

Women's Labour History Project

ANITA ANDERSEN

Mrs. Andersen was born in Princeton where she and her family experienced the collapse of the Princeton mines (the Granby Mines) and the disastrous economic consequences. She was subsequently orphaned and moved to Vancouver where, as a very young girl, she worked for several families as a domestic. This was one of the few alternatives for working class women who needed a place to live, food and work, and who were basically unskilled. Her sister also worked as a domestic, and they both began to radicalize, due to the influences of the Longshore strike and for Mrs. Andersen, interest in Yugoslavian cultural activities. She became a busgirl and organized for the HREU at the Trocadero Cafe. The Cafe was struck, a contact was eventually achieved, but the central organizers were fired and blacklisted, including Mrs. Andersen. She continued to work for the union until she moved to the Yukon in the 1940's. Returning to B.C., she worked for the Jubilee Summer Camp, the Yugoslavian community as a cultural organizer and with consumer organizations.

ANNA ARTHUR

Mrs. Arthur was born in Victoria, B.C. She graduated as a teacher during the Depression, but was unable to find work. She married and returned to the workforce in 1943. She began to work at the Boys' Industrial School as a special education teacher. The staff began to organize into the B.C. Government Employees Association in order to have a say in teaching policy, wages and hours of work. They linked up with workers at nearby Essondale. Part of the demands made by women were for equal pay for equal work, ~~this issue really involved Mrs. Arthur.~~ The BCGEA workers faced many setbacks: the hostility of employers and a refusal by the government to institute a check-off system. Anna Arthur was involved in organizing the union and was elected to the Provincial executive in the latter 1940's representing the Essondale branch. Many of the issues concerned working conditions, for example, the lack of decent housing for student nurses. Later, while working for the Federal Government, she became Local President of PSAC, organizing for equal pensions for women and equal insurance benefits in the Local.

JACK ATKINSON

Jack Atkinson was active in Local 1-80 of the International Woodworkers of America , in the Ladysmith sub-local. He describes the Ladysmith Women's Auxiliary, which followed the pattern of Local 1-80, and was a sub-local of the larger local. Other sub-locals existed in Lake Cowichan and Youbou. Both the sub-local and the local met regularly. The prime objective of the W.A. was to educate wives of woodworkers to the benefits of unionism and provide a group of supporters for the union. Men initially called the W.A.