Canadian families, however, the pattern which exists for individuals does not repeat itself. Rather, the families in the two lowest quintiles experienced only a slight decline in proportions of the total income and the families in the middle group increased their share. The top

group, on the other hand, had a reduction in their proportion of the total income. (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1975: 21)

It is married women's earnings which prevent the family income distribution from matching that of the individual income groups. As our earlier discussion illustrated, women with husbands who have low incomes are most likely to work. Therefore, the fact that these women are working is the reason the bottom two quintiles did not decline significantly and why the middle quintile improved their position slightly. Women in the highest income groups are least likely to work outside the home and the decline in share of total income experienced by the highest quintile can be explained by this fact.

Summary

It would appear that as the standard of living in Canada rises married women, whose husbands earn low incomes, must work outside the home to maintain their relative standard of living. Married women do not work in order to close the gap between rich and poor families. Rather they work to prevent the difference from increasing. To stay at home and try to stretch their husband's wage is no longer a viable alternative. To maintain what is now considered a reasonable standard of living, families must purchase a growing number of goods and services which are rapidly becoming indispensable. In order to be in a financial position to purchase them many wives must work outside the home. The existence of these goods and services is a prerequisite for women taking outside employment. At the same time, it is the production of these goods and services that women themselves once produced in the home which has led to the expansion of "female" occupations. In other words, married women are "free"(7)to work because of the creation of necessities which in fact determine their need to work. The accumulation process, by expanding the occupational structure and creating "female jobs," determines women's participation in the contemporary labour force. The form of this participation is that of a relatively permanent reserve army which is the ultimate cause of women's oppressive labour conditions.(8)

NOTES

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Symposium on "The Working Sexes," University of British Columbia, October, 1976. See The Working Sexes, edited by P. Marchak, Vancouver: Institute for Industrial Relations, University of British Columbia, 1977, pp. 10-27. It is also part of a larger work Women in Reserve: Canadian Women and the Labour Force, Toronto: Women's Educational Press. Forthcoming.

2. For a more detailed discussion of this argument see Seccombe (1975).

3. Baran and Sweezy (1966) explain how and why the capitalist system creates new needs; builds in obsolescence; and increases consumer debt.

4. While the sample did not represent a cross section of working women in the categories of divorced, widowed, and separated, for married women living with their husbands "the sample is fairly representative, and they make up 88% of the total" (Canada. Department of Labour, 1958: 11).

5. As the authors point out the combined incomes of husbands and wives in the sample cannot be precisely compared with total incomes for Canadian families (Canada. Department of Labour, 1958: 42).

6. This part of the discussion is based on Armstrong and Armstrong's (1975) important article on female segregation in the Canadian labour force.

7. The family as a private unit of consumption is required in a capitalist society. Consequently "a residual portion of the (domestic) work that accomplishes this consumption is structurally necessary regardless of advances in household technology, child care services, etc." (Seccombe, 1975: 92)

8. For a detailed explanation of women in Canada as a reserve army as well as the specific form of reserve army that married women constitute, namely, the institutionalized inactive reserve, see M.P. Connelly, 'Canadian Women as a Reserve Army of Labour' (Ph.D. dissertation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 1976).

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