

Existing resources tell us of the massive unemployment of male youth in the Depression years, the migration of men from the Prairies into British Columbia to swell their ranks, the establishment of government work camps, the campaigns for "work and wages" and "an end to the gunnysack route". We learn of men at work in the war industries, and hear about the impact of changing work methods on the composition and organization of the male labour force. We hear of the fears of unemployment voiced by returning soldiers and their male counterparts in the labour force at the war's end.

Buried in these events there had to be women. There were communities, families, sisters, mothers and wives. There were services, businesses and government offices to be staffed. Existing documentary sources have failed to penetrate into women's daily lives, their feelings and attitudes about home and job.

The Women's Labour History Project has collected the aural histories of women who were instrumental in many of the formative events of the British Columbia labour movement. The images evoked by the interviews present a female face to the traditional male images, an equally important if at times differently situated perspective on the province's history:

### British Columbia in the 1930s

#### IMAGES OF:

- *Women marrying at sixteen to get on relief, bearing three children by the age of twenty and longing for waged work.*
- *Single women working for five dollars a month, room and board, seven days a week, eighteen hours a day : domestic workers.*
- *Women working split shifts, fourteen hour days: waitresses. Waitresses on strike, braving the chance of firing and blacklisting. Women winning a certification at the Trocadero Cafe, inspiring a wave of restaurant unionism.*
- *Mothers marching, calling for jobs for their unemployed children. Women organizing communal kitchens to feed the unemployed on their streets. Women, arms linked, blocking a doorway as the sherriff and his men try to evict a family.*