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Bankers and Bomb Makers: Gender Ideology and Women's Paid Work in Banking and Munitions during the First World War in Canada.

by

Kori Street

B.A. University of Guelph. 1990
M.A. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto) 1991

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Department of History

We accept this dissertation as conforming to the required standard

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University of Victoria
During the First World War, some Canadian women found themselves in new and unfamiliar environments, doing jobs apparently unavailable to them before the war. Many of those women were successful in the new opportunities available to them. The focus of this study is twofold. First, it examines the scope and the nature of women's work in two industries, banking and munitions, during the war. This is an important step because we still know very little about women's experience of the war. Understanding how many women worked and in what capacity is essential to understanding the nuances of women's wartime experience. Women who worked in banking and munitions were not a homogeneous group. The composition of the wartime workforce is also analysed. The war's impact on wage rates for women is also examined. Second, the study focuses on the nature of the impact of wartime participation on gender ideology. In particular, the study seeks to determine if gender ideology was affected by women's expanded opportunities in masculine occupations during the war. Often, the historiography regarding women and war is characterised by a binary discourse that seeks to determine whether on not wars liberate women. Rather than engage in that debate, this study attempts to avoid it as much as possible. Women's experience of the war in these two industries was complex. The study
explores how women could both challenge and reaffirm ideas about gender; how attitudes towards and about women could change and remain the same; and how employee and employers alike strove to undermine and maintain the sexual division of labour and labour processes that were threatened by the entrance of large numbers of women into jobs defined as men’s work. Women’s participation both challenged and reinforced traditional notions about gender. Essentially, despite being successful ‘bankers’ women remained unsuitable for a career in banking. Similarly, regardless of their participation in munitions factories, metal shops remained no place for women. Quantitative, oral interview and qualitative sources including contemporary newspapers and magazines, were used. In particular, a great deal of the evidence was derived from several databases constructed for this project.

Examiners:

Dr. L. S. Marks, Supervisor (Department of History)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"[T]he history of the war is not and never will be written from our point of view... [because] no one who has taken stock of his own impressions since 4 August 1914, can possibly believe that history as it is written closely resembles history as it is lived; but as we are for the most part quiescent, and, if sceptical of ourselves, content to believe that the rest of mankind believes, we have no right to complain if we are fobbed off once more with historians' histories."¹

Virginia Woolf was highly critical of the way the British historicised the First World War and she felt compelled to disabuse people of what she regarded as the mythology of the war. Woolf's caution is equally applicable to Canadians. We have developed our own mythology regarding the "Great War," including a belief that participation in the war created our national identity more than any other event or process.² "It [was] the Great War that marks the real birth of Canada." wrote Sandra Gwyn. "Thrust for the first time upon the world's stage, we performed at all times credibly and often brilliantly....the effort of mobilising and equipping a vast army


modernised us, and our blood and our accomplishments transformed us from colony into nation." According to Gwyn, the war also transformed women.

It is not unusual to regard war as creating an environment that results in significant changes to the roles and status of women. In fact, a simple binary discourse regarding the liberating effect of war for women characterises the historiography of women and war. Some historians, such as Arthur Marwick and Gordon Wright, suggest that the wars of the twentieth century offered women vastly expanded roles in paid employment which, in turn, liberated them. They argue that women's expanded horizons led to significant social change, such as enfranchisement. The weakness common to Marwick and Wright, and others like them, is that they do not measure liberation in terms of the achievement of gender equality. In contrast, the historians who generally form the other end of the binary, such as Penny Summerfield, Gail Braybon, Angela Woollacott, and Denise Riley, argue that the wars did little to undermine underlying social structures and gender


ideology. They found that the changes Marwick identified as important, such as increased participation in paid work, did not result in the removal of the sexual division of labour in the workplace. In fact, many of the authors found that wartime circumstances and experiences reinforced rather than redefined gender ideology. Consequently, they conclude that wars are not emancipating or liberating for women.

A similar binary discourse characterises Canadian historiography on the wartime experience of women. Several Canadian historians reflect Marwick’s approach and argue that women’s wartime participation, particularly in the workforce, liberated women. For example, Gwyn argues that “The Great War ... was to give many women the opportunity – in many cases the necessity – to move out of a familiar environment that, even when typing and shorthand were involved, was essentially an extension of their homes. In tens of thousands they moved into the kind of strange, intimidating, workplaces to which men were accustomed, removed from their homes....” Because of that participation, Gwyn concludes, a “more significant sociological and psychic change had already taken place: the war had already liberated many women from

---

their own hearth." Historians such as Desmond Morton and John Herd Thompson agree with Gwyn and conclude fundamental social changes, such as the federal franchise for women or increased labour force participation, were evidence of increased gender equality.\(^7\) Graham Lowe, for example, argues that as a result of the wartime work of women "old fashioned views about women's work were challenged and public opinion began to accept that perhaps women had a right to earn their own living, and indeed, could make vital contributions to the economy."\(^9\) Fewer historians take the opposite side of the debate and argue that the First World War did not emancipate women. Ceta Ramakhalawansingh is one of the few who contend that the war did nothing to fundamentally change women's status. Recently other historians have begun to examine the work of women during the war and found that there was little substantive change for women that can be attributed to wartime service. James Naylor and Linda Kealey both included sections on women's work during the war and concluded that the war resulted in little long term change for working women.\(^{10}\)

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\(^7\) Gwyn, 438.


\(^{10}\) Ceta Ramakhalawansingh, "Women During the Great War," in Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith, and Bonnie Shepard, eds., *Women at Work: Ontario, 1859-1930* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974) 261-308; Ruth Pierson also wrote from this historiographical perspective. See Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*: *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto:
I have difficulty accepting the conclusions of either approach. Indeed, what I have found is that neither side of the debate fully explains women's participation and the impact of that participation. My concern with the existing debate is twofold. First, I find it suspect that we draw such definite conclusions on the basis of limited evidence. How can we argue one way or the other about the degree to which women were liberated by their wartime experiences when we know little about the nature and extent of those experiences? Moreover, remaining wedded to a dichotomous approach obscures the nuances of women's experience. The first part of the study addresses the issue of the degree of women's participation by examining the nature and extent of women's work in two representatives industries during the war. Chapters five, six and seven consider the impact of wartime participation on gender ideology.

Whichever side commentators or historians take in the debate, they often examine women's paid employment during the war. In particular, historians focus on women's participation in fields closed to them before the war, and some, such as Morton or Marwick, conclude that women's work in occupations closed to them before the war is an indication of enhanced status or emancipation. It makes sense to assume that if women did men's work successfully, attitudes about women would change. Those who argue that women received the vote as a result of wartime work operate from the premise that women earned the right to some measure of equality.

The historians who occupy the other side of the discourse often examine the same work and the same workers and arrive at completely opposite conclusions. For instance, Penny Summerfield examined the same munitions workers that Arthur Marwick used to prove emancipation and found that women were not liberated at all. Scholars on both sides of the debate seem to regard women's work in the paid workforce during the war as something of a barometer of social change. I too chose to look at women's paid work in occupations defined as unsuitable for women before the war.11

Both banking and munitions manufacture were masculine environments before the war. However, the exigencies of the war opened the teller's cage of the banks and the shop floors of the metals industry to women workers. Manufacturers and managers moderated the labour shortage caused by the acceleration of the wartime economy and enlistment by hiring women in both these industries after 1916. Both industries, but particularly munitions, were male preserves before the war and women's entrance into them was regarded as extraordinary. Metal manufacture, with

11 Paid work is only one of several areas that are important and require further examination. In the early stages of this project I envisioned including women volunteer workers as well as paid workers. The scope of the work simply did not allow for a full discussion. A study of women's volunteer activities in conjunction with paid work would also raise other issues, such as minimum wage and mother's pensions that are linked to the social changes brought about by the war. See for example, Margaret Hobbs and Joan Sangster, eds. The Women Worker, 1926-1929 (St. John's, Newfoundland: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1999); James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); and James Struthers, The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).
its reliance on skilled male labour, was not a place for women. Banking, like
munitions work, was an industry reliant on a skilled male workforce before the war.

During the First World War, some Canadian women found themselves in new
and unfamiliar environments, doing jobs apparently unavailable to them before the
war. Many of them were successful in those jobs and made higher wages than they
ever had before. The question that I sought to answer when I began my study was did
the work emancipate the women? The answers I found suggested that the question
did not begin to encompass the variety of women's experience. Who worked? How
many? Where? In what capacity? How much did they earn? What did people think?
What did it mean? All of these questions need to be addressed. We might expect to
find that women's success in those jobs expanded their horizons and even liberated
them. We might be surprised to find that while the wartime experience resulted in
some degree of liberation for women and an expansion of their horizons, women's
social status and labour force opportunities also remained unchanged by the war.

I begin the study by examining the scope of women's work. Understanding
how many women worked and in what capacity is essential to understanding the
nuances of women's wartime experience. Women who worked were not a
homogeneous group. In chapter four, I analyse the differences among the women
who made up the reserve army of labour. I also explore the wages women received
for their labours and find that in that area too, there are few straightforward
conclusions. After laying the foundation, we can fully explore how women could
both challenge and reaffirm ideas about gender: how attitudes towards and about
women could change and remain the same; and how employers and employees alike strove to undermine and maintain the sexual division of labour and labour processes that were threatened by the entrance of large numbers of women into jobs defined as men's work.

**Methodology**

Problems with the quality and availability of sources generally make it difficult to answer questions about the nature and extent of women's participation in the workforce in this period. However, the Bank of Nova Scotia Staff Record Books provide a means of overcoming that obstacle.\(^\text{12}\) Although the General Office did not compile yearly staff statistics and only reported staff numbers in two of its Annual Reports,\(^\text{13}\) the data available from the BNS Staff Record Books allow us to do what we have been rarely able to do in other industries. We can develop a very specific and reasonably complete picture of the extent and nature of women's employment at the Bank of Nova Scotia. We can establish with some certainty the wartime pattern of female employment at the bank, which in turn allows us to draw firmer conclusions.

\(^{12}\) The Bank of Nova Scotia Staff Record Books, Bank of Nova Scotia Archives (BNSA).

\(^{13}\) The Bank of Nova Scotia, *Annual Report 1917*, BNSA, RG 1/2/3/12, p.2 and *Annual Report 1920*, BNSA, RG 1/2/3/15, p.3; see also correspondence from the Canadian Bankers' Association, Toronto Branch to the Canadian Bank of Commerce, 27 February 1919, BNSA.
about the impact of the war on those female employees. What is more, the conclusions could be applied to women in banking in general because the Bank of Nova Scotia is representative of English Canadian banks with respect to their business practices and their attitudes towards women during the war.

Comparison with other banks suggests that the hiring practices of the Bank of Nova Scotia were very similar to most other banks in Canada. In 1919 the Canadian Bankers' Association compiled a report on staffing levels at the end of the war. Of the 20 banks that participated, BNS ranked sixth in terms of number of employees and reported that 39.4 percent of its employees were female which is only slightly higher than the national mean of 34.3 per cent (see Table 1). Only the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank had significantly higher proportions of female employees. They were much larger banks than BNS, and had greater numbers of large branches and larger head offices than BNS. Larger offices meant more clerical workers, such as stenographers, which likely meant that they hired more women than the smaller banks. Banks similar in size to the Bank of Nova Scotia appear to have had a similar proportion of women employed by the end of the war.
Table 1: Female Employment in Canadian Banks, 1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BANK</th>
<th>Proportion of Staff Male</th>
<th>Proportion of Staff Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British North America</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molsons</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationale</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provinciale</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal/Northern Crown</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominion</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hochelaga</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
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14 Citizen’s Repatriations League, “Digest of Information Furnished by Banks to the Associations Representatives in the Business Council of the Citizen’s Repatriation League, February 1919, BNSA, Canadian Bankers’ Association Correspondence, File 42, RG, 18 SE. 1 Series 1, Unit 104.
In order to be able to fully explore the nature of women’s experience, we must have a clear idea about the scope of the experience. I think one of the reasons that we have relatively few studies of women’s work during the war is the difficulty finding sufficient sources. In particular, it is very difficult to find sources that can be quantified. Fortunately, I was able to create several databases that provided a sound foundation for the development of an accurate picture of women’s work in the two industries under study in this work.

The first data set came from the Bank of Nova Scotia. The Bank of Nova Scotia kept its staff and employment records in annual Branch Staff Lists, which are currently housed at the Bank of Nova Scotia Archives (BNSA). The lists were organised by branch and contained information about occupation, salary, length of service, occupational mobility, health, marital status and age. The sample is composed of a random selection of Canadian branches between 1910 and 1922. I chose these dates in order to encompass the 1911 and 1921 census years. I did not
count the Head Office in Toronto as a branch for a variety of reasons. First, the Head Office operated more as an office than a branch bank. As such, it had a different purpose, a different staff composition and different labour processes than the branches had, which in turn meant different opportunities for female employees. I did enter it into a separate database that measured the same variables as the branch banking database because it serves as a useful comparison. I also created a third BNS database of all male employees that enlisted.

The data include approximately 30 percent of the branches for each year. It is very difficult to ascertain what percentage of the total workforce the data set represents, because the BNS did not generally publish information about the total number of staff. The Annual General Report of 1917 and 1920 were the only two sources that listed the number of employees at the bank. Based on that information, the sample includes 35 percent of employees in 1917 and 32 percent in 1920. In order to be included in the sample, employees had to have been in service for a minimum of three months, and at the branch sampled for more than five days.

I also constructed a database from Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) pension records. My sample in this case is more problematic. The sample that I worked with is a sub-set of the sample created for a much larger project. I worked from the existing series of records that Mary McKinnon used to create a database on CPR.

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15 The databases will be referred to as BNS Database, BNS Database – Head Office, BNS Database – Military Service throughout the remainder of this work.
employees. I was unable to gain access to the original records. McKinnon’s sample appears to be neither random nor scientific. The selection of records was based on the first letter of the surname. It is entirely likely that the sample under-represents certain ethnic groups as a result. Ultimately, my sample consisted of all the female employee’s pension cards from McKinnon’s selection. As far as I could determine, the sample I drew accounted for 28 percent of McKinnon’s entire sample. Only those records that were totally illegible were discounted. Again, I am unable to say what proportion of the total workforce the sample represents, nor am I able to make comparisons between male and female workers. Despite the problems with the sample, it did yield some excellent information on occupations, geographic distribution, age, ethnicity, wages and length of service in a variety of occupational groupings.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, I examined a variety of other sources. Most of what was available to me were reports about working women from various agencies. Reports from the government, concerned organisations and media sources make up the bulk of documentary sources. In many cases, those generating the reports had different concerns and values than the workers about whom they wrote. The female employees’ voices are usually only heard in the form of quotations. This is particularly true for munitions workers, most of whom were working-class women. Unlike British women munitions workers, Canadian female munitions workers left

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16 Dr. Mary McKinnon is an economist at McGill University. She has used the CPR records to create a large data set in order to primarily study wage rates before the Second World War.
few documentary sources. In Canada, the authors writing about the war experience of the workers were from the middle and upper class, and many of them were male. Consequently, their conclusions may not accurately represent the ideas of the working class. For instance, there were several advice books directed at working women written during or shortly after the war. Most were similar to Marjorie MacMurchy's *The Woman -- Bless Her* (1916). The advice offered reflects middle class ideology and is quite likely a poor representation of working-class reality. In contrast, women in the banks, who were usually educated and from middle-class or respectable working class backgrounds, had a somewhat more literate tradition. Female bank employees published several articles in the trade journals. The articles are a valuable source. It is unclear, however, whether the articles represent what women wanted as much as what the banking community believed about women.

Oral sources about Canadian women's First World War experiences are also very rare and those that exist are problematic. Two projects interviewed women who participated in the war: The National Film Board's *And They Knew How to Dance*...
A central weakness of both sources is that they do not differentiate women who lived and worked in Canada during the war from those who participated in Great Britain. The experiences of many of the women interviewed in both productions took place in Great Britain. The situations in the two countries were very different, something almost all contemporary Canadian sources were quick to point out, but that the two sources fail to recognise. Consequently, only a few of the interviews are relevant. Furthermore, neither project specifically analysed gender ideology. I was fortunate in that I was able to locate three women willing to be interviewed for this project, two of whom worked in munitions and the third in a bank. I recognise that taken together they are hardly representative of women's experience, but even with all the problems associated with oral history, their experiences are a valuable resource and they added depth to this research.  

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20 Many others have addressed the difficulty in doing oral history, not the least of which is the fallibility of memory. See for example, Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2nd Edition (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 1988); Joan Sangster, "'Telling Our Stories,: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," *Women's History Review* Volume 3, Number 1 (1994): 5-28. Sherna Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987) introduction. These same sources often point out the value of the methodology. The women interviewed for this project were all over 90 years of age and their memories were not always clear, however, taking into consideration the limitations of the subjects and the methodology, they provided useful evidence. I conducted the interviews with McAvity's employees, Louise Poiret and Jennie Arbo, in April 1992. I also interviewed a third woman who asked not to be named in June of 1994. She has been identified as Subject A.
Newspapers and other media publications are useful sources of contemporary attitudes. For the purposes of this project, I sampled the following newspapers for the war years: *Victoria Daily Times, Daily Colonist, Toronto Globe, Montreal Star, Montreal Gazette, Halifax Mail, Hamilton Daily Times, Calgary Herald, Regina Leader Post, Winnipeg Free Press, Toronto Star* and the *Ottawa Journal*. I read one day of every week for each newspaper. The day of the week was determined by a random number sample. When an issue arose regarding women's work in either of the industries under examination, I traced all references to it. I also paid close attention to classified ads. I also read one in every four issues of *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night*. In the case of the trade journals such as *Canadian Machinery, Railway Age Gazette*. I examined every issue published between 1914 and 1919. Although I expected to find far more than I did, a study of such sources revealed a great deal of the complexity of this issue. Perhaps as interesting as what I did find was what I did not. As I will discuss in chapter 6, there was not a dramatic increase in the level of coverage about women during the war, which could be interpreted in a number of ways. It is possible that women's mobilisation was simply not sufficiently extraordinary to be covered. If men and women had seen women's mobilisation as a threat to the social order, it is likely that there would have been more coverage of the issue or more editorials. That was certainly the case in Great Britain.
**Historiography**

One of the greatest challenges of this study was the sleuthing dimension of the research. There is a general dearth of sources regarding the nature and extent of women's experience of the First World War. Sources that traditionally provide information about women's work are often unavailable. For instance, during the war, the Department of Labour did not have any reliable statistics about women's labour, nor did they believe it was their responsibility to collect them. The Imperial Munitions Board (IMB), the most influential organisation with respect to the employment of women in munitions, also kept few statistics. Further, because the

21 In researching this project, I searched for sources related to women's wartime experience in paid work in the Public Archives of Canada, the Imperial War Museum and the Public Record Office in London. I examined several different record and manuscript groups, which yielded little useful evidence, including the Department of Labour (RG 18); the Department of Defence (RG 24); several women's collections, such as the Red Cross and YWCA; the Borden Papers, Flavelle Papers: the Grand Trunk Records. I also scoured the Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia, as well as local and city archives in Toronto, Saint John, Halifax, Victoria and St. Catharines. I also examined the records of private companies, including the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Bank of Nova Scotia and Ganong. I even went on the CBC radio and made an appeal for information. The show yielded only six calls, most of which referred me to published sources. I also examined several popular literary sources by authors such as Nellie McClung and Lucy Maud Montgomery. French language sources were particularly difficult to find in relation to women's work. I did examine French language newspapers, but found little related to women's work in the industries. I found more in the English language sources in Quebec which may suggest that employment patterns were different even within Quebec. More work, particularly dealing with other industries and volunteer activities, might bring more sources about the experience of French Canadian women to light.

22 Flavelle wrote to Borden in 1916, "I may have been mistaken in suggesting that the Department of Labour was the one to whom such matters should be referred and that the routine duties of the Department makes it impossible for them to consider the labour problem as affected by the war..." Borden Papers, Public Archives of Canada
IMB was neither a Canadian nor a British institution, neither country kept many records because each thought it the other's responsibility.\textsuperscript{23}

What sources exist often diverge widely. On the one hand, some commentators praised, and possibly exaggerated, accounts of the ‘thousands’ of women working at paid and unpaid war work. David Carnegie, a military officer who worked with the IMB, called Canadian women’s work in munitions a national service that would be the marvel of future generations.\textsuperscript{24} In direct contrast, many other contemporary commentators minimised the work of women, suggesting that the extent of women’s wartime participation was not significant. For instance, J Castell-Hopkins, author of the \textit{Canadian Annual Review} suggested that “Social conditions in far-flung Canada did not permit of the same volume of war-work amongst its women as characterised Great Britain. There were too few of them, they were too scattered in great agricultural regions, they were too busy with the essential duties of a new country... There was no surplus of women ... as in the Old Land.”\textsuperscript{25} Enid Bone Price, whose 1919 thesis on women in the First World War is one of the sources most often used, believed that there was a significant divergence between the reality of women’s

\footnotesize
(PAC) 1047, MG 26, H1, Volume 2111, 118708; also see Correspondence between the two men on July 22, 1916 and July 26, 1916.

\textsuperscript{23} Although the finding aids of the Public Record Office include references to series of IMB records, some of which are unavailable.


experience and contemporary perceptions of it. The result is that we have a perception of war that might not reflect the reality.

Another weakness of the existing historiography on women and war is that it treats women as a homogenous group. In *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (1992), Sandra Gwyn recounts and briefly examines the wartime experiences of ten individuals whom she suggests are prisms of history. Using their journals and letters Gwyn constructs what she describes as an intimate record of the time. Her use of the word 'record' implies objectivity and inclusiveness. Her methodology, she asserts, will permit readers to "think and feel and experience as those Canadians did three-quarters of a century ago." The central weakness of this particular approach is that Gwyn's ten Canadians are not representative. She was limited in her choices by the availability of sources and

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26 In 1918 the Canadian Reconstruction Association awarded a series of post-graduate scholarships to women in Canadian universities to further the investigation of homemaking and women's industrial participation. It was believed that "careful, sympathetic and trained investigation of women's work by women graduates is one of the most effective methods by which the economic and industrial well-being of women may be secured." In the first published thesis of the series, the focus was on women's participation in the wartime workforce. Enid Price, the author of the study, which is largely a collection of statistics regarding a variety of industries in Montreal, indicates that although it was recognised that many war industries were partly maintained by women, there was little known about how many women actually entered previously masculine occupations. Despite being of limited statistical value, her surveys provide some interesting insights into women's work and it remains one of the most valuable sources for historians. Just as interesting is Price's reason for conducting the study: the belief that there was quite a divergence between the popular perception and the reality of women's paid work during the war. Enid Bone Price, "Changes in the Industrial Occupations of Women in the Environment of Montreal During the Period of War, 1914-1918." (McGill University: Masters Thesis, 1919).

27 Gwyn, 16.
confined herself to Canadians who left written records. The limitation of such an 
approach is particularly glaring in the case of Canadian women.

Gwyn included three women in her book: Mabel Adamson, wife of an officer; 
Ethel Chadwick, single Ottawa woman with connections to the vice-regal court; and 
Grace MacPherson, ambulance driver from BC. All of these women were white 
English-Canadians from the middle or upper class. All of them were, in some way, 
exceptional. Adamson followed her husband to war and ultimately established a 
charity in Belgium. MacPherson drove an ambulance at the front and wrote one of the 
first accounts of Gallipoli. Chadwick, who is the principal guide to the home front, 
was a member of the upper class, although lacking in money, and had access to the 
very height of Ottawa society. She socialised with the Duke of Connaught and skated 
with Princess Patricia. Her income came from writing about the society to which her 
birthright gave her access.

Based on the written records of these three women, Gwyn concluded that the 
wartime participation of “tens of thousands of women” in the paid workforce, 
particularly in untraditional jobs, liberated Canadian women from their hearths.²⁸ 
The stories by all accounts are interesting, and Gwyn’s book is excellent, but her 
conclusion with respect to women is suspect. All of Gwyn’s representatives came 
from a situation of privilege. Even Grace MacPherson, who worked as a secretary 
before the war because her father, a civil engineer, had died, did not seem to need to

²⁸ Ibid., 435.
work. Their experiences were likely quite extraordinary and not representative of the wartime experience of all Canadian women.

This highlights the need for historians studying women and war to familiarise themselves with the work accomplished by historians in other fields who have demonstrated that women are differentiated by class, race, ethnicity, place of residence and other factors. We need to question the assumption that the "army" of women was a homogenous unit. Historians such as Franca Iacobet...
demonstrated that class also determines lived experience. What jobs women receive, how much they are paid, what social and cultural organisations women have access to was (and is) determined to a great extent by such social attributes.

If we are to understand the depth and breadth of Canadian women’s wartime experience, we need to examine these social attributes in the context of war. British and American historians have already done so, and have, not surprisingly, found that not all women shared the same wartime experience. Karen Anderson and others argue convincingly that African-American women did not share the expanded horizons that white American women did in World War Two. Women of colour were excluded from jobs requiring skill or training and received lower wages. Other historians, Angela Woollacott and Penny Summerfield among them, have demonstrated that class had a profound impact on British women’s experience of war. For instance, working-class women did not benefit from the “destabilising of gender”


31 See for example, Tillotson; and Lynne Marks, “The ‘Hallelujah Lasses’: Working-Class Women in the Salvation Army in English Canada, 1882-92,” in Iacovetta and Valverde, eds.

that occurred during both world wars in Britain. Middle-class women seemed to experience some improvement of their relative role in society, but working class women did not share that despite their extensive participation in the workplace. Canadian studies have not yet addressed these issues to the same degree. Ruth Pierson’s groundbreaking study on women in the Second World War does a fine job examining gender but does not deal as well with class, race, ethnicity or other important issues. This is a particularly glaring omission in the discussion regarding the paid workforce. Dionne Brand’s work, which indicates that the circumstances in Canada during the Second World War gave African-Canadian women access to factory work for the first time, is one of the only Canadian sources that looks at race and women’s work in war.\footnote{In her study of CWACs in WW2, Ruth Pierson is limited to mostly white, English-Canadian women because the CWAC was mainly composed of such women by design. Pierson, \textit{They’re Still Women After All}; Dionne Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to go into factory work until Hitler started the War’: The 1920’s to the 1940’s,” Iacovetta, Draper and Ventressa, eds., \textit{A Nation of Immigrants}.}

The First World War was not only an experience of liberation, nor was it only an experience of continued subjugation for women workers. Rather than search for an understanding of women’s wartime experience on the periphery of the existing

debate. I looked in between the poles of the dichotomy. I found that women’s experience as munitions workers and bank officers was not a single experience at all. It was a diverse and complex experience, which varied by class, race, ethnicity, region and class. Women’s increased opportunities in the two industries under examination here challenged gender ideology, at the same moment that a process of ideological accommodation reaffirmed women’s secondary status as a temporary reserve army of labour.
CHAPTER 2: THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S WARTIME PARTICIPATION AS BANK STAFF AND BOMB MAKERS.

In his work on the impact of wars on society, Arthur Marwick argues that if we are to understand how war and society interrelate we must understand society as it was before, during and after the war.¹ To draw any conclusion as to whether or not the war affected women's work patterns or their broader social horizons, it is necessary to understand the context of the period, the nature of the industries under examination and the general patterns of women's work between 1900 and 1921. Marwick would argue that in order to appreciate fully any alterations to women's horizons that can be attributed to war, we need to understand the environment in which the war occurred. That is the focus of this chapter.

Industrial Context

Historians generally describe the period between 1901 and 1921 as one of rapid expansion for Canada.² Canada's GNP, a fairly good indication of aggregate

¹ Arthur Marwick, "Mobilising for Total War," 4-7; and The Deluge, 4-12 and 15-39.

² There are many studies on various aspects of the transformation. One of the most useful sources, despite its weaknesses which include a very limited discussion of women, is Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation
growth, grew at a rate of 6.48 percent between 1896 and 1913 as compared to a rate of 2.38 percent for the years 1870-1896.³ After a brief decline in the value of real output in 1913/1914, wartime production resulted in yearly growth of the real GNP per capita until 1917, the peak of wartime production. Canada experienced an economic decline between 1918 and 1921, followed by sustained growth until 1929. Economic growth was not uniform. Some sectors of the economy grew, others declined during the period. For the purpose of this study, I am most interested in the growth of the financial and manufacturing sectors.

Economic historians Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram argue that during the first two decades of this century "Manufacturing activities grew slightly faster than GDP, rising to contribute over one-quarter of final output in 1920."⁴ Donald Creighton went so far as to suggest that "By the end of the war Canada was launched as a significant industrial nation...."⁵ Norrie and Owram indicate that not all

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⁴ Norrie and Owram, 300.

⁵ Donald Creighton, *Canada's First Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1978), 136. Norrie and Owram suggest that while the argument holds in general terms, there are
manufacturing industries experienced untrammelled growth between the turn of the century and 1921. General economic growth, buoyed by the wheat boom and the settlement of the Prairies, resulted in considerable activity in the manufacturing sector. At the same time, the sector experienced significant dislocation as traditional industries, such as ship-building, stagnated and new industries, such as value added steel manufacture, emerged. The sector also diversified. After a decade of growth, the industry experienced a serious recession in 1913, which the war did not immediately offset. In fact, initially the war worsened the situation. However, the manufacturing industry soon recovered and expanded to meet the growing needs of the Allied war effort.

Employment patterns in the manufacturing sector illustrated that the sector was changing. As Table 2 indicates, the number of production workers fluctuated between 1905 and 1923. The labour demands of the war resulted in a significant increase in the number of blue-collar employees. The trend quickly reversed during the post-war recession, and the number of operatives declined to pre-1910 levels. The some important qualifiers that need to be considered, not the least of which is that wartime expansion of manufacturing was a short term phenomenon. An examination of longer-term impact suggests that the depressions of 1913 and 1921 had more impact on the sector than the war. Norrie and Owram, 309-310.
Table 2: Manufacturing Employment, 1905-1923

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Production Workers</th>
<th>Number of Supervisory and Office Workers</th>
<th>Manufacturing Workers as Percentage of Total Labour Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>347,672</td>
<td>35,030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>465,029</td>
<td>42,948</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>523,491</td>
<td>62,454</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>499,063</td>
<td>75,558</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>437,259</td>
<td>73,849</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

evidence in Table 2 suggests also that the opportunities for production workers actually declined during the period, despite the brief wartime increase. In contrast, opportunities for supervisory and office employees in manufacturing increased dramatically (70 percent) in the same period. The increase indicates that the sector was undergoing significant structural changes throughout this period.

One of the defining features of this rapid expansion was the increasing concentration of economic power. In this age of corporate capitalism, financial and industrial interests were closely linked and mergers and consolidation were common.

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7 Brown and Cook suggest this massive rise in modern industry was predicated on the boom in agriculture. The wheat boom increased the demand for rail lines, manufactured goods and tertiary industries. Brown and Cook, 83-84.
A managerial and administrative revolution accompanied the concentration of capital and production. Increased factory administration was one of the most obvious consequences of industrialisation. During this period, there was a disproportionate increase in administrative personnel relative to manufacturing personnel. Managing these new large organisations required new skills, as did working in the changing shops. New technology and new methods made their way to the shop floors to increase productivity and profits. Scientific management brought about new methods to manage labour, not all of which were received by the growing working class with equanimity. For instance, employers introduced new systems to the factories that were time-based. Tasks were standardised and timed, efforts were made to eliminate all wasted energy, and new tools and machines were developed which deskillled the labour process. Similarly, routinisation was introduced to the office as was technology. This process accelerated during the war. Owners and managers continued the specialisation of work and consolidation of wealth and productive power throughout the war. They were assisted by a government more interested in efficiencies that would maintain the output of the war economy than they were in workers' demands.

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Banking and Munitions Industries

Clearly, the consolidation of financial and industrial interests affected banks. In fact, the rise of corporate capitalism radically altered the service sector.\(^\text{10}\) For all banks, including the Bank of Nova Scotia, the years preceding and including the war were years of expansion and amalgamation.\(^\text{11}\) Expansion continued throughout most of the decade after the war, although a process of consolidation accompanied it. For the BNS, the years 1900-1922 were ones of rapid expansion in the number of branches, employees and in the business of the BNS. The annual growth rate of the bank in current-dollar terms during this period is estimated at 10.5 percent, and it is argued that assets of the bank more than doubled.\(^\text{12}\)

A survey of the number and location of branches illustrates the rate and scope of expansion clearly. In 1900, the BNS was a small, local bank. The BNS had 58 branch offices in 1905. However, the majority of them were in the Maritimes despite

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\(^{12}\) Schull and Gibson, 137.
efforts to expand westward, particularly into Central Canada. Over the next five years, the bank showed a moderate increase in the number of branches. The bank's annual reports listed 99 branches in 1910 when H.A. Richardson, who had started his career with the bank as a clerk in 1879, took over and ushered the bank into a new era.

When Richardson took over as General Manager of the BNS, 27 percent of the branches were located in Nova Scotia. The smaller, regional banks in Canada were losing out in the expanding economy to the bigger banks that had the capital to expand into growing markets such as the west. Such was the case for the Bank of New Brunswick. They had chosen not to expand before 1910, despite being in a very solid position to do so. In the more competitive market, they found themselves unable to expand and in danger of collapse if they did not. In 1912 they approached the BNS with an offer to merge. Richardson and the board agreed and the result was a greatly expanded BNS with the capital to expand into new markets. In particular, the BNS were interested in expanding into Ontario, and Richardson pursued an amalgamation with the Metropolitan Bank. The Metropolitan Bank served Toronto and most of its branches were located in the city and southern Ontario. The BNS and Metropolitan banks had long enjoyed a positive working relationship often finding themselves joined in opposition against the bigger banks on a variety of issues. Given the increasing pressure on smaller banks, the two amalgamated in 1914 increasing the number of BNS branches in Ontario from 14 percent to 35 percent of their total Canadian branches.
The war provided the opportunity to consolidate these mergers, but it also strengthened the bank financially and in relationship with the government. As Richardson reported to the Board: "the banks and the Government are practically one in whatever is done to finance Canada through this war." The banks also found the war a drain on resources, particularly human resources. Because of the difficulties in maintaining desired levels of staffing, the banks all agreed among themselves to cease further branch expansion. No banks opened new branches between 1916 and 1918, and most had closed branches by 1918. Despite this, Richardson continued to pursue westward expansion in order to compete with the larger banks. He engineered the amalgamation of the BNS with the Bank of Ottawa on very reasonable terms in 1920. The bank acquired approximately $75 million in assets and a further 70 branches. This final act gave the bank a solid national footing and made it extremely competitive. Canada experienced a minor recession in the early twenties. The collapse of sugar prices in the West Indies and the fishing industry in Newfoundland profoundly affected the bank and ended their expansion. In the ensuing years when most businesses were enjoying rapid expansion, particularly in the secondary and tertiary industries, the BNS was satisfied to maintain a conservative course of action and saw only modest growth of about 2 percent annually. In many ways, this

13 Schull and Gibson, 176.
prepared the bank well for the Depression and the BNS was able to maintain its position as one of the national banks. 14

Occupational and organisational changes in banking indicate that the general changes in the broader economy affected the BNS. As the bank expanded and diversified to keep up with the changing needs of corporate capitalism an increase in the staff complement at branches and some diversification of their staffing requirements was evident. The process of scientific management, discussed further in subsequent chapters, made its way into the banks. The locations that underwent the greatest transformation were Head Office and the largest branches. The number of occupations increased, and, more specifically, the number of stenographic workers increased.

The history of munitions work in Canada is not quite as well known as is the history of the Bank of Nova Scotia. Not only was munitions production in this country largely a wartime industry, it also involved more than one type of manufacturing or industry. It included the manufacturing of shells of many types. as

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14 Table 3: Distribution of Bank of Nova Scotia Branches.
Source: BNS Archives, Annual Reports and Branch Lists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>NB</th>
<th>PEI</th>
<th>ON</th>
<th>PQ</th>
<th>MAN</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>SASK</th>
<th>BC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
well as producing explosives, building ships and aeroplanes, felling timber, mining ore and producing steel among other things. It is beyond the scope of this work to give even the briefest of pre-war histories of all of these industries. I have limited the focus of my contextual discussion to the manufacturing, or machining, of armaments, because most of the workers I examined were employed in production.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1914, the only existing armament factory capable of producing shells would have taken twelve years operating at full capacity to fulfil the initial order.\textsuperscript{16} Many more orders followed the first order of 200,000 empty shells awarded through the Shell Committee. By the end of the war, the Canadian munitions industry employed approximately 175-250,000 workers in 675 factories located in 150 different towns or cities.\textsuperscript{17} This is a remarkable industrial achievement by any standard. In fact, historian Myer Siemiatycki has credited the production of munitions with catapulting Canada out of the recession of 1912-1914.\textsuperscript{18} It was not an industry that materialised out of a


\textsuperscript{16} Bliss, 239.

\textsuperscript{17} Carnegie, xix.

\textsuperscript{18} Myer Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy: The 1916 Hamilton Machinists Strike," \textit{L/LT}, Volume 3 (1978), 131; also see Craig Heron and Myer Siemiatycki, "The Great War, the State, and Working-Class Canada," in Craig Heron.
vacuum. Most of the companies that turned to munitions production during the war were already in metals manufacturing, foundry work or steel production. The wartime munitions industry began in a haphazard manner. Three weeks after the war began, the British War Office sent a telegram asking Sam Hughes, then the Minister of Militia, to assist in securing empty shells from American manufacturers. Hughes, believing that Canadian manufacturers were capable of producing munitions in Canada discussed the possibilities with several of his manufacturing friends. His opportunistic action ultimately led to the organisation of the Shell Committee.

A serious lack of experience hindered the development of the industry, and although companies were eager to participate in a potentially lucrative market, they lacked the tools and the technology necessary. Indeed, only 10 sets of gauges were available in Canada. Manufacturers were hesitant to retool their factories for munitions work because of the size of the capital investment required -- an investment they feared would be lost because they believed that the war would be over quite quickly. The situation was accurately described by Robert Borden's colleague, W.F. O'Connor, who said that,

[capital was panicky, equipment non-existent, satisfactory raw materials rare, skilled labour not to be had. There was uncertainty as to the duration of the war. There could be no certainty that any

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19 Carnegie, 2.

20 Siemiatycki and Rider.
investment in plant, or in materials beyond that amount actually necessary to produce any particular order would not be entirely lost.²¹

Despite the many problems, manufacturers found munitions contracts sufficiently enticing to attract interest from across Canada.

The industries most likely to undertake the capital investment required to re-tool factories were machine shops, railway shops, bridge works and foundries. This was because many of these possessed at least some of the tools and skills required. The government particularly urged the railways shops, many of which were idle or under-utilised, to participate in munitions manufacture. Although the equipment in the railway repair shops was not necessarily suited to munitions work, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and others converted existing shops or created separate departments for munitions production.²² Of the eight munitions factories surveyed by Enid Price in her 1919 thesis, four existed before 1914 but none was a munitions factory; one was a railway shop, one was a construction plant, another was general machine shop, and the last one was a bridge and general engineering shop. The other four factories were erected during the war specifically for munitions work.²³ T. McAvity and Sons Limited, a company in Saint John New Brunswick which was awarded several shell

²¹ Robert Borden Papers, PAC, as cited in Siemiatycki, 132.

²² "The Railroad and Canada" Railway Age Gazette, Volume 62, Number 25, 1301-2.

²³ Price, 11-20.
contracts between 1915 and 1918, was a plumbing fixture factory before, and after, the war.\textsuperscript{24}

The practices of the Shell Committee, which proved incapable of meeting its responsibility of organising and distributing shell contracts, also initially hampered the munitions industry. Under the mismanaged Shell Committee, the manufactured munitions were failing inspection in Britain at rates as high as fifty percent. Difficulties were also experienced in delivery and distribution of supplies. The result was the cancelling of a number of contracts, which discouraged businesses from converting to munitions production. Many of the companies that had converted had already experienced significant losses and they were dependent upon contracts. McAvity's, for example, went into debt in order to retool their shops and the Board of Directors were very concerned when the British cancelled contracts.\textsuperscript{25} Pressure from the British and the manufacturers resulted in the replacement of the Shell Committee in 1915 with the Imperial Munitions Board.\textsuperscript{26}

The IMB was a volunteer organisation of Canadian businessmen. The purpose of the board was to act as the official agent of the British Ministry of Munitions in Canada. In fact, the IMB came under the authority of the Ministry of

\textsuperscript{24} Director's Minute Books, 1909-1921, T McAvity and Sons, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB), MC 252, MS 1, 1/1.

\textsuperscript{25} Enclosures to the Director's Minutes, T. McAvity's, PANB, MC 252 1/1.

\textsuperscript{26} The history of the Shell Committee and IMB is well documented. See for example, Bliss, Carnegie and especially Rider.
Munitions and had no direct link to the Dominion Government. They were responsible for distributing orders and supplies among the factories in Canada, inspecting the armaments produced and observing the industry. The IMB also acted as the liaison between the Canadian government and the Ministry concerning munitions. What is interesting about the IMB is that it was not a government organisation. The men involved on the board were all volunteer, many of whom were the new breed of professional managers including the head of the IMB, Joseph Flavelle. R.H. Brand, in a letter to the Minister of Munitions suggesting that Canada deserved some praise for their contribution, said, "The board is the Canadian Ministry of Munitions. It is run by men who from patriotism have given up their own businesses and who are working voluntarily."27 This is remarkably different from the munitions industry in Great Britain. There the production of munitions was completely under the control of the government through the Ministry of Munitions. Many of the factories were nationalised. The government controlled every aspect of production, including labour, supply, contracts and distribution. By contrast, what could be described as "national" munitions plants were only developed in Canada in 1918. The factories, which were opened in Montreal, Trenton, Renfrew, Toronto and Parry Sound, manufactured powder and high explosives and aeroplanes. These plants, known as the National munitions plants, were not owned or controlled by the

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27 Brand wrote the letter because he felt that the work of the IMB was being overlooked in the Ministry’s rush to praise the American contribution. Letter to Minister of Munitions from R.H. Brand, 16 August 1916, Public Record Office (PRO), MUN 5/173/4 XC 14473, 1.
federal government, as was the case in Britain. National plants were companies whose entire stock was held by members of the Imperial Munitions Board.\textsuperscript{28} The volunteer businessmen of the IMB undertook to organise the production of materials when private firms and government would not. The federal government was also reluctant to monitor the labour situation. It was only towards the end of the war that they got involved in the practices of the IMB in the munitions factories.\textsuperscript{29}

The production and labour requirements of the munitions industry fluctuated quite widely depending on contracts and other factors. The industry very clearly followed the course of the war. The IMB’s weekly and monthly reports to the Ministry of Munitions illustrated the volatile nature of the industry. For instance in 1917, output fell because of a reduction in contracts caused by the entry of the United States into the war. The US not only brought its military might into the battle, it also brought its industrial might. The number of contracts increased again in 1918, which corresponded with the last major offensives of the war. In each case, there was a corresponding decrease or increase in labour required.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} John Castell Hopkins, \textit{Canadian Annual Review}, 1918, 543.

\textsuperscript{29} The government had no authority to insist that the IMB required munitions contractors to meet certain labour standards or policies, such as the Fair Wages Policies. The government could try to influence practices, but could not impose its will on the IMB or contractors.

\textsuperscript{30} The labour costs increase or decrease in relation to output. Further, a number of reports actually reported that women’s labour had decreased or increased in response to production. Ministry of Munitions Reports on Imperial Munitions Board in Canada, PRO, MUN 2/11, 14850.
The munitions industry was affected by the general changes to the labour process that were occurring in many manufacturing industries. Although I will examine this issue in more detail in chapter seven, it is worth noting at this point that scientific management came to the shop floors. Labour processes in manufacturing underwent significant changes. The new process emphasised increasing technology and mechanisation, which in turn deskill ed jobs and subsequently undermined the status of skilled workers. Craig Heron's *Working in Steel* demonstrates that new mass corporations brought new ideas to questions of labour process which resulted in significant changes to the managerial and technological environment in the Canadian steel industry between 1900 and 1935. Similar changes were very noticeable in the munitions factories during the war.

By the end of 1918, the Canadian munitions industry had reportedly produced gun ammunition, explosives, metals, aeroplanes and other armaments valued then at $1,003,830,473.88 -- a remarkable achievement for an industry comprised of only three or four companies just four years earlier. Not all manufacturers benefited from munitions production, but some, like the Russell Motor Car Company did. Flavelle was always quick to remind manufacturers that there had been no guarantee that they

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31 Craig Heron, *Working in Steel*; Kealey, and Naylor.

32 Carnegie, 2.

would make back their investment and many did not. Whatever the bottom line, the war changed the industry and its labour processes, something made clear in the following excerpt from an article that appeared in the *Toronto Globe* at the end of the war: "'Munitions contracts,' declared an official from one of the munitions firms ... 'will prove to be tremendously important item in the development of Canada as a manufacturing country.'...A great many mechanical arrangements have been developed through this concentration. 'Since munitions contracts have shown the immense advantages of specialization and concentration manufacturers see clearly ... that they must specialize ....'"34 Finally, it was an industry greatly affected by changes to the labour process. All of these factors affected the size and nature of the work force and the work experience of women.

_Women and Labour: General Trends 1901 - 1921_

Women looking for paid work in Canada in the decades preceding the First World War found themselves in a rapidly changing market. The process of industrialisation transformed the socio-economic structure of Canada. The economy became less reliant on resource based staple industries and new occupational opportunities arose for women (and for men) in the secondary and tertiary industries.

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that developed. Although there is still much to be learned about their participation, women were an increasing part of several important developments in the new economy. With regard to women's work during this period, research has focused on the nature of women's opportunities, and, more specifically, on the inequalities that characterised those opportunities. Clearly, the increasing participation of women in a greater diversity of occupations did little to alter the relative position of men and women in society. While women's opportunities for paid work changed, the social context in which they worked did not, and the period found many women trapped between the ideal of women and the reality of their own lives.

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Gender ideology determined largely the experience of women in the paid workforce. As home and work became increasingly separated, a gender ideology was developed that supported separate spheres of influence for men and women based on perceived natural characteristics. Victorian Canadians were assailed with an ideology that clearly identified women as dependent upon men and as belonging in the home. Women and men were naturally different and this difference resulted in complementary, but not equal, social roles. In 1856 Reverend Robert Sedgewick made the following argument:

...It would never do, however,...to draw the conclusion that woman...is bound to exert her powers in the same direction and for the same ends as man. This would be to usurp the place of man -- this were to forget her position as the complement of man. and assume a place she is incompetent to fill. or rather was not designed to fill.

Many years later, professionals in the industries studied here, such as this contributor to the Journal of the Canadian Bankers' Association in 1912. echoed Sedgewick's ideas:

36 On gender ideology, see for example Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Joy Parr, “Gender History and Historical Practice,” CHR, Volume 76, Number 3 (September 1995): 354-376; and Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and history (New York Routledge, 1992). In Canada, see for example Prentice, et.al; Parr, Gender of Breadwinners; Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde. eds., Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) and Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld. eds, Gender and History in Canada (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996).

Woman has manifestly been designed by nature as a complement, not a substitute, for man. If society has put her under certain political disabilities, her Creator has put her under certain physical disabilities. Even independently of the curse of Eve, the average woman cannot calculate on her ability to work continuously with as well-grounded confidence as the average man, while in bodily strength she cannot compare to him... To doubt that her different organisation was designed to fit her for different duties would be simply to doubt the beneficent adaptation of means to ends which pervade all nature.  

In his article the author linked chastity to domesticity and even quoted St Paul in admonishing women to be "discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, [and] obedient to their own husbands." As women’s place was in the home, it was expected that all women would marry. By 1914, domesticity was well entrenched as ideally feminine, particularly among the middle class, and, at the same time, there was an increasing number of women working for pay outside the home.

Working-class women were caught between the reality of needing to work and the prescribed middle-class ideal of femininity. The cult of domesticity, which relegated women to the home where they were subordinate and financially dependent upon men, had an enormous impact on the nature of women’s participation in the new industrial workforce. While it became somewhat accepted during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that women could work prior to marriage, the expectation

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39 Ibid., 89.
was that women would give up their jobs to marry. The household, and caring for children would be their primary responsibility. Gender ideology structured work relationships for men and women. The division of labour in the workplace replicated what ideally occurred in most middle class homes. Even in trades that were natural extensions of women's home work, such as the needle trades, women were seriously under-represented in supervisory or management positions, or positions defined as requiring skill, based on the belief that their sex made them unsuited for such. In her study of women in the Canadian clothing industry, Mercedes Steedman demonstrates that gender divisions in the tailoring trades mirrored the middle-class patriarchal gender divisions within households, in that women were subordinate to men. Employers wanted women to be "...polite and respectful of her superiors. ready

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41 “Managers, supervisors, foremen, overseers and inspectors made up a small group in Canada – 11,039 men and 292 women, or less than two in every hundred male employees and two in every thousand women.” Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, *Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and Their Families in Later Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 93.
to obey promptly, quick to understand and to anticipate orders, and observant of all that goes on around her."

Women's subordinate position in the home made them particularly vulnerable as a body of cheap labourers in the industrial context. Because of the various expectations linked to gender ideology, employers could justify paying women less and investing less in their training. It was assumed women would work only a short while before entering the more natural role of wife and mother, so any investment in training would be lost. Moreover, the working-class desire for a family wage reflected the primacy of the male worker idealised by the cult of domesticity. Men were required to bring home sufficient wages to support a wife and family according to the then current ideology. Women did not need a family wage, and in fact were generally regarded as working for pin money, because gender ideology prescribed that women be dependent on the male breadwinner. Gender-based stereotypes were invoked to justify lower wages, exploitive working conditions and marginalization.


In effect, gender ideology served the needs of capitalism by providing a pool of low cost, temporary workers.\textsuperscript{45}

Such was the power of gender-based stereotypes that middle-class reformers were often more concerned with the moral health of the female worker than the fact that she could not live independently on what she earned. The views of the Vancouver employer interviewed by the British Columbia Commission of Labour can be regarded as fairly common to the period. When asked how he could justify paying women employees $4 per week when it was clear they could not survive on less than $12, he said that he assumed that they had someone else taking care of them at home: that their wage was not the sole support.\textsuperscript{46} Similarly, the Minimum Wage Board in Manitoba did not consider women under the age of 18 as requiring a living wage because it was assumed they lived at home and were not sole supporting.\textsuperscript{47}

The census clearly illustrates that women’s horizons in the paid workforce were significantly constrained by gender stereotypes. Beliefs about the inappropriateness of women working affected the number of women in the paid workforce and limited what jobs were available to them. Historians who use census

\textsuperscript{45} Marks, "New Opportunities Within the Separate Sphere." 24-26.

\textsuperscript{46} British Columbia Commission of Labour, BCARS, GR 684. Box 1, File 8, 105.

data concede that there are problems with the source, particularly in the case of women's work. Traditional under-enumeration of women and their labour is an issue we still contend with in today's society. Regardless, the census is still a useful tool to illuminate patterns of waged or salaried employment and participation rates of women in the labour force.

At the turn of the century, the female labour force participation rate in Canada was 16 percent. Largely the result of immigration, continuing industrialisation and economic diversification, Canada experienced a 52.8 percent increase in the labour force between 1901 and 1911. During that period, although the total number of women in the workforce increased, their rate of participation remained virtually unchanged (16 percent in 1901 and 16.6 percent in 1911). By 1911, the Department of Labour reported, “approximately 365,000 women were gainfully occupied in

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50 The report defined gainfully employed as follows: “gainfully occupied refers to persons either working for pay of those assisting in the production of marketable goods.” Untitled report on the main trends of women’s employment prior to the Second World War. PAC, RG 27, Volume 3135, File 162, 1.
Canada representing 14 [sic] per cent of all women of working age." By 1921, the workforce had increased further, as had women's participation in it. The 1921 census indicated that women's participation had increased to 19 percent. The following table illustrates the pattern.

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51 The discrepancy between the statistics of the Department of Labour and those cited here regarding women's participation rate is the result of converting data from various censuses to a consistent format. As is described in Marsha Courchane and Angela Reddish. "Women in the Labour Force. 1911-1986: A Historical Perspective.: in Robert C Allen and Gideon Rosenbluth, eds. False Promises: The Failure of Conservative Economics (Vancouver: New Star Books. 1992):146-162. "the census provides data on involvement in the labour market since 1901. From 1901 to 1941, the Canadian government published census data on the number of people "gainfully occupied": since 1951 a labour force concept has been used. The distinction is that the labour force measures those employed or seeking employment on the day of the survey whether of not they usually work, while gainfully occupied persons were those who typically worked during the previous year." The statistics in the Department of Labour report cited above reflect the latter definition. Denton and Osprey found that the difference between those gainfully occupied and those in the labour force was quite large for women, which distorted the picture of participation rates of women. As a result, the data must be converted to get a consistent measure. Denton and Ostry generated conversion factors and published labour force figures for 1901 to 1941 using the 1951 census which included data on both gainfully occupied and labour force members. The conversion factors are commonly applied, as they are in Reddish and Courchane, to the historic data. (Since the share of these activities is unlikely to have been constant, the conversion must involve a significant margin of error.) The overall adjustment is 0.3 % for men and 12.3% for women. The converted data explains the difference in the statistics found in sources that pre-date Denton and Osprey and those that are more recent. See Courchane and Reddish, note 2, p 160; and F. Denton and S Ostrey, Historical Estimates of the Canadian Labour Force, 1961 Census of Canada Cat. No 99-425.

52 Ramakhalawansingh, 265-66; and Leacy, D86-106; 1921 Census, Table.
Table 4: Male and Female Labour Force Participation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male Participation Rate</th>
<th>Female Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,782,621</td>
<td>1,544,050</td>
<td>238,571</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2,725,148</td>
<td>2,358,519</td>
<td>366,629</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916*</td>
<td>448,364</td>
<td>367,496</td>
<td>80,868</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3,173,169</td>
<td>2,683,019</td>
<td>490,150</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for 1916 is based on returns of the Postal Census and only relates to the participation rates of men and women in the manufacturing industries.

Although women gained increased access to paid work, there were only a limited number of occupations available to them before 1914. As Table 4 illustrates, most women in the paid workforce did jobs identified with their "natural" domestic abilities. The Department of Labour reported that between 1911 and the outbreak of war, "Employment was confined largely to occupations usually considered the province of women. Almost 100,000 were employed in domestic service. 34,000 were teachers and over 10,000 were reported in the individual occupations of sales clerking, dressmaking, and millinery." Aside from farm work, which was seriously under-enumerated, it appears that most women found work as domestics before the war. In fact, it is not until 1921 that domestic workers account for less than a quarter

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of working women. Other occupations deemed appropriate for women were teaching, 
nursing, sewing, caring for children, or working as store clerks or stenographers.55

The needs of the industrial economy also opened jobs for women in the 
manufacturing industries during the pre-war period. Although the participation rates 
of women in the manufacturing industries remained fairly constant between 1901 and 
192156, the returns from the Postal Census in 1916 suggested a moderate increase in 
female participation during the war period.57 According to the Postal Census, women 
employees accounted for 21.8 per cent of all waged employees in manufacturing: 4.7 
percent of all supervisors and 35 percent of clerks, stenographers and salesmen in 
1915.58 In metal manufacturing specifically, women’s participation increased from 
1.7 percent in 1911 to 7 percent in 1916 before declining to 4 percent in 1921.59

54 Department of Labour, Untitled Report. PAC, RG 27, Volume 3135, File 162.
55 Census 1921. Tables 1.2. 28.
56 Of women in the labour force, those working in manufacturing or blue collar 
occupations accounted for 12.6 percent in 1901, 10.2 percent in 1911 and 10.1 percent 
in 1921. Livinia Calzavara, “Trends in the employment Opportunities of Women in 
Canada. 1930-1980,” in Rosalie Silberman Abella, Research Studies of the 
Commission on Equality in Employment (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 
1985), 525.
57 Postal Census of Manufactures, Canada, 1916 (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1917) 
Table VII. The Postal Census reported on the state of manufacturing, including 
construction and “hand trades.” Reports were obtained from every establishment in 
Canada that earned in excess of $2,500.00 per year. The census enumerated “capital, 
number and wages of employees, days worked, and the class and value of raw 
materials and finished product.”
58 Ibid., calculated from Table VII.
59 Ibid., calculated from Table IX.
Table 5: Leading Occupations of Paid Women Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>8,421</td>
<td>15,094</td>
<td>16,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>81,493</td>
<td>98,128</td>
<td>78,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeepers</td>
<td>7,572</td>
<td>6,762</td>
<td>23,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other domestic service</td>
<td>8,844</td>
<td>19,170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charworkers and Cleaners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel and restaurant and boarding house keepers</td>
<td>2,344</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>4,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waitresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot and Shoe makers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmakers and Seamstresses</td>
<td>22,063</td>
<td>20,357</td>
<td>16,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milliners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Factories</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>5,269</td>
<td>14,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Factory Operatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Public Admin, clerks</td>
<td>892</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78,342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60 Ramakhalawansingh, 265-66; 1921 Census, Tables 1,2, XXVII. Not all occupations were identified by 1921, which is why several of the cells remain empty. In many cases the occupations were included in other categories.
Stenos and typists

**Book-keepers and cashiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone operators</td>
<td>12,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saleswomen</td>
<td>35,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>49,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>21,162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that opportunities for women opened in clerical work. There seems to be little disagreement that clerical work became a job suitable for women between 1911 and 1921. That the census specifically delineated clerical work as a separate category in 1921 is one indication of the degree of growth in this sector. There had been no separate classifications for these occupations prior to 1921, and subsequent censuses included even more specialised classifications reflecting the increasing component of clerical work in the overall labour force. The Department of Labour reported that between 1911 and 1921, and particularly during the war, "Women left domestic service in large numbers and turned to various kinds of "white-collar" jobs. Personal service employment dropped from 38 per cent of total female employment in 1911 to 27 per cent in 1921; clerical employment took up the slack and rose from 9 per cent of those employed to 18 percent during the same period."^{61} Graham Lowe's

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^{61} Department of Labour, Untitled Report. PAC, RG 27, Volume 3135, File 162, 2.
study revealed that female workers as a percentage of clerical workers increased from 22.1 percent in 1901 to 41.8 percent in 1921.\(^{62}\)

Clerical work in general increased between 1901 and 1921. As businesses and government expanded and became more complex, clerical work experienced a period of rapid growth. In part, the growth was the result of industrialisation. With industrialisation came the application of scientific principles to manufacture. Work became more specialised and mechanised. Tasks were routinised and timed, and efficiency became a high priority for managers. Specialisation and mechanisation required a body of workers to collect and analyse precise data. In short, there was a necessary increase in administrative functions in a factory. Daniel Nelson argues that "Factory clerks were an essential accoutrement of scientific management."\(^{63}\) Offices experienced a similar trend during the same period. Clerical tasks became more routinised and offices more fragmented and specialised, which required a larger body of clerical employees. In essence the work in both industries was deskillled. In the case of clerical work, as we will discuss more fully later, as the work was deskillled, clerical occupations changed from a male dominated industry into women's work. Clerking had been a skilled occupation until the so called administrative revolution


resulted in deskilling of the work. The more specialised and mechanised it became the more feminised the work force became.\textsuperscript{64}

Clerical work became a respectable option for young working women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Marjorie Davies suggests that clerical work gained recognition as appropriate work for women because of a convergence of different factors. The economic decline of small family owned farms and businesses frequently forced daughters into the labour market. Davies suggests that "Productive work in the home was on the decline, making the labour of both working-class and non-working class women available outside the domestic sphere."\textsuperscript{65} Clerical work was also one of the few opportunities for literate women that required literacy. Further, in comparison to what women could expect in factories and domestic situations, the shorter hours, cleaner work environment, benefits and the apparent potential for advancement in clerical occupations created the perception that clerical work was a good opportunity for women.

\textit{Women as a Reserve Army of Labour}

One last characteristic of women's participation in the paid labour force should be discussed. Women's participation in the labour force exhibits all the

\textsuperscript{64} See also Norrie and Owram, 334.

characteristics that define what Marx identified as a reserve army. Marx argued that the capitalist search for profit created a body of marginal, floating workers, or workers that were available to enter the paid workforce when there was market demand for labour. What defines the reserve army is a willingness to work for low wages and to compete with other workers for jobs. Several researchers argue that women’s participation in the paid labour force fulfilled the conditions that characterise a reserve army. Women were defined outside of the capitalist labour market initially, and their labours were confined to the home. However, they were available to enter the paid labour force when necessary. They were also cheap. Women’s wages were, and generally remain, lower than men’s because men’s wages were predicated on the assumption that they were supporting dependants. In contrast, women’s wages were based on the assumption that they were supported by someone, or that they only had themselves to support. Women also threatened men’s jobs because they would work for less, which put them into competition not only with each other, but with men as well. Further, material and ideological pressures existed that kept women as an impermanent part of the labour force. As we will discuss further, gender ideology defined women as belonging in the home. Marriage, not paid work, was considered to be women’s most appropriate career choice. Beliefs

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about femininity prescribed that women could only work during certain periods of their life cycle. These conditions existed in 1914, suggesting that women's wartime participation in the wartime labour force was as a reserve army of labour. They provided a cheap, flexible, competitive workforce. In munitions in particular they found work in occupations created during the war, and as we will see, in jobs that were deskill and mechanised because of the war.

Conclusion

While this chapter does not constitute a thorough examination of all the factors affecting women wartime workers, it provides the context Marwick suggests is so essential to understand the impact of war on society. We know, for example, that Canada experienced a process of industrialisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As a part of that process, the two industries under study in this work experienced significant changes to their labour processes and structures. The principles of scientific management impacted both the BNS and munitions factories, changing the nature of work for all employees. In terms of women's opportunities for paid work, we know their participation expanded between 1901 and 1921.\(^\text{67}\) If we created a chart depicting women's participation in the paid labour force, it would appear as a gradually sloping incline (see Figure 1). The rate of growth of women's

\(^{67}\) Department of Labour, Untitled Report, PAC, RG 27, Volume 3135, File 163, 2.
labour force participation was 34 percent between 1911 and 1921, a decade that was bracketed by serious depressions. The types of jobs open to women who sought paid employment changed during this period as well. Defined by the cult of domesticity,

Figure 1: Women as Percentage of all Workers, Census

which dictated the same sexual division of labour in the public sphere as existed in the private sphere, women had few opportunities outside of domestic work prior to the war. By 1921, there were a wider variety of jobs available to women. Clerical work in particular provided expanded opportunities for women workers.
Banking and munitions were affected by all these trends. At the turn of the century, banks and machine shops counted few women among their employees and those that they did have were restricted to a very limited number of jobs which usually reflected domestic duties. That situation gradually changed over time as both the number of women and the number of jobs open to them increased. The pattern of work will be more closely examined in the next two chapters.

So far, the evidence would seem to suggest that the war did have a significant impact on women's paid work. It certainly appears as though women had more opportunity in the paid workforce after the war than before. One of the questions that faces us is whether or not we can attribute the increased participation of women in the paid workforce evident in 1921 specifically to the war. Was the experience of the First World War the catalyst for the alterations to the pattern of women's labour? Did employment in munitions factories and banks during the war sufficiently open the door to the new occupations that were available to women in the 1920's? These are some of the questions that I will address in the next chapter.

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^ Sources: 1901-1921 Census, Denton and Ostry 1967; BNS database; Reddish and Courchane.
CHAPTER 3: ASSESSING THE EXTENT OF WOMEN’S MOBILISATION

In 1917, Louise Poiret* resigned her position as the house maid for the local priest and with her sister left their home on a small farm in Kent County, NB and went to St. John to work in McAvity’s foundry.¹ She and her sister remained in the foundry for less than a year before moving on to Southern Ontario to pick fruit. The Poirets continued south through Buffalo and onto New York working as waitresses before finally settling into jobs as cooks in Manhattan in 1919. Are the Poiret sisters representative of the experience of the perceived army of women who entered the labour force during the war? In order to answer that question, and indeed more complex questions about the short a long term impact of women’s participation, more information is needed respecting the nature and scope of women’s participation. Many questions about women’s wartime participation remain unanswered: How many women worked? Where were they employed? What positions did they occupy? How much were they paid? Answering even these basic questions is the first step towards an accurate understanding of the Poiret sisters’, and all women’s, wartime experience and the ramifications of their participation in terms of status and long-term social change.

¹ Louise Poiret, known as Louise Perry in all McAvity papers; oral interview.
This chapter begins to answer several of those questions for women in banking and munitions. As well, questions about the scope and nature of the war's impact on women's employment, which I raised at the end of the last chapter, will be addressed. In large part, I am concerned with enumerating and describing the scope of women's work in the two industries. Knowing more about the scope of women's participation increases our understanding of the nature and complexity of the experience. Women's participation rates undoubtedly increased in banking and munitions during the war. For the most part, women's opportunities declined soon after the war. Once the emergency passed, the traditional gender division of work re-emerged.² To conclude that because of the exigencies of war, women worked in fields regarded as masculine would be consistent with the belief that women were a reserve army of labour. Such a conclusion would not sufficiently reflect the complexity of women's experience. Not all of women's wartime horizons were constrained during the post-war. In at least one occupation at the bank, the war resulted in the expansion of women's horizons in the post-war period. Understanding the scope and nature of the work will be essential if we are to explore the impact the activities women undertook during the war had on ideas about gender roles.

Banking

The pre-war participation of women at the Bank of Nova Scotia was constrained by many of the same influences -- such as gender ideology -- that affected the general labour force. Not only were women seldom hired, but when they were it was in jobs that reflected contemporary ideas about femininity. Only a small number of female bank employees appear in the Bank of Nova Scotia staff records prior to 1910. Women first appeared in BNS records in 1905. In that year there were two stenographers at Head Office, two “sewing girls” in stationary, a scrubwoman in Toronto and a cook and a waitress in the Dining Room. All except the scrubwoman

*Figure 2: Women as a Percentage of all Workers, BNS and Census*³

³ Census, 1921 and BNS Database.
were single. The next year the number of female employees had increased to 11 stenographers and 4 women in the stationary department. Over the next several years, the staff books indicated that both the general office and many of the large, urban branches hired female clerical workers.

The pattern in evidence at the Head Office and the larger branches, such as the main branch in Toronto and Halifax, between 1911 and 1914 is consistent with what Graham Lowe describes as the administrative revolution, which I introduced in chapter two. The increasing mechanisation and specialisation of clerical and office work characteristic of the administrative revolution occurred at the Bank of Nova Scotia Head Office. In order to meet the staffing needs of the changing labour process, the BNS increasingly hired female staff to fill a growing number of clerical jobs at Head Office. By 1914, women comprised 20.2 percent of the Head Office workforce. In contrast, female staff accounted for only 5.5 percent of the branch labour force by 1914. The great majority of these were in large branches that required a higher degree of clerical work, and most of the women were stenographers. In fact,

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4 Unfortunately, they hired a male chef to replace the female cook of the previous year although two waitresses remained on the staff lists. Bank of Nova Scotia, Staff Record Books, BNSA, RG066/01/0003/0010.

5 BNS database number 2, Head Office.
more than 87 percent of the female branch staff were stenographers in 1914. The remaining 13 percent were in domestic occupations or other clerical work.⁶

As discussed in chapter two, the census data on women’s labour force participation rates between 1911 and 1921 indicate that women’s participation in the paid labour force increased moderately in this period. Figure 1 illustrated the general pattern. Only using women’s participation rate data from the years before and after the war (1910 and 1920) results in a pattern quite similar to the Census data. As illustrated by figure 2, labour force participation rates in the branch banks of the BNS were not dissimilar to the general pattern of women’s work illustrated in Figure 1. The number of women in banking increased gradually, although somewhat more rapidly than women in the workforce in general, between 1910 and 1922. If only that data from the Bank of Nova Scotia were examined, we might conclude that women gradually entered the banks in the years between the 1911 and 1921 Census. However, we would have overlooked a significant element of women’s employment at the bank. What the intervening years illustrate is that while women’s employment at the BNS may have increased gradually over the war decade, during the war the rate of increase was anything but gradual.

Given the situation that the bank faced during the war, the significant increase in the employment of women should come as no surprise. By 1915, there was already a concern at the Bank of Nova Scotia that they would be unable to meet their staffing

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⁶ BNS database.
requirements. In that year alone, 180 bank officers enlisted. By the end of 1916 approximately 35% of the male bank staff had enlisted. Because the bank had been expanding, and specifically increasing the number of branches it had, before the outbreak of war, the bank felt the losses caused by enlistment of staff acutely. As early as November of 1915, the General Manager felt it necessary to issue a memorandum to all branches encouraging branch managers to hire women. Five months later the management released a more strongly worded memo criticising the branch managers for not hiring women. "We might just as well realise at once that the service of young women will have to be utilised." The alternative, they claimed, was to close branches, something that neither branch managers nor Head Office wanted. The result was that branch managers quickly hired women, particularly in 1917 and 1918.

Women's employment at the Bank of Nova Scotia did not simply increase gradually from 2 to 14 percent, as is indicated in Figure 2. As can be seen from Table

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7 In all, 626 men enlisted or were conscripted, of whom 82 died and 91 were wounded. There is some discrepancy in reports of the numbers of officers who left to serve in the military. I compiled this data from the records kept of bank officers' military service in the Bank of Nova Scotia's Staff Record Lists. During the war, the bank listed all members who joined the military and followed their careers. It is not surprising that the BNS did this. In 1914, the bank decided to keep the positions of employees who joined up available for the employee on return from military service. This policy was increasingly difficult to maintain as the war progressed, and the bank tended not to protect the positions of men who left without following the proper procedures and who did not give sufficient notice to their managers. BNSA, Staff Record Books.

8 Bank of Nova Scotia, General Manager's Circular No. 1646, 25 November 1915, BNSA.

9 Bank of Nova Scotia, General Manager's Circular 1699, 6 April 1916, BNSA.
6, which is illustrated by Figure 3 for greater clarity, the participation of women at the BNS increased fairly dramatically during the war, and decreased similarly after the war, indicating a very short term change to what could be termed the "normal" labour pattern. The evidence clearly demonstrates that by 1922 there were more women working at Bank of Nova Scotia branches than there had been in 1910. The data also clearly illustrate a dramatic wartime increase that is distinct from the longer term pattern. Women's participation during the war increased to a level substantially higher than the post-war level of 14.3 percent. (see Figure 3). In fact, the proportion of women

<table>
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<th>Women</th>
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<td>1910</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
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<td>32.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6: Women as Proportion of BNS Branch Employees*¹⁰

¹⁰ Developed from BNS database.
on staff at the branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia almost tripled between 1914 and 1916, and doubled again over the next two years. At the height of wartime participation, female employees accounted for 32.3 percent of the total branch banking staff.

The decline of women's participation to post-war levels was almost as rapid as the increase. Between 1914 and 1918, women's participation increased from approximately 5 to 30 percent. Over the next four years, it declined by more than half that figure. By 1922, women comprised only 14 percent of the branch banking staff, which was still approximately 2.5 times their proportion before the war. In some ways

\footnote{BNS Database.}
the evidence appears to prove the thesis that the war effected a fundamental change in women's opportunities. Women's participation during the war was significant and more women were working in branch banks after the war. What remains unclear is whether the increased employment of women evident in the post war was a result of wartime participation. Graham Lowe has certainly argued that it was, but I am not convinced of that.

As seen in chapter one, Lowe clearly thinks that women's wartime participation resulted in a new pattern of labour in the bank after the war. Lowe contends that the dramatic increase in the wartime labour force at the bank had a profound and long-term impact on the bank and on women. My difficulty in agreeing with Lowe is that he based this conclusion on an examination of the Head Office and a number of large branches in Toronto. In those cases, he is absolutely correct. Wartime participation seems to have had a profound impact on the division of labour in large branches and Head Office in Toronto. However, it is simply not as clear that this was the case in the branch banks.

The evidence suggests that the overall increase of women at the branches was not necessarily unusual or dramatic. First, the proportion of women employed by the bank had increased fairly steadily before the war at a rate of about 2 percent a year. Had that pace continued without interruption women would have accounted for about 13.5 percent by 1922. According to the data, women accounted for 14.3 percent of branch bank staff in 1922. One could argue that the number of women employed by the bank was already increasing before the war and reached much the same level as it would have
by 1922 regardless of the wartime participation of women. Further, implicit in the suggestion that the work women did during the war increased women's participation in the post war is the belief that attitudes about women workers changed. I will be discussing attitudes specifically in subsequent chapters, but I would like to raise the issue briefly here.

Employers did not hire more women out of a conviction that women made good bank officers. In fact, the explanation for the increase in the number of women employees has little to do with the career ambitions or capabilities of Canadian women. Bank managers quite simply had no other choice. At least 35 percent of male bank staff enlisted in the military. The pool of prospective bank staff to replace those male officers contracted while labour demands increased. During the war, there was a great deal of competition for single, white males between the ages of 18 and 40. Banks were competing with other industries, many of which offered higher salaries, and with the public pressure men faced to serve the country by enlisting. Women were a temporary replacement workforce. In fact, the BNS listed many of the women hired during the war as temporary or emergency staff in the staff books.12 Employers at the BNS obviously regarded the women as a reserve army of labour that could be demobilised once the emergency was over. Indeed, the statistics suggest a straight replacement. The bank lost 35 percent of its workforce to military service and the women hired to replace them accounted for 32.3 percent of the workforce. Once society returned to normal.

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12 This was not the case for Head Office employees. BNS Staff Record Books, BNSA.
there was no need to continue employing women at anything like wartime levels. All of which suggests a short-term gain for women as a result of the war.

While the war likely did not have a significant long-term impact on women’s horizons at the bank generally, I would suggest that the war was fundamental in changing the type of job available to women in bank branches, and that had long-term implications. In particular the war opened the fields of clerk and teller to women, and those opportunities remained after the war. Wartime opportunities in those occupations likely expanded women’s horizons generally at the Bank of Nova Scotia. Before the war, there were only a few jobs open to a woman in an average sized branch bank. For the most part, branch managers employed women as stenographers or cleaners. Both of those occupations were identified as appropriate women’s work. As I discussed briefly in the previous chapter, stenography, and clerical work in general, had increasingly become women’s work since the 1880’s. In hiring women as stenographers, the BNS operated within traditional gender ideology. However, during the war, other occupations opened for women at the branch level that would not have been regarded as “women’s work.” In particular, the BNS hired women as clerks and tellers. Clerks constituted the largest proportion of bank employees during this period. Because they were responsible for the day to day operations of the bank, clerks were essentially the cornerstones of the industry. They recorded transactions, filed, kept ledgers up to date, were responsible for the daily sums, and they served customers. Tellers were responsible for the cash of a branch, to the point that they were required to keep a
revolver close by. The reputation and the very safety of a branch often rested on its clerks and tellers. More importantly, clerk and teller positions were respectable positions for men, not women, before the First World War.

Figure 4: Proportion of Male and Female Clerks, BNS

![Chart showing the proportion of male and female clerks at BNS from 1910 to 1922]

The labour shortages caused by the war forced the BNS to hire women in both those positions. The BNS first hired women as clerks in 1915. Despite the misgivings of some senior officials, the female clerks were a success. The number of female clerks in the branches of the BNS rose rapidly and by 1918, women constituted almost 47% of all clerks in the branches (see figure 4). What is particularly interesting is that although their numbers clearly declined in the post-war, female clerks did not disappear altogether from the branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia, which we might expect. Of the clerks working at the bank in 1922, 19.2 percent were women. As figures 5 and 6 illustrate the distribution of female workers

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changed between 1914 and 1918. Prior to the war, the majority of female bank workers were stenographers. By 1916, 60 percent of the female bank staff were clerks. Indeed, by the end of the war female clerks far-outnumbered female clerical (stenographers, filers, etc.) workers. Fully 82 percent of women employees were clerks by 1918. That number declined only slightly by 1922, which suggests that the expanded opportunities of the war were not reversed completely. Women also attained the more senior position of teller. In 1916, no female teller appeared in the sample. Two years later, almost 20 percent of all tellers were female. That number increases dramatically if we add in the women identified as clerks and tellers at many of the branches. Indeed, 39.6 percent of female staff had such a designation in 1918. That many branches did not have tellers listed at all indicates that it is likely that working with cash was a responsibility of clerks. While the proportion of female tellers in the bank did not reach the level of female clerks, the women tellers forged a small, albeit precarious, hold in the workplace, which continued into the post-war period.

The implications of this data are very revealing, and pose another challenge to the conclusions reached by Graham Lowe. Women's participation in two essential occupations in the branches, both of which were masculine occupations, increased
significantly during and because of the war. Certainly, there was a short-term expansion of women's horizons, which we might expect to disappear once the war

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14 Compiled from BNS database.
ended. However, in these cases women continued to occupy positions as clerks and tellers once the war emergency was over, suggesting that they were more than simply a reserve army of labour. The availability of such occupations for women continued into the post war at a significant rate. It is evident that in terms of the variety of work available to women, there was a long-term impact that can be directly attributed to the war. It was not that women’s employment in general expanded significantly, and resulted in a feminisation of the bank labour force because of the war, as Lowe suggests, but that their participation in two areas completely closed to them before the war expanded. More importantly, the job opportunities that resulted from the wartime
participation were in "men's work." As will be discussed in chapter seven, those jobs did not immediately change because of the increased employment of women. That is to say, the labour process in the branch banks was not altered to accommodate women during or shortly after the war.

In 1919, the Canadian Bankers' Association asked all banks to report on labour. The Bank of Nova Scotia reported that of their total workforce of 1,304, 516 were women. According to the report, women comprised 39 percent of the BNS workforce, although that number fell by half within a year and further decreased by 1922. Only 17 percent of the women working in the bank during 1919 were stenographers and more than one third of them were located in Toronto, likely at the Head Office. The report is consistent with the data from the staff record books. The differences are largely explained by the inclusion in the report of the statistics from Head Office, which were not included in my data. The evidence suggests that there was an increase in the proportion of women in the branch bank workforce generally. However, the increase was as likely a result of a general trend towards hiring women as it was the result of the wartime experience. It is possible that with or without the war, women's participation in branch banking would have experienced a similar moderate increase, as was the case in women's participation in the labour force in general. Where the war directly affected women's horizons was in the jobs open to women. Women not only gained short term access to new occupations

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15 Canadian Bankers' Association correspondence, File 42, Citizen's Repatriation League, February 1919, BNSA.
because of the war, but they held onto positions that were completely unavailable to them before the war. The hiring of women as branch clerks or tellers at the Bank of Nova Scotia can be directly attributed to the war. That the banks continued with this emergency measure from 1916 on suggests that there was a long-term effect of the war.

Munitions

Our understanding of women's participation in the munitions industry is very poor, generally. An important goal of this study was to take steps towards rectifying that omission in the historiography. When women's participation in munitions is examined, the picture that emerges is of a small number of women gaining temporary access to jobs clearly defined as masculine for a short period of time. Whatever opportunities existed in the metals shops for women were a wartime phenomena. I am careful, however, not to dismiss entirely the importance of the opportunity that women had, as limited as it was in both duration and scope. The proportion of women in metals work increased significantly and women gained access to non-traditional occupations. This section reviews the nature and the scope of women's participation as well as the significance of it.

The availability of records suited to quantitative methodology resulted in the ability to create an accurate picture of the extent of women's employment in banking during the war. In the case of munitions, establishing the pattern for women's
participation is much more difficult for a variety of reasons. Not only are researchers faced with a dearth of records, they are also dealing with serious problems with what records are available, not the least of which was that contemporary officials and observers often exaggerated reports regarding the extent of women's employment for reasons of publicity. The Financial Post reported that "Much has been heard of the remarkable results achieved by women workers...on the other hand, close investigation reveals that these accounts are frequently highly coloured for patriotic or some other special purpose,..." The difficulties with the available sources call into question what has become accepted as the number of women in munitions and make it quite difficult to determine the extent to which women were employed in the munitions industry during the war. While the accepted number is 35,000, it is very improbable this number of women in Ontario and Quebec were employed as munitions workers during the war.17

In England, the Ministry of Munitions exerted a great deal of effort towards collecting and compiling accurate statistics on women's employment in the munitions industry. In contrast, no department or individual in Canada took responsibility for collecting accurate statistics regarding women's employment. Although the IMB had a Department of Labour, they had neither the official authority to compel companies

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16 The Financial Post, August 5, 1916; also see Ramakhalawansingh, 274.

17 This statistic was reported in the Report of the Women's War Conference and has become commonly accepted. See for example, Ramkhalawansingh, 276; Prentice, et. al., 139.
to report labour statistics nor the responsibility to organise such a survey.\textsuperscript{18} The Federal Department of Labour certainly did not see it as their responsibility to keep records of the level of employment in munitions. In fact, no one seemed to take responsibility. The result was that at the end of the war the Department of Labour could only discuss the extent of women's employment in vague terms. They suggested that women were drawn into munitions work in "relatively large numbers."\textsuperscript{19} Even the IMB, which was responsible for monitoring the industry, was unable to provide an accurate estimate of the numbers of women employed when asked to do so during the war. The IMB reported to the Ministry of Munitions in 1917 that "With over 600 plants uncontrolled and covering so large a territory it will be appreciated that accurate figures as to the number of employees are practically impossible to obtain."\textsuperscript{20} Mark Irish, the head of the IMB Labour Department, made efforts to secure such statistics. However, no accurate accounting of Canadian female munitions workers seems to have survived the war. The federal government admitted as much. Following the Second World War the Department of Labour reported that "no statistical data are available to measure the extent of change in women's

\textsuperscript{18} Joseph Flavelle argued that the responsibility for collecting labour statistics and organising labour fell to the Department of Labour or the National Selective Service Committee and not to the IMB or the manufacturers. Neither the Minister of Labour nor the head of the NSS were interested in assuming the responsibility. Robert Borden Papers, PAC, 210, c-4399, 118708-9.

\textsuperscript{19} PAC, RG 27, Volume 3135, File 162, 1.

\textsuperscript{20} Ministry of Munitions, Report No. 101, PRO, MUN 2/11, 14580.
employment during the First Great War...." which was a particular problem with respect to munitions work.\textsuperscript{21}

The nature of the munitions industry also makes it difficult to have confidence in the contemporary reports about the numbers of women in the shops. We are dealing with a temporary industry that operated on a contractual basis. In Canada, the IMB awarded contracts, or parts of contracts, to private companies across Canada as they received orders from Britain. There was a great deal of competition for munitions orders both domestically and internationally. Consequently, several companies found themselves without contracts on occasion. At McAvity’s, for example, the board complained in late 1917 that because the number of orders they received was not steady they had staffing difficulties and supply problems. On one occasion, they ordered boxes anticipating orders that never arrived.\textsuperscript{22} The unstable demand had an impact on staffing. When an employer received a contract, the workforce expanded. If the employer could not hire sufficient men, then hiring women was an option. When the contract was completed, they released that portion of the workforce no longer required. We can speculate that the first fired were the temporary workers hired specifically for particular orders. The nature of the industry also affected the number of factories that underwent the re-tooling necessary to

\textsuperscript{21} Department of Labour, “Canadian Women and Wartime” RG 27, Volume 125, File, 601.3, 1.

\textsuperscript{22} The directors discussed a high overdraft incurred as a result. Minutes from the Director’s Meeting, July 19, 1915, McAvity’s, PANB, MC 252, 5/7.
employ women. As I will address in chapter six, most employers believed that significant reorganisation and re-tooling of existing shops was required if they hired women. The uncertainty around contracts meant that manufacturers were unwilling to hire women, because the expenditure required to reorganise the factory might exceed the value of contracts. The number of women employed at a given time also depended on the type and length of the contract received, as did the amount of work available. As I will address later in the study, only certain types of work were considered suitable for women.

The fact that the numbers of women in the industry may have fluctuated is not problematic in and of itself. The problem is that there is no way to eliminate double counting. Few sources include information about women's work history. The sources that do include specific information about women's past work history, including previous employment in munitions, indicate that the extent of women's employment corresponded to the demand for munitions and that women returned to work at the same factory. Evidence from the only factory for which pay records could be found, McAvity's of New Brunswick, reveals that there was an extremely high rate of turnover. Although McAvity's paybook included 72 women employees, there only seemed to be 15 - 20 positions at any time. Two women who worked at the shop

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23 This particular paybook only recorded the female employees hired as "munitions" workers during the war. The McAvity's Paybook was recovered from the site of the old factory when it was demolished several years ago. I am indebted to Harold Wright for sharing his personal collection with me.
both recalled that about "two dozen" women worked in the factory. They also recalled that very few workers remained employed for the duration of a contract, and only a handful stayed for the entire time women were employed in the machine shop. Their memories are quite accurate. The information in the paybook demonstrates that 40 percent of the women worked for one month or less, some for only a day or two. Workers employed for more than one month and less than five account for the next highest proportion of the women's workforce (29%). Long-term workers, or those who remained employed for more than a year, account for less than 10 percent of the workforce. One third of the women in the factory had previous manufacturing experience, and more than half of those workers had previous munitions experience. More significantly, the paybook shows that the company re-hired workers who had left the company. In fact, fourteen percent of the women hired were re-hired by the company. A similar pattern occurred in the plants surveyed by Price in Montreal. Price surveyed eight plants, which accounted for fifty percent of munitions employees in Montreal. She found that the plants hired women on a temporary basis and dismissed them as contracts were completed. Although she indicated that some of the women had previous munitions employment, she unfortunately did not make an effort  

24 Interviews with Jennie Arbo and Louise Poiret.  

25 Ibid. The evidence in the paybook supports Poiret and Arbo's recollections. McAvity's Paybook.  

26 Ibid.  

27 Price, 15.
to determine how many women were re-hired on subsequent jobs at the same plant. I certainly recognise the problem with drawing too sweeping a conclusion from such slender evidence. There is nothing, however, to suggest that this pattern did not exist in factories that employed female munitions workers elsewhere. Releasing workers, particularly those regarded as reserve workers, was a common practice in manufacturing according to the *Labour Gazette*. There is little reason to think that such a practice would not have occurred in an industry such as munitions.

The McAvity records also suggest another reason to assess the accuracy of contemporary reports carefully. The paybook identified all of the women who worked on the shop floor, as opposed to the office, as “munitions” workers. The problem is that not all of the women working on the shop floor worked on munitions. Many women at McAvity’s worked turning plumbing fixtures and pipes, and stamping washers, which was the business the foundry was in before the war. Neither of the McAvity’s employees interviewed for this project worked on a shell or armament of any kind. The munitions jobs, which paid more, were held by male employees (who returned to the plumbing fixtures once the munitions contracts ended). In fact, the munitions were made in an entirely different plant than where the

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28 This appeared to be a common practice and one that contributed to unemployment. See for example, *Labour Gazette*, May 1915, 1296, December 1914, 677 and 927 and November 1916, 1713.
majority of the women workers were located. The following photos of McAvity’s shell plant illustrate the gender division of labour.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{Figure 7: McAvity's Munitions Plant}\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29} McAvity’s Collection, PANB, P49, MAV. Used with permission.

\textsuperscript{30} McAvity’s Collection, PANB, P49, MAV. Used with permission.
Figure 8: McAvity's Shell Plant

31 McAvity's Collection, PANB, P49, MAV. Used with permission.
Figure 9: Women and Men at McAvity's

32 McAvity's Collection, PANB, P49, MAV. Used with permission.
The photos of the working munitions shop show only male employees. When women appear with the munitions, they are not working on production. There are also very few of them. The third photo depicts women and men overlooking several piles of finished shells. Those women probably worked inspecting shells rather than producing them. The paybook indicates that McAvity’s hired several female inspectors. In fact, there were a number of photos in the collection that depicted women inspecting shells, but none with women producing shells. McAvity’s was not alone in this practice. The male workers of the Empire Brass Works in London, Ontario struck in 1917 because the company hired women to work on plumbing supplies, the normal production line, instead of munitions, the wartime production line. We have no way of knowing how common this practice was in other shops, but we can speculate that McAvity’s and the Empire Brass Works were not completely unique in their labour practices in this instance. Few companies turned completely to the manufacture of munitions. Although several major companies, such as the Russell Motor Car Company in Toronto and the Packard Fuse Company in St. Catharines, did little but manufacture munitions, many other factories that manufactured a variety of products may have used women on non-munitions work. It is possible that the unions may have curtailed that process in efforts to protect the jobs

33 Interestingly, I came across no photographs of women in Toronto factories in the William James Collection either. There were photos of women munitions workers, just not at work.
of their members. Whether or not the women worked on munitions does not diminish that the women were doing non-traditional work. Whether they stamped plumbing supplies or shell casings, the war provided a few women with a significant opportunity in an industry closed to them prior to the war.

Despite the drawbacks, I was able to come to what I believe to be a reasonable conclusion as to the extent of women’s work in munitions factories during the First World War. I focused on employment rates in 1917 in particular because by all indications that was the height of women’s employment in munitions. In fact, the greatest opportunity for women in munitions probably existed between the fall of 1916 and the spring 1917. By June of 1917 the Ministry of Munitions was already in the process of decreasing the number of orders placed in Canada through the IMB. The cost of labour reported in the Ministry of Munitions Monthly Reports indicates that labour costs were decreasing throughout what had traditionally been the busiest time for munitions factories, which suggests that the number of workers was declining. In fact, in the spring and summer of 1917 labour costs were reduced from

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34 PAC, RG27, Department of Labour, Volume 306, File 17 (65); and Naylor 131.

35 Imperial Munitions Board, *Summary of Munitions Shipment from Canada. 1915-1918*, indicates that munitions production was significantly higher in 1917 in all but a few categories. In fact, munitions production was lower in 1918 than it had been in 1916. PRO, MUN 5/173/1142/38, 1-4.

36 The reduction of orders to Canada was in part a result of the direction of the war, but was also influenced by the entrance of the United States into the war. Report of the IMB, PRO, MUN 5/321/A 14580.
Given the pressure for the implementation of the Fair Wages Clause, which would have further increased the already relatively high wages paid in the munitions industry, it is likely that such a dramatic decrease in labour costs reflected a significant decrease in labour. The reports also stated that there was no longer a labour shortage in Canada because many contracts had been completed.

In 1918, when the final battles of the war were fought, there was some concern on the part of the IMB that they should be prepared in case of a possible labour shortage. If any lessons had been learned it was that the war could be counted on to last longer than expected. With conscription being implemented, manufacturers feared the loss of a significant proportion of their male workers, prompting Flavelle to write to Irish and ask him to contact munitions manufacturers in order to “direct their attention to the importance of organising their plants so as to make use of women.”

He believed that 25-30,000 women could yet be utilised. Irish complied and sent out a letter urging that the employment of women be vastly increased to meet the demand expected when conscription was enforced to replace the casualties incurred during the

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37 The reports from the IMB state that labour costs in June 1917 were more than 6,501,348 million dollars whereas costs in July were reduced to 3,910,571, and in August they were further reduced to 2,734,304. Ministry of Munitions Reports on Imperial Munitions Board in Canada, PRO, MUN 2/11, 14580.

38 Letter to Mark Irish from Joseph Flavelle, 16 April 1918, PAC, MG 30,16, Vol 38, Irish, Mark file.
final stages of the war. There is, however, no indication that this occurred or was necessary. Orders and production in 1918 remained well below 1917 levels.\(^{39}\)

In trying to determine the extent of women's employment between 1916 and 1917, I used many sources. We would expect that the IMB would be the most likely group to have kept statistics, but they did not. Nonetheless they were the most interested party in the general state of labour in the munitions factories and their estimates are probably the most accurate of any. Although he was not sure of the exact numbers, Flavelle reported that there were 220,000 men and fewer than 13,000 women at work on munitions in Canada by the end of the war.\(^{40}\) In the IMB's official reports to the Ministry of Munitions, they stated that "We should, however, estimate that there are at the present time engaged directly in the production of munitions, over 150,000 men and women." That same report estimated that during 1917 there were only 11,000 women working in 111 plants, 79 of which were located in Ontario. The next week the IMB reported that "At the 31st of May, 96 plants were employing 11,789 women who had been in service for a period of longer than 30 days."\(^{41}\) There is no indication of the source of their statistics. According to these official estimates, approximately 7.3 percent of the munitions workforce was female (or 5.9 percent based on Flavelle's estimate).


\(^{40}\) Extract from OS A-55-33, PAC RG 24 Volume 1847 File GAQ 11-71C

\(^{41}\) Ministry of Munitions, Report No. 101, PRO, MUN 2/11, 14580.
The data collected in Enid Price’s thesis suggests that the IMB statistics might have underrepresented the number of women working in munitions. The eight plants Price surveyed, which by her accounting represented 50 percent of the munitions production in Montreal, employed 15,206 workers in total and 5,460 of these were women, representing a proportion of 36 percent of the munitions workforce. However, I would suggest that Price’s statistics may not be a reliable indicator of the extent of women’s participation. In part, her data reflect a regional difference that we will discuss in the next chapter. More troublesome is that Price specifically targeted factories that hired women. It is conceivable that the factories that accounted for the other half of production did not hire any women. Further, the two largest plants she visited were primarily manufacturing fuses, which skews the results. Fuse plants had the highest proportion of female employees because manufacturing fuses was regarded as the most suitable munitions work for women. Other sources also indicate that the level of women’s participation was not particularly extensive. The National Council of Women, for example, suggested that there were fewer than 20,000 women engaged in munitions work throughout Canada by the end of 1917. The Department of Labour estimated that “hundreds”, not thousands, of women were hired in munitions. The evidence suggests strongly that the figure of 35,000 women

42 See for example, Railway Age Gazette, Canadian Machinery, December, 1917; PAC, Robert Borden Papers, C4399; PAC, RG 24, File 16 and Notes of Munitions Work for Women, IMB, 1917.

could be is as much as double the number of women in the munitions industry during the war. I suggest that it is likely that somewhere between 11,000 and 13,000 Canadian women worked in munitions during the First World War. Having arrived at what I believe to be a reasonable estimate of the extent of women’s participation in munitions work, I would like to address the significance of that participation.

In order to measure the significance of women’s wartime participation, it is necessary to examine the pre-war participation of women in the industry. The Postal Census provides us with a valuable starting point for a discussion on the significance or impact of women’s participation in munitions because it enumerated it at the end of 1915. At that time, the munitions industry was just starting to expand to the level that hiring women was regarded as necessary. The economy in general was still experiencing some unemployment, particularly for women, and the munitions industry itself still suffered as a result of the mis-management of the Shell Committee and was not yet at full production. The Postal Census presents something of a baseline measurement of women’s participation from which to compare subsequent years in order to get a clear sense of the extent of women’s participation in the munitions labour force.

As is evident in Table 7, in 1915 women already made up a small proportion of the workforces of two industries closely associated with the munitions industry, foundry and machine shop and iron and steel products. That they appear at all is interesting in and of itself given that other sources indicate that it was not until 1916
that such industries found it necessary to hire women. The Postal Census returns may indicate that some shops hired women before it was completely necessary, that women worked in the industries before the war or that the women accounted for in the Postal Census were not involved in the non-traditional occupations of production.

Table 7: Women in Manufacturing, 1915

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Women as a Proportion of the Workforce over 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron and Steel Products</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundry and Machine Shop Products</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbing and Tinsmithing</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass Castings</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing – Men’s</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing – Women’s</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottons</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery and Knit Goods</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third explanation seems the most plausible. There are too many contemporary observations that women had not been in metal working before the war to conclude that women customarily worked in the industry before the war. In one of his publicity campaigns Irish stated that “the metal working shop was a realm wherein woman had never stepped prior to the present war necessity,...”

44 The Postal Census of Manufactures, 1916, Table IX (Ottawa: 1917).

Labour concurred. "In the iron and steel manufacturing groups... the employment of women was hitherto unknown." Several newspapers carried similar statements. For instance in an article on women in industry, which focused on munitions, the author wrote, "The range of employment for women has been greatly widened during the war. We are no longer surprised to see them at tasks which only men had performed...." Another reported that "Women have just begun on work that has up to the present been confined to men. This is the making of wings and parts of wings for flying machines." In 1911, the entire "metal products, machinery and transport equipment" sector reported only 1.7 percent of its entire workforce was female. It seems to me unlikely that metal shops employed women on production prior to the war. It also seems unlikely that many munitions factories employed women before it was completely necessary.

What I think the Postal Census data illustrates in this instance is the traditional gender division of labour. It is quite likely that even if metals shops did not employ women in production, they employed women in clerical or domestic positions before 1916. The factories surveyed by Enid Price listed female employees in the machine shops before 1916. All of them were clerical staff. Similarly, McAvity's Foundry

46 Department of Labour, untitled report, RG 27 Volume 3135, File 162.
47 "Women and Industry," Toronto Globe, August 19, 1918, 4.
49 Most armaments plants fell into this category. Leacy, D8-55.
listed female employees before the war. Although there appears to have been only one or possibly two positions, the foundry hired 5 women in 1906 and 1907. All indications lead to the conclusion that these women did not work on the shop floor but in the office.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, the CPR, which converted several of its machine shops to munitions production, employed women in occupations that reflected traditional gender values in the pre-war period. Between 1910 and 1914, the highest proportion of women were employed as clerical workers. Hotel and food service workers made up the next highest proportion. The majority of women employed by the CPR were stenographers or cleaners. Even when women appeared in machine shops or operations, they were employed as cleaners.\textsuperscript{52} This pattern is borne out in the railway shops surveyed by Price as well. In the railway shops she visited they reported that prior to 1916 they had 5 women total working in a staff of 7,433 (.07 percent).\textsuperscript{53}

The extent of women's participation suggests that the wartime participation of women in metalworking was a unique, wartime situation. Was it significant?

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} McAvity's Records, Public Archives of New Brunswick (PANB), MC 252, MS5/6, Employee Accounts 1902-1907; and MS5/7, Employee accounts 1918-1919.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Price, 31-41.
\end{itemize}
Assuming that Flavelle’s estimate was reasonably accurate, fewer than three percent of all gainfully occupied women were employed in munitions production. Flavelle’s report of 13,000 indicates that only 10 percent of all women in manufacturing were working on munitions.\textsuperscript{54} Neither of these figures strikes me as particularly dramatic, especially in comparison to male munitions workers. Men working in munitions accounted for 10 percent of all men in the workforce, and almost 50 percent of men in the manufacturing workforce. However, Price’s statistics illustrate that in some factories the proportion of women rose to levels much higher than those found in the Postal Census. Even Flavelle’s estimate suggests that generally women’s participation more than doubled from levels recorded in 1915.

The Postal Census offers another important indicator of the scope of women’s wartime participation in munitions industries: it allows us to measure the increase of women in various sectors of the industry. In 1911, the ratio of male to female manufacturing employees (not including supervisors) was almost 3:1 (2.83:1).\textsuperscript{55} Using the entire manufacturing sector as a comparison is problematic in that it includes a number of industries where a high ratio of women was common. Looking at the Postal Census is far more valuable. The Postal Census measured the metal working industry prior to the influx of women during the war. Arguably, it is a good measure of the general state of the sectors of the munitions industry before production

\textsuperscript{54} Based on estimated labour force for 1917.

\textsuperscript{55} Leacy, D129.
levels increased dramatically. Although the munitions industry was not dealt with distinctly, two categories in particular deal with the shell making industry. In the foundry and machine shop products, the ratio of male to female employees was 71:1. and in the metals group it was 14:1. Based on the IMB’s reports to the Ministry of Munitions, the ratio in the munitions industry in Canada was 14:1. In foundry shops then, the increase may have been dramatic. In the metals group, where McAvity’s for example would be counted, there was virtually no change. This evidence suggests that in some sectors the proportion of women increased dramatically, and in others there may have been little difference between the pre and post war workforce.

Knowing the extent or scope of women’s participation generally is only part of understanding women’s experience in munitions during the war. Another essential component is an understanding of what women did while working in the industry. Specific evidence about what occupations women undertook during the war is scarce. Whereas the BNS data indicate exactly how many women entered certain occupations, we do not have similar data for the munitions industry. In munitions it is far more difficult to determine what jobs women did or how many women did them. Contemporary sources described women’s work in munitions factories in very general terms and they rarely quantified it. For instance, several authors indicate that

56 Ministry of Munitions, Report No. 102, PRO, MUN 2/11, 14589. If we use Flavelle’s numbers, the ratio is 17:1.
employers and society recognised "women can do almost anything." Another wrote. "women were employed successfully on all sizes of shells..." Few sources articulate exactly what women did or the nature of the job. A further problem concerning munitions work is that several sources may not offer an accurate description of the jobs available to women because their purpose was publicity. This is a particular concern with sources produced by or for the IMB. The central function of the Department of Labour was to educate manufacturers and the public about the potential value of the female munitions worker. The department relied on education and publicity. Irish often complained to Flavelle about the lack of actual influence he could exercise. The centrepiece of the IMB’s publicity program was a pamphlet that depicted the various occupations that women were capable of doing. Every munitions manufacturer who had contracts with the IMB received the pamphlet, which was entitled Women in the Production of Munitions in Canada. The photographs included in the booklet were of female munitions workers in Britain. The purpose of the campaign was to illustrate for employers that women could be


58 "Female Labour on 8 ins. High Explosive Shell Machining," Canadian Machinery, Volume 17 (March 6, 1917) 207.

59 See for example Flavelle to Irish, March 1917 Flavelle to Babs Irish, May 1917, Irish to Flavelle February 1917 in PAC, MG 30, A16, Volume33.
employed on a wide variety of occupations. Unfortunately, we have little indication that employers hired women in the same capacities in Canada.

Several lists and descriptions exist that outline the occupations available to women, but not necessarily performed by them. One such list indicated that women could be employed on all the operations listed in Appendix 1, which included everything from driving trucks, drilling shells, cleaning cars and working with cordite. Few sources specifically described the work of female munitions workers, so we are forced to rely on scattered anecdotal references. We know, for instance, that women operated vertical milling machines that faced the case of shrapnel shells. The machines consisted of a multiple jig holding six shells and a cutter, which worked continuously. Manufacturers also engaged women in the production of high explosive shells. The production of such a shell was a complex process and women worked on a variety of tasks in those factories. Women operated standard lathes, which were fitted with hydraulic cylinders to permit easier operation of the carriage travel, spindle, and tail chuck. The forgings entered the factory through a door behind the lathes on a time base. Women also operated drills. They were also

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60 The operations required for each the body and the base are as follows: rough drill the nose, rough turn the body, rough turn the profile, cut off base and nose, rough bore body, rough bore profile, finish ream interior, second rough turn body, finish turn body, second rough turn profile, finish turn profile; rough counterbore and face, finish ream counterbox, finish ream, rough tap base, finish tap base. To complete the shell the following general operations were required: finish and tap nose, fit and drive adapter, roll adapter joint, rough face and weigh, groove and weigh, press on copper band, finish turn copper band, cut off square, finish face, etc., government inspection, varnish, paint and ship.
required to move the forgings from conveyor belt to machine, which they did with the assistance of hydraulic cranes. Women inspected, bored and varnished the shells as well. In fact, female operators were involved in all but the heaviest of tasks in the factory. Women operated machines that punched or drilled holes, they filled shells with explosives and they turned shells on lathes. In the case of the latter, huge pieces of hot metal came off the shells as the women turned and chemicals splashed down. Women also used gauges to inspect shells. They also engaged in the production of fuses, which required them to assemble the various components of the fuse, including detonators.

Although the evidence is somewhat limited, it suggests that whatever the extent of women’s labour, they did jobs previously regarded as men’s work. There are also indications that the work that some women did was skilled. For instance, women became welders and at least one factory listed women as skilled machinists. During a 1917 strike, Willys-Overland was compelled to pay female “machinists and toolsetters in their employ” the same rate of pay as men in the same occupations. The strike raises a number of issues. However, what is important at this point is to recognise that there were some women who operated as skilled mechanics, although probably very few.\(^{61}\)

Whatever the extent or nature of their wartime participation, women’s work on munitions appeared limited to the duration of the war, as was the case for most

\(^{61}\) *Toronto Globe*, June 18, 1918; PAC MG 28 I44, C-4589.
male munitions workers as well. The industry itself was severely constrained as soon as the war ended. The day after the Armistice, the *Globe* ran a feature on the potential problem of thousands of unemployed munitions workers.\(^{62}\) With the conclusion of the war, there was no need for the manufacture of munitions at anything like wartime levels, and no need for the large munitions workforces. Although some officials, such as R.B. Bennett for instance, were concerned that women would be reluctant to leave munitions work once the war was over,\(^{63}\) there is little indication that women protested significantly. However, there is little to suggest that they did not. The *Globe* would have had readers believe that all women were happy to leave high paying jobs in munitions. "'If anyone had asked me three years ago that I would caper around like a giddy goat over the prospects of losing my position, I would have told her she was crazy,' said a young woman... 'Yet I am as happy as the day is long, and I don't feel anxious yet.' Nor have hundreds of thousands of men and women employed in munitions industries in Canadian cities any place in their hearts to-day [sic] for anything but thankfulness."\(^{64}\) We might be inclined to dismiss those sentiments as excitement that the war was over. However, a few months later *Maclean's* assured readers that the women who had replaced the men would only be too happy to vacate those positions. "Just what part are women going to play in the

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\(^{62}\) "Must Soon Lose Jobs," *Toronto Globe*, November 12, 1918, 3.

\(^{63}\) PAC MG 30, A16, Vol 34.

\(^{64}\) "Must Soon Lose Jobs," *Toronto Globe*, November 12, 1918, 3.
next big world movie, the rebuilding?" wrote one correspondent. "The little surface agitation here and there, the temporary bewilderment of women standing outside the door of closing munitions plants, the question of whether the woman who has taken the man's position will be ready to give it up gracefully when he comes back, are only the bubbles bound to rise when the current turns, and just as sure to disappear."^65

There were a few reports that women were unwilling to lose their jobs in munitions. Matrons at several Toronto factories, for instance, complained about women not wanting to give up their jobs. Some women still employed at the time of Armistice refused to leave the shops willingly.66 Similarly, women in one Victoria factory signed a petition protesting the loss of their jobs due to lack of work.67 However, in 1918 women were not working in the munitions factories to the same extent as they had been in 1917. In fact, there were reports of women's unemployment for that year.68 Before the war had ended, in fact, manufacturers laid female workers off. In 1918, several factories reportedly no longer employed female employees although they were still in production.69 Not only was the number of

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66 Naylor, 134.

67 Correspondence to Flavelle, PAC, MG 30, A16, Volume 30.

68 Naylor, 135.

69 *The Globe*, September 18, 1918. 4.
contracts available lower than in previous years, but there was increasing pressure on manufacturers to hire returned soldiers rather than women or the foreign born. In Toronto, for instance, the Mayor and City Council passed a resolution demanding local contractors give priority to returned soldiers. Another indication that some factories stopped employing women was that McAvity's no longer kept a women's paybook after the end of the war. Jennie Arbo, an employee at McAvity's, confirmed that women did not work at the factory past the end of the war. Similarly, in the CPR records, women no longer showed up in the shops after the war. Although women in British Columbia worked in munitions industries in Vancouver and Victoria in 1918, no women appeared in metals trades in British Columbia's 1919 report on labour. There were, however, some women, albeit not many, who remained at the end of the war and lined up in Toronto at the corner of King and Dufferin to receive their final pay some months after the Armistice.

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That the press felt compelled to publish any articles reassuring readers that women would want to return to normal may indicate that the middle class were concerned there was a reluctance among working-class women to leave the trades they gained entrance to during the war. However, there are few indications to support that. I think that it is more likely that there just were not enough women in enough

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71 William James Collection, City of Toronto Archives, 924; Permission to reprint granted by City of Toronto Archives.
jobs in enough factories to mount an effective challenge to the traditional division of labour. In Canada, it would seem that women's foray into munitions work was a temporary, short-term experience for relatively few women in Canada. Despite this, we still seem wedded to the belief that it fundamentally changed women's horizons.

In the banks, a relatively short-term opportunity translated into longer term changes to the occupations open to women. A similar pattern did not emerge in the metal shops of Canada. It is difficult to know to what degree women worked in any occupational group or job. Unfortunately, we simply cannot know how many women worked as drillers or welders or turners. There are few specific references to what women actually did in the shops. Even in the CPR pension records there are few indications of the actual occupation of the female munitions workers. They listed women only as munitions workers rather than more specific occupations, such as those that appear in other occupational categories. I will discuss the nature of women's work in a subsequent chapter. At this time, it is sufficient to make the point that women gained access to jobs defined as masculine before the war.

Women's horizons in metal shops expanded suddenly and significantly and contracted in a similar fashion. It would not appear that the extent of their participation was as significant as we might have once thought. In a number of factories it is clear that the extent of women's participation was quite dramatic. However, overall the proportion of women did not increase substantially. The available evidence leads me to agree with contemporary commentators who suggested women's participation in munitions was not particularly significant. The evidence
also strongly suggests that women in munitions were a reserve army of labour, mobilised only for the wartime emergency.

Conclusion

The perception of the pattern of women’s labour force participation is generally based on Census data, that is to say data taken before and after the war. Such data indicate a gradual increase in labour force participation. Taking data for banking and munitions for the years bracketing the war suggests that the industries reflected a similar growth pattern. However, that data would not be complete. The pattern that becomes clear when we examine data from the intervening years is both consistent with and dramatically different than the general pattern of women’s work (see figure 11). In both industries, war increased women’s opportunities. In munitions, those opportunities only expanded for the duration and only in a few, specific instances. While the overall extent of women’s participation was not dramatic by any estimate, the evidence suggests that the gender division in a number of foundries or metal shops was altered, significantly, for a very short period of time. In the case of banking, there was certainly a significant increase in the labour force participation of women. More importantly, women’s horizons were expanded in one particular field that had been the preserve of men before the war. Women gained access to positions as clerks because of the war, and kept them after the war.
emergency had passed. For the most part, then, women's participation had many of
the characteristics of a reserve army of labour, with one or two exceptions. Before
starting to explore what this meant with respect to gender ideology or women's roles,
it is necessary to be more specific about the composition of the reserve army.

Figure 11: Representation of Wartime Participation of Women in
Banking and Munitions
CHAPTER 4: THE COMPOSITION OF THE ARMY

When Mark Irish, the head of the IMB Department of Labour, visited Winnipeg in the spring of 1917, the seeming lack of concern about the war effort caught him off guard. "There is no war spirit here," he wrote to Joseph Flavelle, the Chairman of the IMB, "everything progresses as usual.... I had heard of enlistments and patriotism but frankly I see little of either."¹ Irish found Winnipeg very different than Toronto, and his comments reflect what historians have sometimes overlooked:² the wartime experience was not the same for all Canadians. The previous two chapters referred to the women working during the war as if they were a homogeneous group, when in fact they were not. Consequently, the conclusions regarding the expansion of women's opportunities may not necessarily be applicable to all Canadian women. Women who worked in banking and munitions had different wartime experiences depending on such factors as region, ethnicity and marital status. This chapter begins to illuminate the heterogeneous nature of the wartime workforce, and to speculate as to why those differences occurred and what they might mean.


² In particular the national histories, such as Morton and Granatstein, overlook differences. Herd Thomson illuminated several unique characteristics of the western experience of war.
Region

Canada is a country characterised by, among other things, profound regional differences. Not surprisingly, the pattern of women's work in banks and munitions shops was not uniform throughout the country. There were significant provincial variations in the distribution of the female workforce in both industries, which meant that women's opportunities also differed by province.

Evidence suggests that most of the women employed in munitions probably worked in factories in Central Canada, particularly Toronto and Montreal. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most commonly cited contemporary statistic about the extent of women's participation in the industry claims that in those two cities there were 35,000 female munitions workers. While I may have difficulty accepting that figure, it reveals a social perception that large numbers of women were working in those two Central Canadian cities. That is not to say that women's opportunities for munitions work did not exist in other cities, but it is highly probable that the opportunities were not as numerous as the ones in southern Ontario and Quebec. Irish believed that Toronto was the "industrial centre of Canada and particularly the Munitions Industry." Indeed, although he found it difficult to stay in Toronto and travel to Ottawa as often as he did, he remained in the city because "it was where [he] felt the hub of [his job] was."3 Certainly, the factories that were

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3 See Irish to Edward Fitzgerald, June 1918, PAC MG 30, A16, Volume 38, Flavelle Papers; also Volume 33, Mrs. Irish to Flavelle and Irish to Flavelle July 1918.
reputed to have employed the greatest number of women were in Southern Ontario. Inglis, Willys-Overland and the Russell Motor Car Company all were located in Toronto. The Dominion Cement Company, which had the one of the highest proportion of female employees during the war, was located in St. Catharines.

*Figure 12: Women as Proportion of Provincial BNS Staffs*

Ontario. Indeed, more than half of the women working on munitions in Ontario worked in three factories in the city of Toronto.\(^5\) The demand for labour, and in turn the reserve army of female labour, was most certainly higher in Central Canada than it

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\(^4\) BNS database.

\(^5\) *Star*, 27 November 1918, *Financial Post*, October 19, 1918, also see Naylor, 135.
was in the West or the Maritimes. Women working in munitions factories on a large scale were arguably a central Canadian phenomenon.

Regional differences also influenced the opportunities and experiences of the female employees at the Bank of Nova Scotia. Figure 12 depicts the regional distribution of female employees of the BNS, and clearly, there were regional differences. In Quebec, for instance, women were not a significant proportion of the branch labour force in any year except 1920. The proportion of women in Quebec in 1920 represented in the graph is almost entirely composed of stenographers in one large urban branch. With the exception of that single branch, the proportion of female staff did not increase significantly in Quebec during the war. The proportion of female employees in branches in New Brunswick, Ontario and Nova Scotia, in contrast, increased in each year between 1916 and 1920. In fact, by 1918 women comprised almost one half of the branch bank staff in each of those provinces as compared to less than one fifth in Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan. It was possible in 1918 that customers going into some branches in Ontario or Nova Scotia were faced with more female than male bank officers.

The extent that wartime opportunities for women in the bank remained in the post-war also differed depending on where they lived in Canada. As Figure 7

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6 The inclusion in the database of the downtown Montreal branch explains the high proportion of women in that year. That particular branch was quite different from other branches in the province in size and structure. In some ways, it was more similar to the General Office than a branch banking operation. As such, office clerical workers such as stenographers and file clerks constituted a significant proportion of the staff complement.
illustrates, women's expanded opportunities did not survive the war with one important exception. In most provinces, women's post-war employment was not significantly higher than the pre-war levels. For instance, the employment of women in Saskatchewan and Alberta increased at an astonishing rate and decreased equally as rapidly. In both British Columbia and New Brunswick female participation rates in 1922 were less than they were in 1914. The reduction in the participation rates of women in most provinces suggests that wartime participation may not have been the catalyst, at least immediately, for the increased employment of women in banks. In fact, the data for provinces such as New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Alberta suggest that women's wartime work was an anomaly. Women in those provinces were released in the post-war, indicating that the BNS regarded them as a reserve army of labour as opposed to suitable bank employees for the long term. The only exception to the pattern was Ontario. In 1922, the proportion of women in branches in Ontario remained significantly higher than it was in 1914. Indeed, it had more than tripled, which suggests that women held onto their new positions and new horizons.

These results clearly explain how Graham Lowe could argue that the numbers of women hired during the war "precipitated lasting shifts in the balance of the sexes in the office."\(^7\) In reaching his conclusion, Lowe relied on data from Ontario, and in

Ontario, women’s participation during the war seemed to result in expanded opportunities for women during the post-war. One fifth of Ontario’s branch bank staff were women after the war, which is a significant increase from pre-war statistics. The same clearly does not hold true for all the provinces. For instance, the dramatic increase in the employment of women in New Brunswick apparently did not result in lasting changes immediately after the war. The proportion of women in that province dipped to below pre-war levels after the war emergency was over.

The reasons that women’s participation differed by region are similar to both industries. The distribution of the industries and the effect of recruiting influenced the distribution of the female workforce in both banking and munitions. Although both purported to be national in scope, most of their business occurred east of Winnipeg, with a high concentration in Central Canada. In the case of banking, Toronto was the financial centre of the country. Most of the big banks desired western expansion; however the population and industrial base did not warrant large numbers of branches in the west until after the war. The Bank of Nova Scotia had a similar distribution of its branches. Throughout the war, the highest concentration of BNS branches was in Ontario. Fewer than ten percent of BNS branches were located west of Winnipeg.\(^8\) Quite simply, there were more opportunities for women in areas of high branch concentration.

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\(^8\) The regional distribution of the banks was outlined in chapter 2.
The distribution of munitions production was also highly centralised. Sixty percent of all munitions production occurred in Ontario, and a further 35 percent in Quebec. The Maritimes, once a significant region for iron and steel production, only produced 4 percent of munitions and all the western provinces accounted for 1 percent. The distribution reflects that Central Canada was the munitions manufacturing centre of the country. Awarding contracts to companies in Southern Ontario and Quebec was economic and efficient, which is something Flavelle often explained to those manufacturers from other regions with the temerity to question the

Figure 13: Distribution of Munitions Manufacture, 1914-1919

9Memo from Flavelle to Sir Thomas White, September 11, 1918, PAC, MG 30 A16, Volume 18, File 182.
IMB. Flavelle told one politician that the IMB awarded several contracts in BC for purely political reasons. He stated that “a member of the Board visiting British Columbia returned with the statement that he thought that British Columbia ought to have an opportunity.... The Province had been generous in the number of men who had enlisted, and it had been hard hit from the collapse of the Real Estate market. and that it would be a good thing if we could assist in securing orders....”\(^1\) It seemed that Flavelle believed the capacity to meet the wartime emergency existed in Central Canada. The cost and the time it took to transport materials and munitions across the country made awarding contracts outside Southern Ontario and Quebec inefficient. Flavelle understood that politically it made sense to send orders to companies in BC, but in practical terms he saw no advantage. As a businessman, not a politician, Flavelle was very reluctant to continue the practices of the Shell Committee and let political or patronage concerns direct the business of manufacturing shells.

The distribution of munitions factories meant that the demand for labour was higher in the manufacturing centres such as Toronto and Hamilton than it was in Victoria, for instance. In 1917, British Columbia had 14 companies in receipt of munitions contracts from the IMB. The same year, New Brunswick had only 8 factories making shells, which was a significant reduction from the 23 factories in

\(^{10}\) Joseph Flavelle to Hon. Martin Burrell, Minister of Agriculture, August 21, 1917, MG 30 A16, Volume 8, File 1918.
operation in 1916.\textsuperscript{11} In stark contrast, the city of Toronto had 45 factories involved in the production of just one type of shell, the 6 inch high explosive shell.\textsuperscript{12} The contracts in the West were not nearly as lucrative as the shell and fuse contracts awarded in Southern Ontario or Montreal. nor did they generate the same demand for labour.\textsuperscript{13} In BC, of the 14 companies in receipt of munitions contracts, 7 were for ship building, 6 were for making boxes and only 1 was for armament production.\textsuperscript{14} Consequently, opportunities did not exist for women according to Austin Taylor, Director of the Department of Aeronautical Supplies in Vancouver. Taylor wrote to Flavelle to request the IMB’s assistance in importing French Canadians to assist in the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Report to the IMB regarding Sunday Operation, MG 30, A16, Volume 13, File 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} There was a great deal of acrimony over this distribution, particularly from B.C. Manufacturers there were disappointed to miss the lucrative shell contracts, and complained bitterly to their political representatives about Joseph Flavelle and the IMB’s antipathy towards BC firms. One politician in particular attacked Flavelle about the issue and argued that he was unfairly biased towards Toronto businesses. Largely, as Flavelle points out repeatedly, the cost of shipping the shells across the country was simply too high. The shells could be made cheaper elsewhere and he was loath to gouge the British to please a BC politician. See for example, Austin Taylor to Flavelle, PAC MG 30, A16, Volume 30, Flavelle file; PAC MG 30, A16 Volume 23, File 1916-1918.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} IMB, List of Manufacturers of Munitions and Shipbuilding in the Province of British Columbia, August 21, 1917, MG 30 A16, Volume 8, File 1918.
\end{itemize}
lumber industry, but he saw little use for women in the industries in BC during the war.\textsuperscript{15}

Enlistment rates and beliefs about the war also influenced women's employment opportunities in the paid workforces of banking and munitions. In the industrial regions, large numbers of workers enlisted as a result of unemployment in 1914 and 1915. Of the 263,111 men who enlisted by March of 1916, fully 64.8 percent were manual workers and another 18.4 were clerical workers.\textsuperscript{16} This meant that a significant number of industrial workers were no longer available to manufacturers. The economy experienced rapid growth in the manufacturing industry at the same time as the available male labour pool decreased rather significantly. The result was more opportunities for women in manufacturing generally, and in munitions specifically, in industrial regions. The high enlistment among clerical workers had a similar effect on staffing at the BNS.

With respect to the need to hire women at the BNS, there was a direct correlation between the provincial levels of enlistment of the bank's officers and the degree of women's participation. BNS records show higher enlistment from Maritime and Ontario branches than branches in Quebec and the West.\textsuperscript{17} The

\textsuperscript{15} Correspondence from Austin Taylor to Flavelle, cc'd to Borden, PAC, Borden Papers, MG 26, H1, Volume 238, 133263.

\textsuperscript{16} Morton, \textit{When Your Number's Up}, 278.

\textsuperscript{17} Calculated based on the list kept by the BNS of officers who enlisted or were conscripted for military service. BNSA, RG0066.
enlistment of bank officers in the Maritimes was disproportionately high as compared
with the rest of the bank branches. Generally, there were higher levels of enlistment
and casualties in the Maritime Provinces because of unemployment and close ties to
Great Britain. There was also high enlistment in Ontario for many of the same
reasons. In fact, 40 percent of all Canadian casualties came from Ontario. More
significantly, more than 44,000 men in Toronto enlisted during the war, more than
any other city in the country. In Quebec and the Prairies, there were lower levels of
enlistment from the bank and society in general. Branches in areas of higher
enlistment had more difficulty finding suitable male employees and were more likely
to hire women as replacement workers than regions with lower levels of enlistment.
For instance, in French Canada where enlistment was low because there was far less
support for the war than in English Canada, there was not the same pressure to hire
women at the bank. However, in Toronto where there was more competition for
women workers and more banks, the pressure was quite high. Irish directly related
lower levels of enlistment and less support for the war in general to the extent of the

18 Strange, 195.

19 Hubert Groves, Toronto “Does Her Bit” (Toronto, 1918), 50.

20 Morton, When Your Number’s Up; and Morton, A Military History of Canada; AA
Conscription 1917 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n/d),1-14.

21 BNSA, List of Officers in CEF, BNS database 3 – military enlistment; and Rudin, 65.
labour shortage in Quebec. In fact, in a report on the need for women in the factories of Quebec he wrote:

In all the Provinces, save Quebec, I had no trouble whatever with the Governments and nothing but assistance and sympathy was extended in the effort to Dilute Munitions Labour by women. Possibly the reverse position adopted by the Government of Quebec grew out of the fact that Male Labour has never been scarce in that province since the War began. Doubtless Male Labour was able to demonstrate that the introduction of Women in Munitions in Quebec did not mean Dilution by Women but rather substitution and hence the men objected to losing their jobs.22

Assessing the ramifications of the regional differences is difficult. I am not nearly as confident as Graham Lowe that the work women did in the banks during the war altered how society regarded female bank employees and led to a long-term change in the division of labour in the industry. Lowe’s argument is predicated on the assumption that the level of participation changed attitudes, and that continued post-war employment was evidence of the shift. If that is so, are we left to assume that attitudes did not change in New Brunswick where the proportion of women workers in the bank actually decreased after the war? Certainly, there was significant wartime employment, but there was also an equally significant decline in post-war employment in most provinces. We can only speculate as to the level of participation that is required to alter social beliefs. Are beliefs more likely to change in Hamilton where people went to a bank where one third of the staff was female?23 Or were

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23 BNS database.
To address this final question we need to examine another variable that impacted women's wartime experience: whether women lived in a rural or urban area.

**Rural and Urban**

Most of the women in this study were from urban communities for the simple reason that banking and munitions were largely urban industries. Labour shortages existed throughout the war in rural communities, which resulted in expanded opportunities for rural women. Those opportunities were much more often in farm labour than in banking or munitions work. Of the two industries, rural women had more chance of finding employment in a branch of the BNS than in a munitions plant. Not only were there no factories in rural areas, but the IMB felt that farm women were not suitable munitions employees. The BNS, in contrast, had a few rural branches, mostly in the Prairies, and women found opportunities for work during the war in those branches. The proportion of female employees in rural branches increased more slowly and declined more quickly than in urban branches.

24 See Herd Thompson; and Margaret Kechnie, "'This is not a paying job...': The Farmerette Movement in Ontario during the Great War," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Ottawa 1993.
During 1916 and 1917, Mark Irish, and to a lesser extent Joseph Flavelle, waged a quiet war with R.B. Bennett, Member of Parliament for Calgary. The issue over which they exchanged heated letters and speeches was labour. Irish wrote to Flavelle after meeting Bennett unexpectedly: "He (Bennett) rather took me off my food by a tirade against the munitions board in general and you in particular. Our interview, unsought by me, was short and unpleasant." Bennett felt that the IMB had too much of the available pool of male labour and was depriving the farm communities of essential workers. More than once he attempted to undermine the IMB's labour recruitment efforts by publicly denying that there was a labour shortage in the factories. Interestingly, the two men seldom disagreed regarding the use of female labour, which is probably because the IMB did not want rural women.

The IMB's Department of Labour was careful not to encourage women from rural communities to seek work in urban factories. We can speculate that their reticence had as much to do with economy and propriety as any concern about rural labour needs. The IMB was very concerned regarding women worker's moral welfare, something I will address in more detail in chapter six. Inviting rural women into the city to work would have challenged the middle-class sense of propriety. Reform minded, middle-class citizens did not support a rural migration of women into urban areas. They regarded such a process as full of danger, and several reform organisations were committed to protecting such women from the dangers of the

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industrial urban landscape. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) believed that providing women, particularly new migrants to the city, with moral, properly supervised accommodation would ensure that the women were safe from harm and the problems social reformers associated with urbanisation. We can speculate that had the IMB encouraged large numbers of women to come to urban factories from rural areas, they probably would have experienced opposition from social reform groups. The IMB could also have faced incurring the cost of securing the female workers appropriate, supervised accommodation. Urban factory women, on the other hand, were already living in the city. The IMB could limit its responsibility for their well being to on site services such as canteens and matrons, which, as I will discuss in chapter six, they did. Potential women workers in all provinces faced pressure to work on farms, particularly rural women who were encouraged to remain and help on the farms rather than seek war work elsewhere. Urban women, specifically teachers, were also urged to go to rural communities to help bring in the harvests during the summer months. Such moral, economic and

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26 Diane Pederson, "'The Call To Service': The YWCA and the Canadian College Woman, 1886-1920," in Paul Axelrod and John Reid, eds., Youth, University and Canadian Society, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1989); Mary Qualye Innis, Unfold the Years: A history of the Young Women's Christian Association in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1949), 78-84; Strange, 174-87.

27 Herd Thompson, chapter five; Winnipeg Free Press, July 5 1917, August 14, 1918, September 12, 1918; Halifax Mail, January 24, 1917, March 23, 1917, September 6, 1917; Maclean's April 1916 and the Canadian Magazine, July 1917.
public pressure discouraged the IMB from looking to rural areas for potential workers.

The migration of rural women into the city was a concern throughout the early twentieth century, and we can only speculate whether the increased opportunities for women in munitions during the war increased the migration. I have come across few sources that give us any indication of the percentage of the workforce that came from rural communities. McAvity's paybook was one of the only sources that I found which included the former occupation of the female employees specifically. Only 5 percent of the workforce reported farm work among their previous experience. In response to being asked if many workers came from a farm or rural background, Louise Poiret, a former McAvity employee said, "Oh no. These were factory girls we worked with. Factory class. Only my sister and me come from farms — maybe some other, but not too many."^28 It is dangerous to speculate too much based on such slender evidence about the extent of rural women's participation in munitions work, but it seems likely that a large proportion of the munitions workforce was made up of urban women.

We can have more certainty regarding our conclusions about the banking industry. The Bank of Nova Scotia had branches in rural areas, although the number was never very significant. Only about 7 percent of the branches were located in rural

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^28 Interview with Louise Poiret.
Managers at rural branches, like their urban counterparts, faced labour shortages that they dealt with by hiring women. The women were probably local women from the surrounding area. The extent of women's participation, however, was somewhat different than for branches in urban centres. For instance, the proportion of women on staff rose more slowly and declined more quickly in rural branches than it did in urban branches. Women were less likely to maintain opportunities gained during the war in rural branches. A number of factors contributed to the difference. Women did not have the same degree of opportunity in rural and urban branches because the demand for women was lower in rural areas. The branches in rural areas were smaller and required fewer staff members than urban branches. Further, lower enlistment rates and the isolated nature of rural banks led to a higher degree of reluctance on the part of bank officials to staff rural branches with women. Because of the isolated nature of rural branches, clerks were required to protect the branch. It was assumed that, female staff, being unable to protect a branch physically, would be an inducement to thieves. "The banks have always afforded the temptation to the daring criminal; and the reckless robber would think it all the safer to attack a bank in which there were women employees." Despite such reluctance,

29 Rural/urban determination based on Census (1911 and 1921).

30 For the purposes of this analysis, I entered all rural branches in a separate database, a subset of the larger database, and compared their labour patterns with a random sample of urban branches.

there are several examples where a rural branch had more female than male employees. Such was the case in Star City, Saskatchewan in 1917. This might have been a cause for concern among BNS management, but they did nothing to alter the situation during the year.

Age and Marital Status

Before the war, the female workforce was largely young (34 and under) and single. Although marrying and raising a family was women’s primary “job,” it became acceptable that women worked before they got married. According to middle-class notions about femininity, working after a woman married was not acceptable. Society expected women to leave paid employment in order to marry. One woman recalled that “You married or worked. It wasn’t a matter of ‘couldn’t,’ you wouldn’t! (emphasis in original) In other words, it was a job.” Women could “look forward to marriage as a definite means of support and hold but loosely that which they may be called upon at any moment to give up.” We might expect to find

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33 Mrs Adrienne Stone, middle-class family, volunteered with the VAD of the St John’s Ambulance in Toronto, in Read, 164.

34 As cited in Davies, 82.
that the shortage of labour experienced during the war resulted in opportunities for mature, married or widowed women. Certainly in England, the war affected the median age of the female workforce and increased the proportion of married women in the workforce. In Canada, the age of the female workforce in the banks and munitions factories remained fairly static. The effect of the war on the number of married women in the workforce was somewhat ambiguous. Although no change occurs to the marital status of female bank employees, it appears that either we have underestimated the proportion of the female workforce who were married in general, or the war resulted in an increase in the number of married women hired in munitions.

Contemporary reports, particularly from Toronto, described the munitions workforce as “women and girls,” who were “intent on seeing their industrious young selves in the role of munitions workers.” One of Mark Irish’s appeals for women workers suggest that they were looking for younger women as operators. He appealed to mothers to let their daughters go. He assured them that the young women would be looked after properly. Such reports, and our impressions based upon them, may not accurately reflect the heterogeneity of the munitions workforce.

The CPR pension records offer an interesting opportunity to examine the age of women workers over time and by occupation. As Figure 14 illustrates, there was

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35 See for example, Summerfield and Braybon, 159 - 167; and Woollacott 152-156.


37 Irish, Canadian Machinery, 719,
little change in the median age of female workers at the CPR between 1910 and 1922. In particular the war had little or no effect at all on the age of workers, with the exception that the median age of manual workers increased in the post-war. Clearly, the clerical workforce was younger than the manual workforce was. Hotel and food workers had the highest median age. Women in those occupations were usually domestics, cooks and wait staff. The age of women's munitions workers varied among the companies. For instance, the median age of the female workers at McAvity's was 26 as compared to the CPR median age of 32. The difference may be explained by the wider range of ages (13-71) of CPR workers, which is not surprising given the comparative size of the two companies. That work at the CPR was of a more permanent nature than that at McAvity's may also have contributed to the

Table 8: Ages of Applicants for Munitions Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>0-14</th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
<th>41-45</th>
<th>46-50</th>
<th>51-55</th>
<th>56-60</th>
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<td>Toronto</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

difference in the median age of the two workforces. The median age of women applying to the Ontario Labour Bureau for munitions work, compiled in Table 8, was similar to the median age of employees at McAvity's. The data from the bureau suggests that the women in Toronto and London might have had a younger median age than the women in Hamilton. The data from Hamilton more closely resemble the CPR data. There could be any number of reasons why potential munitions workers were younger in Toronto than in Hamilton, St. John's or at the CPR. The temporary nature of the industry may have had an impact. Perhaps older women, particularly those with dependants, were less likely to jeopardise a permanent job for a temporary one. Because of industrial expansion, Toronto may have attracted more young single
workers more so than other urban centres, which is something that Carolyn Strange has suggested. I hesitate to speculate without more evidence.

Figure 15 Median Ages of CPR Female Clerical Staff as Compared to BNS Female Staff, 1910-1922

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39 Strange, 23.
The women hired at the BNS between 1910 and 1922 ranged in age from 14-40. The median age of all women staff during those years ranged from 21 to 22.3. There was virtually no change during the war, which surely suggests that the labour shortage was not so severe as to force the bank to hire more mature female staff. The age of clerical workers at the CPR was similar to that of the women at the BNS. The wartime age distribution is the same as the pre and post-war age distribution. There seems to have been no difficulty finding suitable young women to work in the banks or in other clerical work.

One of the explanations for the comparative youth of the BNS female staff is that the bank adhered closely to the middle-class idea that women worked only before marriage. The bank required female employees to be single. The bank had very strict rules regarding marriage for all of its employees, but for women there was no option. Female staff had to conform completely to middle-class ideas about respectable femininity, including the belief that women only worked until they married. As we will discuss later, the bank was extremely concerned about respectability and had many rules to govern employee conduct. When women left the service, it was invariably to get married. When women resigned from their positions at the bank, fully 78.4 percent of women cited marriage as their reason for leaving the bank. In contrast, only 5.7 percent indicated that they were leaving in order to take up another

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40 In comparison, the age ranges of male workers was 13-74, which illustrates the much shorter career of female bank staff.
Perhaps had the labour shortage been more pronounced the banks would have been forced to hire married women, as was the case in the Second World War.

The munitions industry, on the other hand, had a high percentage of married women. In fact, the proportion of married women in munitions work throughout the war was higher than the proportion of married women in the workforce at large in 1921. What remains unclear is whether the number of married women in munitions was a wartime phenomenon, unique to the industry, or whether we have underestimated the level of married women’s participation in the workforce in general. According to Enid Price, married women comprised 22 percent of the female workforce in the munitions plants she surveyed in Montreal. Comparably, 24 percent of McAvity’s munitions workers were married and approximately 22 percent of the CPR women were married, which is significant considering that only 2 percent of gainfully occupied women were married. Even twenty years after the war, married women constituted only 10 percent of women in the labour force. It is possible that munitions present an aberration to normal working patterns.

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41 BNS Database. Ill health was the other reason that women left the BNS.

42 In the eight plants, the proportion of women who were married ranged from 0% to 44.1%

43 Ramakhalawansingh, 246 and Prentice et. al. 146. It is possible that married women’s participation was underenumerated quite significantly.

44 The proportion of married women in the labour force in 1931 was 10 percent. It was not until 1951 that the proportion of married women returned to the levels evidenced in some of the munitions factories of the First World War. Ramakhalawansingh, 294; Labour Canada, Women's Bureau, Women in the Labour Force, (Ottawa: Supply and Service, 1971) Table 14; Prentice, et.al., 351.
There is some evidence to suggest that munitions factories were more likely than other industries to hire married women, particularly out of a sense of patriotism. Munitions work was more than a manufacturing job. Employees felt that they were contributing directly to the war effort. Hiring women who were without male support because of the war was not unusual. For example, most of McAivity’s married employees were identified as wives of soldiers.\(^4^5\) In an article in a Toronto paper, the one married woman described was the mother who had lost her son at the Somme. In 1916, Irish claimed that the majority of munitions workers had “husbands, fathers, brothers or sweethearts at the front and they rightfully feel that their position is in the munitions factory has joined them to the force behind the man behind the gun.”\(^4^6\) Another article commented that they would only hire middle-class women once “the soldiers’ women-folk are cared for and others that need work.”\(^4^7\) Perhaps the high percentage of married women in the munitions shops was related to patriotic impulses, or perhaps the proportion of married women in the general pre and post war workforce was somewhat underestimated.

\(^4^5\) McAivity’s also identified widows of soldiers as “married”. For the purposes of this study, I did not include those women as married.

\(^4^6\) Irish, 719.
Munitions work aside, the CPR pension records database also suggests something about the marital status of women working in occupations not directly linked to the war effort. In addition to munitions workers, I also examined the marital status of female employees in three other occupational groups between 1910 and 1922. In order to avoid conflating munitions workers and non munitions workers, I divided manual workers into those two categories. Non-munitions workers were largely cleaners. Figure 16 illustrates my findings. The data illustrate several interesting findings regarding the marital status of women workers in general. In all categories, the proportion of the female staff who were married was higher than the national average, perhaps most surprisingly in the clerical workforce. I have already discussed that clerical work was regarded as appropriate work for young, single

women. The chart clearly illustrates that the proportion of married women in clerical occupations, as well as in hotel and food occupations remained constant despite the war, showing only a moderate increase after 1917. The war did seem to effect non-munitions manual labourers in that there was a significant reduction in the number of married women in those jobs. Before and after the war, the number of married women was quite high. Several factors may have contributed to causing the decline evident between 1914 and 1918. For instance, an influx of temporary workers may have swelled the workforce, which would suggest support for the reserve army of labour hypothesis. These findings may suggest that more work needs to be done on the participation of married women in the workforce. The women working in the occupational groups in Figure 16 (CPR) were working-class, and as several historians argue, working-class families seldom survived on the earnings of a single breadwinner during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Women, and children, had to contribute to the family income. Married women generally took work into the home or worked part-time rather than working outside the home. The CPR data suggests that perhaps it was less unusual than we generally think it was for married women to work full-time outside the home. We would expect that domestic occupations would have a comparatively high number of married women. However, the data for the other classification could suggest that the number of married women who were gainfully occupied during this period may have been underenumerated.

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48 Sager and Baskerville, 113; and Bradbury Working Families.
Mary McKinnon certainly argues that the CPR was representative of labour processes and practices in Canada during this period. If that is indeed the case, then perhaps we have under-estimated the numbers of married women working. It is difficult to be completely certain because of the danger of conflating the wartime reserve army of labour and permanent workers. The evidence does suggest, I think, that more work needs to be done in this regard.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity also affected women's opportunities in munitions and banking during the war. The increased opportunities for women in banking and munitions were not available to all women. The conclusions reached in chapter two regarding the extent of women's participation are not as applicable to women of colour or to women of non-dominant ethnic groups. Although other historians have found that wartime has afforded members of ethnic and racial minorities opportunities to improve their economic and social situations, it does not appear that the First World War gave Canadian women of colour the same opportunity. The ethnic composition of the workforces of the BNS and munitions was relatively homogeneous. The opportunities that I identified in the two industries seem to have broadened the horizons of white women of British or French descent only. It may be

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that increased opportunities for women in those industries opened opportunities for women of the non-dominant ethnic and racial groups in other industries. A thorough discussion of those possibilities is outside the scope of this study. However, there is some indication that a broader examination of the labour force participation patterns of women of colour and different ethnic groups might find that the war offered those women increased access to non-domestic jobs or domestic jobs outside of private homes. In any case, the ethnic and racial composition of the two workforces examined here remained largely unchanged by the war. Contemporary attitudes regarding the foreign born explain the lack of opportunities for immigrant women.

Traditionally, historians argued that the treatment of immigrants during the First World War was a radical departure from normal attitudes.\textsuperscript{50} We no longer completely accept that “because of the strains of war, discrimination against immigrant groups – both of enemy and non-enemy origin – became the rule rather than the exception.”\textsuperscript{51} English Canadian attitudes toward immigrant groups and French Canadians, particularly in Western Canada, were neither tolerant nor favourable before the war. The discrimination merely worsened in many cases during the war, particularly in the case of the Ukrainian, Austrian and German Canadians.\textsuperscript{52} Heightened nativism during the war affected the labour force, particularly in

\textsuperscript{50} W.L Morton, \textit{The Canadian Identity} (Toronto, 1962), 111.

\textsuperscript{51} Thompson, 73.

\textsuperscript{52} Vera Lysenko, \textit{Men in Sheepskin Coats}, (Toronto, 1947).
munitions. Despite a serious shortage of skilled and unskilled male workers in munitions shops, manufacturers were extremely reluctant to hire foreign born workers. Employers faced pressure from government sources as well as the public not to hire "aliens," particularly those from countries with which Canada was at war. The criticism of the IMB concerning the use of "alien labour" demonstrates that the general attitude towards immigrant workers was that they were to be hired only as a last resort.

The IMB faced particularly severe censure in 1917 and 1918 because of the public perception that they employed enemy aliens. The issue came to head in Toronto in 1918 when a petition from the City Council suggested that not only was the IMB employing aliens, but that they were doing so at the expense of returning soldiers. The City Council petitioned the government to make it illegal to employ enemy aliens in munitions and to enforce the provisions of the Alien Labour Act. In response, the IMB sent out a circular encouraging contractors to "employ Returned Soldiers to the limit of their capacity," and asking for details regarding the nature and extent that they employed alien labour.\(^{53}\) Irish defined "aliens" as anyone "other than British subjects."

The responses from the contractors indicate that they were conforming to contemporary attitudes and not hiring alien labour. It is possible that what they reported to the IMB and what they did were different, however most wrote that they

had no aliens in their employ. Midland Engine Company responded that “It is our policy, however, to only hire Canadians, and married as much as possible. While there are one or two aliens in our two Plants, they have been natives of the town for several years before the War started, and we look on them as citizens.” Few manufacturers distinguished between enemy aliens and any foreign-born workers. For instance, the Russell Motor Car Company wrote “…in fact we cleaned out all the foreigners that were on our payroll ... There was some injustice in this to certain foreigners who came from countries allied with us....”54 Another company, W.H. Banfield and Sons in Toronto, bragged that their plant was “entirely free from foreign labour....”55

Only one of the eighty factories that replied admitted to a large contingent of foreign born workers. The Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company advised the IMB that “we have in our employ slightly over twelve hundred men, fiftysix [sic] percent are aliens, of whom Austrians comprise one half, the remaining fortyfour [sic] percent is made up of Canadians, British and American.” The company also wrote that they were experiencing a great deal of pressure from the English speaking community to fire the foreign-born workers, which they could not do without shutting down the business. The other companies who reported having alien labour included a particular

54 Replies received to circular of March 6, 1918 on Alien Labour, Mark Irish, IMB, PAC MG 30 A16, Volume 8, 1918.

55 Ibid.
qualifier about those labourers that indicates that there was an ethnic hierarchy at play. Three munitions shops reported employing aliens, but justified it because they were employed in jobs that English speaking workers refused to accept. For instance, the Guruey [sic] Foundry in Toronto told the IMB that "we do not employ aliens in our Munitions Plant except such as are bonafide subjects of our alleys [sic]. There are many jobs in the Munitions Plant, as you know, that it is impossible to get English speaking people to take. These only, are given to aliens." Similarly the Cluff Ammunition Company wrote, "We are in hearty accordance with the sentiments expressed in your letter, and while at times we are forced to employ foreign labour in our Plant, it is only done on such jobs as we are unable to get British born Subjects to work upon." Such attitudes about the appropriateness of hiring immigrant men for munitions work suggests that immigrant women would have had even less opportunity.

Mark Irish believed that the attitude of the Canadian people in this regard was a reflection that the country was "to an appreciable degree [abandoning] sanity." Irish recognised that the foreign born were a valuable part of the industry and that they posed little risk. It angered him that a section of Canadian society was prepared to "throw out Alien Labour in Canada." Irish's concern was not limited to the impact such action would have on the labour shortage in the factories. He was also very concerned with the welfare of the immigrant workers. "This means that an army of human beings, in a larger radius than the numbers of those actually working, are to be placed on the hands of the community for support. The Alien is not by any means
universally a bachelor and what is the community to do with his dependants? In addition to this how are you going to replace him in the work he does?” Irish’s letter to Flavelle also suggests that he recognised that immigrant workers did the poorly paid, low status work in the factories. “The more violent the agitator in this direction, the higher would go his nose if asked to perform the task that the Alien now does. Are you going to slow up industry, in some case to the point of stoppage, in order that the community may be engaged in the very laudable but unproductive pursuit of singing ‘God Save the King?” 56

In such an atmosphere, it is little wonder that the ethnic composition of the female banking staff appeared to be homogeneous and unaffected by the war. Unfortunately that conclusion is based on what is missing from the evidence rather than what is available. Unlike other employers, the Bank of Nova Scotia did not record information regarding the ethnicity or race of employees, which may suggest that the workforce was ethnically and racially homogenous. There were no debates in the industry regarding the need to hire non-British employees.57 The concerned debate that accompanied women’s entrance into the banks was not accompanied by any commentary about hiring members of ethnic and racial minorities. It just does not appear to have been an issue. Perhaps the most compelling rationale for concluding

56 Mark Irish to Joseph Flavelle, March 28, '1918, PAC, MG 30, A16, Volume 8, Miscellaneous.

57 In their studies of clerical workers, neither Coomb’s nor Marks identified any women born in countries other than Canada, United States of Britain. Marks, 50; also see Davies, 74.
that the bank was ethnically homogeneous is that bank staff had to conform to the highest measure of respectability. As we will see, racist attitudes towards ethnic and racial minorities, particularly during the war, were such that had the bank even considered hiring non-English speaking women, their reputation would have been suspect. We have more evidence about the ethnic and racial composition in munitions, albeit not much more.

A newspaper journalist described the workforce of the Russell Motor Car Company in 1916. “Many of these ... are English or Scotch. One hardly needed that information for rosier cheeks than Ontario supplies seemed to be the rule.” It appears likely that the description was representative of the women working in most munitions factories. The majority of women in munitions were Canadian or British born. Very few were foreign born. Unlike the BNS, there was very small measure of ethnic diversity in the munitions factories. The Ontario Labour Bureau collected and collated the nationalities of women who applied for work in munitions factories in 1917, which I have included as Table 9. Clearly, the large majority of women were members of the dominant racial and ethnic groups. Fewer than 5 percent of all the women who applied to the Bureau were foreign born. Enid Price found a similar pattern of ethnicity in the factories she reported on. The proportion of the workforce

58 Saturday Night, July 15, 1916.

59 For my purpose, British born includes women of British, Irish and Scottish descent.
that was foreign born ranged from 0 to 10 percent in 1917, and 0 to 5 percent in 1918.\textsuperscript{61} The proportion of the labour force that was foreign born was 8.2 percent and "other British born," that is to say Scottish or Irish, was 11.7 percent.\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{Table 9: Nationalities of Female Applicants for Munitions Work, Ontario Employment Bureau, 1917}\textsuperscript{63}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>Canadian</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scotch</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One company's records include detailed breakdowns of the ethnic composition of the workforce. The CPR records allow us not only to get a sense of the ethnic composition of the general workforce of the company before, during and

\textsuperscript{60} I am using the contemporary definition of foreign born here. At the time, British subjects were not considered foreign born.

\textsuperscript{61} Price, 21-22.

\textsuperscript{62} These figures are for 1921. Leacy, A533.

after the war, but we can also examine differences among occupational groups. Generally, the female workforce of the CPR was ethnically homogenous before 1914. All of the workers were of British or Canadian descent. French-Canadians made up no more than 3 percent of the total workforce. During the war, the workforce became more diverse but remained largely comprised of British or Canadian born women. The ethnic groups that made their way into the wartime workforce were "white ethnics". Generally, the women were from Southern and Eastern Europe. There were no women of either Asian or African descent.\(^6^4\)

Using the CPR data, I compared the ethnic composition of three occupations between 1910 and 1922. clerical workers, munitions workers and domestic staff (scrubwomen, maids, cooks, etc.). The ethnic make up of the clerical workforce was, like the BNS, completely homogeneous.\(^6^5\) All of the female clerical staff was British born or English Canadian or American. Similarly, the data for munitions work reveal

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\(^6^4\) The lack of women from a broader racial and ethnic background may also be a result of the database itself. McKinnon’s choice of letters may in fact exclude whole ethnic groups from the study. For instance, not including “C” may have eliminated Asian workers from the sample.

\(^6^5\) Because it is completely homogeneous, I did not illustrate it in the Figures with munitions and domestic workers.
Figure 17: Ethnic Composition of Female Munitions Workers, CPR\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure17.png}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item 1922
\item 1918
\item 1916
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item Canadian/Other British Born
\item French
\item Foreign Born
\end{itemize}

a pattern similar to that collected by the Ontario Labour Bureau. There were more French Canadians in this group, which is not surprising given the large shop in Montreal, but there was also a small percentage of "white ethnics". What was more

\textsuperscript{66} CPR Database.
interesting was the data for the third group, the domestic occupations. As you can see, during the war the workforce became more ethnically diverse. It is possible that the CPR data indicates that the war resulted in a few opportunities for women from the non-dominant ethnic groups, if only in domestic work outside of private homes. In effect, as women from the dominant groups shifted into the new opportunities in munitions, or banking, the vacancies in the lower status, lower paying positions they left were filled by women from non-dominant groups.

The ethnic diversity of domestic work can be something of a barometer of shifts in the pattern of women's labour force participation. Domestic service was a difficult occupation made more unattractive by low pay, isolation, long hours and lack of freedom (most jobs required that the domestic workers live with the family). As new opportunities opened in manufacturing centres and business, the relative status of
domestic work declined. Even before the war, domestic service had become a job
ghetto for immigrant women and women of colour. Immigrant women and women
of colour remained in domestic service as other women moved into new opportunities
in the shops, schools and offices of the early twentieth century. In the immediate pre­
war recession, there was a decreased demand for “foreign-born” domestics.
Unemployment in other occupations reduced the opportunities for women in the paid
labour force in general and women of British descent had few options outside of
domestic work. The Employment Bureau in Ontario reported that it was most
difficult to place even experienced immigrant women in domestic positions during
1914, and that they had a higher rate of unemployment than other female workers.
As opportunities in the wartime economy gave Canadian and British born women
more choice, immigrant women replaced them in domestic jobs. The employment
bureau noted that they were able to place foreign-born women in domestic positions
vacated by women of the dominant ethnic and racial group. The CPR data would
seem to confirm a similar pattern. The increase in the percentage of immigrant

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67 See for example, Varpu Lindstrom, “‘I won’t be a slave!’: Finnish Domestics in
Canada, 1911-1930,” in Franc Iacovetta, Paula Draper and Robert Ventressa, A
Nation of Immigrants: Women Workers and Communities in Canadian History
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); also see; Linda Carty’s useful overview
of African Canadian women’s place in society, including work, as well as Dionne
Brand’s excellent review, using oral testimony, of the new opportunities afforded
black women during WW2 in the same volume.

68 Wilson, 109.
women at the CPR corresponded with the increase in new opportunities and was confined to the lower paying, lower status manual occupations and domestic jobs.

Despite the dearth of precise data, everything indicates that there was little, if any, improvement in the occupational opportunities for non-dominant ethnic groups in either industry during the war. In the CPR, what opportunities existed were in manual occupations and they were temporary, except in domestic work to some degree. In the banks, there was no indication of any but those of British descent being hired. All of this suggests that the wartime participation did not result in any great expansion of immigrant women’s horizons, and even less so for women of colour, with the exception of the increased opportunities in domestic service which had begun before the war.

**Class**

Contemporary observers suggested that wartime participation broke down class barriers among women. The sentiment is most clearly expressed by the following contributor to the *Globe*: “In every community war work has done much to break down the class distinctions and the snobbery which flourished in this young country as in other lands.... The class barriers which have been burned away in the
fires of war ought not to be rebuilt.”*69 Given the evidence that an increase in unionism that culminated with the Winnipeg General Strike continued throughout the war, and particularly after 1916, the idea that class lines were somehow diminished was likely more a reflection of an ideal than the reality. To a certain extent, the belief that class barriers were eliminated or diminished reflected a perception that women from all classes worked harmoniously in munitions factories and other war industries. This section seeks to determine if that was the case, and what impact the war had on class relations among women in the two industries examined in this study.

This section is primarily about munitions work. Although there is little direct evidence of the class background of the BNS female employees, it is highly probable that the class composition during the war was homogeneous, if for no other reason than the bank’s need for respectability. We can assume that most of the female employees came from respectable working-class or middle-class backgrounds because of the bank’s hiring practices, which were based on middle-class notions of respectability. Women at many banks were required to apply with three letters of recommendation.70 One of the letters had to be from the applicant’s clergymen, another from a physician and the third from a prominent businessman. Religious affiliation and attendance were regarded as harbingers of respectability. To be

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69 “Social Reactions of the War,” editorial. Globe, 4 February 1918, 4. See also Wilson, 147.

70 Barbara Hansen, “A Historical Study of Women in Canadian Banking, 1900-1975,” Canadian Women’s Studies/Les cahiers de la femme, Volume 1, Number 2(Winter 1978/79) 6; also see Marks, 49-50.
considered for employment with the bank. Women were required to be educated, articulate and presentable, or as a Royal Bank employee recalled, "All the girls came from a good family. They were all nice girls." According to the Journal of Canadian Bankers Association, a high number of women in the banks were university educated. There was a great deal of concern that women not harm the respectable image of the bank. It was made clear to all staff that the reputation of the banks was won and lost on the conduct and appearance of its officers. The BNS rules and regulations spend a great deal of time on appropriate behaviour and appearance for staff. Everything from where a staff member lived to smoking was discussed. All of these regulations applied to male and female workers, however one female employee of the Royal Bank recalled that it was more important for female bank employees to comply with regulations around appearance and behaviour than it was for male employees. Dress was very conservative, and staff members were encouraged to dress conservatively outside of work as well. The bank's concern with respectability conformed to middle and upper class values. The bank had to induce trust in the client and for the most part, the banks' clients came from the upper and middle-class.

In contrast, the class of the munitions industry appeared somewhat heterogeneous. While the majority of workers came from working-class

71 Ibid. ; also see Marks, 34.

72 See for example, JCBA, Volume 24, No. 3 (August 1917). The editor published several articles by women and men about women in banking. Respectability was a major issue.
backgrounds, there were also women from middle-class backgrounds. The latter group can be divided into two sub-groups: patriotic middle-class ladies who worked to support the war effort and women from middle-class backgrounds who faced economic uncertainty. It is quite difficult to gauge what proportion of the munitions workforce each group comprised because very few sources included indicators that signified class. Those sources that did, suggest that most workers were from working-class backgrounds. For instance, McAvity's recorded the occupation of the employee's father as well as the women's past work experience. Only a very small percentage of the workers fathers had professional or middle-class status. The women were clearly from a working-class background. Similarly, Enid Price found that most women came to munitions work from domestic service or other manufacturing jobs.

A pattern clear in the returns of the Ontario Labour Bureau as well, which is evident from the following table. As you can see, although there was some variation among the cities, for the most part the workers did not come from professional positions or self-employment. The majority of women who sought work in the munitions factories came from domestic positions or other factory work.

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73 BNS Rules and Regulations, and interview with Subject A.
74 Price,23-30.
Table 10: Previous Occupations of Applicants for Female Munition Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Toronto</th>
<th>Hamilton</th>
<th>London</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munitions</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Business</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of workers appear to have come from working-class backgrounds. As Table 10 suggests, however, between 9 and 15 percent of female munitions workers came from a middle or upper class background. Perhaps not surprisingly, considering their audience, the press often focused on the women from the leisured class. Some of these women may have been patriotic workers. Several

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articles suggest that was the case. For instance, in December of 1916 Irish wrote. "The woman labour is being drawn not from the other industries, as might have been expected, owing to the attractive wage, but from the class, at least so far, which has worked before but presently found no necessity to continue. These women and their daughters have entered the factory again as a duty to the State. Their enthusiasm is unbounded." The editor of the women’s section of the Ottawa Journal criticised Toronto “ladies” for not taking positions in munitions shops. “The women I referred to particularly, the women whom I called ‘slackers’ are those of the leisure class who….. gathered in throngs at a recent mass meeting, expressing their willingness to do munitions work in place of men, but when called upon, did not respond.”

Although the Ottawa Journal called into question Toronto ladies’ patriotism, evidence suggests that some women entered the factories because of patriotic impulses. The Toronto Labour Bureau reported that the “percentage of women of the leisured class applying for work decreased perceptibly.” over the course of 1917. In particular, the women left to take up other forms of “patriotic work.” This clearly suggests that women with leisure time, that were not required to work, entered the munitions factories out of a sense of patriotism or duty. It is unclear if they worked in production, inspection or as matrons.

76 Irish, Canadian Machinery, 719


78 Wilson, 110.
One woman, Laura McCully, from a middle-class background who took a job at the Russell Motor Car Company, had mixed motivations for joining the production line. McCully’s family had been quite well off until her father, who was a prominent physician, deserted the family when McCully was 9 years old. She was well educated, having graduated from the University of Toronto with a Master of Arts degree. She was a suffragist and a respected poet. McCully was also an ardent supporter of the war. She actually turned down a lucrative position in a New York publishing house to stay in Canada during the war. She was fiercely patriotic, which was clear from her participation in the Toronto Women’s Home Guard, a volunteer women’s militia unit that organised in 1915 in order to prepare or what they saw as inevitable home service. Several of the poems contained in a volume of poetry published in 1919 had war themes as well. Her commitment to the war effort was clear when she wrote in the defence of the Women’s Home Guard after it came under public criticism and ridicule. “Heaven forbid that I should cast aspersions on the men of this country. I shall never forget that I had the honor of enlisting a few of them myself – a poor comfort for the disability of not being allowed oneself to shoulder a gun, a stretcher or a cook-pot ladle, yet a great honor... But never mind that – here is

79 Sophia Sperodakis, “'For the joy of the working': Laura Elizabeth McCully, First Wave Feminist,” *Ontario History*, Volume 34, Number 4(December 1992) 304.

80 *Telegram*, July 9, 1924, 8.

a parcel of foolish women actually aping soldiers. Come on you corner loafer: come on. you sneaking spy; and you too, you paltry [sic] nameless sinner, and you whose pockets bulge! Now, all together, a rousing ha!ha! ha! ... Then have out your little laugh. Women soldiers, forsooth! When there are brave fellows like you to protect women.® In 1916, she contributed an article to Maclean’s that suggested that only if every aspect of society were mobilised to the greatest extent possible, including training women to fight as soldiers, could the war be won.83

McCully worked throughout the war in a variety of volunteer endeavours, but she was also required to work to support herself. Given her patriotism, a job in a munitions factory suited her perfectly. In the spring of 1916, McCully joined what was likely the first wave of recruits in the munitions shops and accepted a position on the production line of the Russell Motor Car Company. McCully regarded her employment in munitions as a duty, more than a job, and she had little patience for those who did not see it that way. She also exhibited a lack of comprehension and sympathy for the working-class women she was then working with. For instance, she did not recognise that working-class women in Canada suffered any particular hardships. Although she encouraged working-class women to join volunteer organisations, such as the Toronto Women’s Home Guard, and do their bit, she was somewhat condescending towards them. She seemed to suggest that the working-

82 Toronto Daily News, November 16, 1915, 11.

class could do more if they took more initiative or had a greater sense of personal responsibility. For example, McCully was disappointed that more working-class women had not signed up drill with the Women’s Home Guard. She simply did not see that the registration fee (one dollar), the cost of the uniform (nine to thirteen dollars), and the travel time to drill practices should deter a woman working 9 to 12 hours a day, earning the cost of that uniform a week. McCully saw working-class women’s reluctance to participate as a sign of character deficiency.84

McCully’s time at Russell does not appear to have changed her attitudes. To be fair, McCully was mentally ill during her employment there and was hospitalised. Regardless, it would appear that she did not form a bond with the women she worked with. McCully’s experience in that regard may not have been uncommon for women of the middle-class in the factories. Although Mrs. Elaine Nelson suggested her time as a munitions workers proved to her that the working-class women that she worked with in the factory were her “sisters” despite great differences, she also articulated many ways that they were not. “I was amazed because the people who never had anything much were the ones who were most careless with their clothes. I was simply astounded to see this one woman who had been our cleaning woman. Every week she would come and perhaps pay $25.00 for a blouse … and wear them right into the machinery because she wanted everyone to see…. But then the people who were used to good clothes looked after them, and the ones who weren’t used to it just spent the
money like water."\textsuperscript{85} Throughout her interview, Nelson spoke as if an observer rather than a participant, which suggests, as do her attitudes, that she probably had not developed a sense of sisterhood with her fellow workers. Neither of the women I interviewed from McAvity's developed any such sense of shared experience either.

Arbo and Poiret, both women from a working-class background, did not develop friendships or any affinity with their fellow workers. Arbo had little to do with the other factory women and Poiret had no recollections of anyone from the factory. However, she could clearly recount details about the women she picked fruit with although she spent less time in the Niagara peninsula than she had at McAvity's. She described the experience on the farms in Ontario as “a bunch of girls together – we were close and we had fun; we loved it.” The social ties of both women related to life outside the factory. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient evidence to suggest what bonds the working-class women formed. The degree to which female munitions workers identified as a group, or demonstrated a developing class-consciousness as workers, appear to have been quite limited as compared to the experience of Great Britain.

Historians have found that in Great Britain and to a lesser extent the United States, a class-consciousness or sisterhood developed among the women in the munitions industry. The shared sense of experience fostered heightened levels of

\textsuperscript{84} See for example, \textit{Toronto Telegram} July 3, 8, 16 and August 26, 1915; and the \textit{Toronto Daily World}, July 3, 15 and 25, 1915.

unionism and by the end of the war there was a 200 percent increase in women trades unionists. Woollacott suggests that the women’s new attitude “was forged by being in factories where they mingled with many others like themselves instead of being isolated as domestic servants of in small laundries or workshops. by being in continuous employment, and by higher wages that meant that they could afford union dues. Moreover, women witnessed the effectiveness of union representations ....” 86

Women became more active in unions and they identified with each other rather than male unionists. They also called into question the gender division of labour that relegated female munitions workers to lower wages and lower status. 87 Although women’s experience in Canada shared some of the characteristics that led to increased unionism in munitions in Britain, they do not appear to have achieved similar results.

Throughout the war decade, an increasing number of working women in Canada had moved towards unionising. The trend continued and even accelerated during the war. The period from 1916 until 1919 witnessed an acceleration and radicalisation of unionism, to which women were not immune. 88 Unions were more


88 There are several good studies dealing with unionism through the war years, including: Naylor, 129-155; Craig Heron, ed. *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); and Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women For The Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). Naylor in particular argues that generally the unions that affected the metal works or munitions shops reflected a reform ideology or materialist approach. Women unionists did not challenge the idea that the family wage should be the goal of the labour movement, nor did they question
powerful, more successful and more popular. For most unions, the latter years of the war were ones of growth as membership increased. Women in several industries organised unions during the period, including women in shoe manufacturing, waitresses and Bell telephone women operators. With a number of well-publicised exceptions, women in munitions work generally did not have a great deal of success organising. They achieved the greatest success at the Russell Motor Car Company in Toronto, where male employees actually struck over the dismissal of several female employees in 1917.\textsuperscript{89}

The evidence suggests that the situation of the women at the Russell Motor Car Company explains the success there as opposed to other factories employing women. At Russell, women experienced all the factors that Wollacott identified as contributing to successful unionism in Britain. There were a large number of women working together, they enjoyed continuous work, relatively good wages, and they witnessed the success that the male unions enjoyed. The male union in the shop also actively recruited them.\textsuperscript{90} In contrast, women in other shops did not enjoy continuous work or large numbers. In many factories, the number of women working was

\textsuperscript{89} The \textit{Toronto World}, July 11, 1918.

\textsuperscript{90} The men believed that it was more effective to have the women in their union, working towards their goals (such as a family wage that would make women's employment difficult and ensure continued dependence) rather than have them
relatively small. Several factories reported fewer than 100 women working at any one time. Only small number of factories enjoyed the situation described by Woollacott. Further, as we will see in the next chapter, while some women did very well at piecework, some munitions wages were not particularly higher than those that could be expected in other industries. Further, in many cases the women worked for a very short time. A significant proportion of women were likely already out of the industry before the war ended. Moreover, it is difficult to gauge the impact of the ideals of the women from middle-class backgrounds who shared the shop floor. We cannot measure the extent to which female workers were affected by the powerful material and ideological pressures that defined their work as temporary, patriotic duty. How difficult would it be to organise a workforce interspersed with even a few women such as Laura McCully or Elaine Nelson? Middle-class women had different ideas and different opportunities than did working-class women.

Elaine Nelson did not spend her entire munitions career as an operator. She actually started as a volunteer in an on-site canteen, and joined the production line out of a sense of patriotism. She was promoted to inspector very quickly and shortly afterward quit her job because she was concerned that she would make a mistake. Her experience is reflective of the experience of middle-class women in munitions shops. Middle-class women were more likely to be hired as matrons and inspectors than operators. Employers and the IMB preferred middle-class women as inspectors.

organised around separate, perhaps gender specific, issues that might run counter to the men's. PAC MG 28 I44, C-4589; and PAC RG 27, Volume 38, File 18(67).
The IMB’s initial hiring policy for female inspectors targeted middle-class women. Female inspectors were required to have at least a complete high school education, be able to pay for a training course and be of good character.\textsuperscript{91} Male inspectors, in contrast, were not necessarily more educated than workers on the shop floor. Nor were they regarded as a different class of worker from the men they worked with. The female inspectors were. The difference between male and female inspectors was that female inspectors were also responsible for maintaining middle-class standards of respectability. McAvity’s fired a female inspector that they promoted from the floor because she failed to set a good moral example. The foreman argued that she was unable to rise above her class to meet the responsibilities of her job.\textsuperscript{92} Behaviour that had been perfectly appropriate when she was a worker, became grounds for dismissal as an inspector.

The IMB insisted that all factories that employed women employ matrons to ensure a “wholesome, clean” environment that was “generally conducive to the health and happiness of his women employees.” Why this was regarded as necessary will be addressed in chapter six, however at this point it is worth noting that female operators were carefully monitored by members of the middle-class who were hired as matrons. In carrying out their duties supervising working-class women, the women in such positions operated from within middle-class ideologies regarding femininity. Matrons

\textsuperscript{91} Irish to Flavelle, RE Female Inspectors, July 1916, MG 30 A16, Volume 33.

\textsuperscript{92} McAvity’s paybook.
and canteen workers exerted influence over the lives of working-class women with respect to their welfare and morality. Middle-class women imposed rules of conduct and behaviour on female workers while they were at work that reflected middle-class gender ideology. For example, it was a middle-class value that men and women be separated because women required protection from male workers. The *Railway Age Gazette* found that the best results with respect to having women in shops occurred when the women were closely supervised. They hired matrons to ensure adequate "supervision over the women and to look after their welfare." ⁹³ Women's lodging was a concern, and it was the responsibility of the matron to ensure that munitions workers lived in respectable homes. There were also rules to minimise socialising or to encourage particular types of socialising. Further, middle-class reformers had long been concerned about working-class women's health and nutrition, which was reflected in that the Young Women's Christian Association was responsible for the canteens in large factories employing large numbers of women. Whether they working-class women paid any attention or not to the matrons who watched then and volunteers who served them, they were affected by the middle-class ideals of those women. The middle-class matrons meted out punishment to those women not behaving in ways deemed appropriate in the context of middle-class ideology. For instance, at McAvity's the matron reported to the manager who recorded the comments onto the women's pay record. Most of the complaints reflected

⁹³ *Railway Age Gazette*, Volume 63, No. 21, (December 1917), 926.
transgressions of middle-class rules of respectability. Some women were criticised for their lack of thrift and common sense, others for their weight, and still others for their lack of loyalty to the employer. Most of the complaints were about women talking on the job or how the women socialised off the job.

Middle-class ideals were also at play in women's participation in some union activity during the war. Many of the metal working unions adopted aspects of middle-class gender ideology. For example, the argument for a family wage, which was supported by most women workers, was predicated on the essentially middle-class notion that women belonged in the home and that men should be capable of financially supporting a wife and family on a single wage. Where female munitions workers participated in unions during the war, they often seemed to support ideologies and policies that did not challenge beliefs about women's work. For instance, women did not challenge the idea of the family wage or other policies that affirmed the sexual division of labour and effectively marginalised women as temporary workers. Few criticised the division of labour. This was not the case in other industries, and likely reflects the small numbers of women in munitions and the nature of their wartime work.94

94 James Naylor and Linda Kealey have both done excellent, albeit limited, work on women's union participation during the war. More work remains to be done.
Conclusion

When Mark Irish remarked negatively about the state of affairs in Winnipeg he was making the same assumption that several historians have since made about the war: if something occurred in Toronto or was true for the situation there, or perhaps Central Canada, it occurred or was true of everywhere. What I have found clearly suggests that women’s wartime participation varied as a result of where they lived, what class they were and what their background was. White, working-class women’s horizons expanded in munitions shops, and white middle-class women joined them in those shops. However, the experiences were not the same. Middle-class women were more often hired in positions of higher status than were working-class women, for example. Similarly, rural and urban women had somewhat different experiences and opportunities. Rural women certainly did not have access to munitions jobs and in the banks, their experience was different from their urban colleagues. Age and marital status also affected and were affected by women’s wartime participation. Certainly in munitions it appears that more married women were hired during the war. As I continue with my study it is important to remember that the army of women who made bombs and took a seat in the tellers’ cage were not homogeneous. Many of the conclusions that I reach only apply to Anglo-Canadian women in central Canada.
CHAPTER 5: WAGES AND GENDER

Before the First World War, social reformers and government officials had long regarded women’s waged work as a social and moral dilemma. When an increased number of women undertook waged work during the war, we would expect those concerns would be exacerbated. As the following author indicates, that appears to be exactly what happened. Canadians anxiety about female wage earners heightened in response to women’s increased wartime participation. “How can our national reconstruction go on with our young women going into offices and factories instead of into homes? How can a young man earning even double the salary his father did at the same age support a girl who has been making nearly as much herself and spending it largely as she went along. Aren’t these unnatural conditions making the girl so independent that she will look the marriage prospect over rather critically?”1 In particular, it appears that Canadians were concerned that women’s wages had increased to the point that they were equal to men’s. They were also concerned that those higher wages would give women independent ideas and have a deleterious effect on working women’s desire to marry. Such concerns were not uncommon during the war. Indeed the British voiced similar worries. Many people in Britain felt that women would not return home after the war because they had grown used to high wages. In 1918, for example, the National Union of Women Workers reported that the high wages paid to women during the war, particularly in

1 Maclean’s, January 1919, 98.
munitions work, resulted in premature liberty. Wages almost equal to men's would indeed have been a liberating experience for women; they would have also directly challenged traditional beliefs about gender ideology.

In order to understand the nature of the changes to wages during the war, we need to answer several questions, not the least of which is simply how much did women earn? Once that information is available, we can begin to explore changes to wages in comparison to pre-war wages and to men’s wages. If the war did narrow the wage gap between men and women’s wages and result in increasing women’s wages substantially, it would be quite significant. In particular, increased wages or wages equal to men’s would undermine the belief that women did not require a living wage, which was linked directly to beliefs about gender ideology. Further, equal wages would have had the potential of liberating women because they would undermine the sexual division of labour. The purpose of this chapter is to test the validity of the belief that the war raised women’s wages and somehow liberated women.

Women’s Wartime Wages

In order to measure the rates of increase, if any, of women’s wages, it is necessary to have a touchstone or starting point upon which we can base a comparison. Wage rates for women before 1931 are difficult to find. One of the few sources of wage rates for the period under examination in this study is the Federal

Department of Labour's annual *Wages and Hours of Labour*. There are several problems with relying on *Wages and Hours of Labour*, including that the source rarely distinguished the sex of employees receiving wages. More significantly, several authors have argued that the wages listed in the *Wages and Hours* were inflated. Although my research suggests that the differences are not particularly significant in the case of women's wages in the industries examined here, Mary McKinnon's findings are difficult to overlook.\(^3\) Despite the difficulties, the rates

\(^3\) There is serious debate regarding the pattern of wage rates between 1900 and 1930, in part generated by questions about the accuracy of records utilised to determine wage rates. Most of our knowledge about wages comes from the census and the Department of Labour's *Wages and Hours of Labour in Canada*, which was a supplement of the *Labour Gazette*. Several scholars have made compelling arguments that the indices in the *Labour Gazette* are faulty. Using CPR wage rates as a measure, Mary MacKinnon made a sound argument that the wages for unskilled workers in particular were significantly lower than what was reported in *Wages and Hours of Labour*. Gordon Bertram and Michael Percy also argue that the process by which the wage and price indices were set was fundamentally flawed and resulted in the inflated hourly rates in the *Labour Gazette*. The work by MacKinnon and Bertram and Percy address the gap in historiography regarding the pattern of real wages in Canada prior to the Depression. Studies that examined the issue of wages in Canada have been either highly aggregated, such as the work of Bertram and Percy, or they are highly disaggregated, such as the work by Micheal Piva and Terry Copp on Toronto and Montreal respectively. MacKinnon's work, which has been well-received, "sheds considerable light on wage trends in one large sector of the Canadian economy," and permits some reasonable conclusions regarding wage trends in the rest of the country, although there are several factors making railroad workers unique. See for example, Mary MacKinnon, "New Evidence on Canadian Wage Rates, 1900-1930"; and MacKinnon, "The Great War and Canadian railway Workers, 1900-1926"; MacKinnon, "The Great War and the Canadian Labour Market: Railway Workers, 1900-1930," in Mary MacKinnon and George Grantham, eds., *Labour Market Evolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); and Mary MacKinnon, "New Evidence on Canadian Wage Rates 1900-1930," *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 114-31; and Michael Piva, *The condition of the working class in Toronto, 1900-1921*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press).
published by the Department of Labour offer some indication of wage rates for women before the war, which at the very least offers a starting point. In 1913, for example, the *Wages and Hours of Labour* addressed the issue of textile work for women and found that female employee's wages ranged between $6.90 and $9.95 per week.\(^4\) *The Labour Gazette* reported that female operators at the Bell Telephone Company earned between $6.60 and $9.00 per six-day week. Stenographers earned as much as $14.50 per week.\(^5\) Although the CPR wage data were somewhat lower than the data found listed in the *Wages and Hours of Labour*, the two sources were comparable. For instance the median wage of female CPR clerical workers before 1914 was $12.25. While this is lower than the average salary listed for stenographers, it is important to note that only 68 percent of the CPR workers were stenographers. Generally, stenographers were the elite of clerical workers and earned higher salaries than other clerical workers. According to the pension records, manual labourers at the CPR earned between $6.00 and $9.50 per week. This is slightly lower than the wage range of the textile workers. The difference may be explained by the inclusion in the CPR data of domestic workers who likely would have earned less than manufacturers.\(^6\)

As a general measure for comparison, these sources are sufficient. However, in order to understand the impact of the war, it is essential to have data specific to

\(^4\) *Wages and Hours of Labour*, Department of Labour, 1914, 27.

\(^5\) *Labour Gazette*, 1913, 684.

\(^6\) CPR database.
banking and munitions. Finding such data for the bank is not difficult. Salary information is recorded in the staff books and I recorded it in the database. Consequently, a clear and concise comparison of wages before, during and after the war and between male and female employees is relatively straightforward. In the case of munitions, finding appropriate data for comparison purposes is somewhat more difficult. I found, however, that the wage rate data contained in the Postal Census of Manufacture is a sound measure of comparison for the wage rates of female munitions workers.

As discussed in chapter three, the Postal Census measures the workforce in industries that undoubtedly engaged in the production of munitions. It also included the weekly wages paid in the industries enumerated. One of the reasons that the Postal Census is valuable as a source in this study is that it recorded wage data prior to the main influx of women into munitions factories. Therefore it offers something of a base measure for wages. The problem, and it is one that cannot be avoided, is that the women enumerated may not have been involved in the production of munitions. It is possible that they were clerical workers or domestics rather than operators. Consequently, the wage recorded may not reflect earnings for munitions production. The evidence suggests that even if the wage rates reflect earnings of cleaners and stenographers, they are still a useful measure of comparison. According to sources such as *Wages and Hours of Labour*, the *Labour Gazette* and the CPR data, wage levels for manual or production workers fall in between wages for stenographers, at the higher end of the spectrum, and cleaners, at the lower end of the
spectrum. One would anticipate that the median wage of all workers, whether they are clerical workers, stenographers or cleaners would be within the range of what was paid to women engaged in the manufacture of munitions. I compiled wage

**Table 11: Wage Rates of Female Employees in Manufacturing, 1915**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wage Rates</th>
<th>Iron and Steel</th>
<th>Foundry and Foundry</th>
<th>Machine Shops</th>
<th>Textile</th>
<th>Clothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5 - $6</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7 - $8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$9 - $10</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12 - $15</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20 - $25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Compiled from Table IX of the *Postal Census of Manufacture, 1916.*
information from the Postal Census in the preceding table. It appears that women in manufacturing earned between $4.00 and $20.00 in the industries most likely to enter into the production of armaments. The majority of female employees earned less than $10.00 a week in 1915.

Although the available sources regarding female munitions operators’ earnings are not as easily quantified as those available for the Bank of Nova Scotia, they are valuable nonetheless. One source that provides an interesting window to assess the level of wages women earned in munitions factories is the Ontario Labour Bureau record of female applicants. Women were asked to indicate on their application forms the wages that they expected and the minimum that they would accept for munitions work. Although many of the women applying for work through the provincial labour bureaus did not do so, 800 women indicated what they expected to earn in munitions work. Their responses, compiled in the following table, indicate that the majority of applicants sought wages of approximately fifteen dollars a week, and that they would accept somewhat less than that. It is highly likely that the wage levels they reported offer a fair estimate of the wages women could expect in manufacturing in Southern Ontario during the height of demand for female munitions workers. After all, it is unlikely that when asked to record what wages they would “accept” women would list wages lower than they were already receiving. As for the wages they desired, or expected from munitions work, women’s estimates may have been based on information available to them, such as media reports or accounts from
other workers. Based on those assumptions, women likely earned between $8.00 and $15.00 a week and expected to earn between $8.00 and $18.00 per week in munitions.

Table 12: Women's Wage Expectations for Munitions Work, Ontario 1917

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Wage Rate</th>
<th>Expectation of Wage</th>
<th>Minimum Wage Acceptable</th>
<th>% of Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$5 to $8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8 to $10</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10 to $12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15 to $18</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20 to $25</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*“Extracts Relating to the Employment of Women From the Report of the Trades and Labour Branch, Ontario Department of Public Works, 1917,” Ontario Sessional Paper No. 16 of 1918, as reproduced in Wilson, 111.*
Enid Price's thesis is one of the few surviving sources of information about women's actual wages. Price recorded the wage rates women received in the eight factories surveyed. Her data, which I compiled in Table 13, indicate that the wages expected by the Southern Ontario applicants were higher than average, but nonetheless in concert with the wages available. According to Price, female munitions workers in the factories she surveyed earned anywhere from $9.00 to $27.00 a week. Women working on piecework potentially earned even more. Extra shifts and overtime, which the women were eligible for, also offered women opportunities for further increasing earnings. In one extraordinary case, a woman consistently earned $1.30/hour on a ten-hour shift, six days a week. Clearly, the potential existed for women to earn wages significantly higher than what was previously available to them. According to Price, the majority of the workers included in her study earned just over $11.00/week, which is about 10 percent higher than pre-war wages.

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9 Price's data on wage rates is invaluable. However, a key weakness with her work is that there is no indication of the frequency distribution of the wage rates. Her averages could easily be the average of the minimum and maximum wage rate available. There is little way to know, aside from her anecdotal remarks, how many women earned what wage. Price suggested that most women were not making high wages, but it is unclear from the evidence that she presented what most of them did earn.

10 Wage rates calculated from Price' tables. Table II, 21-22; Table IV36-37; and 50-55.

11 Price, 15.
Table 13: Wage Rate in Montreal Munitions Factories for Manual Labour 1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wage Rate</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Male Wage Rate</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Male-Female Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>$.22-.40</td>
<td>$.30</td>
<td>$.20-.25</td>
<td>$.23</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c,d</td>
<td>$.85-.25</td>
<td>$.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$.28-.13</td>
<td>$.60</td>
<td>$.30-.13</td>
<td>$.45</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$.12-.38</td>
<td>$.24</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a wages paid for 8 hour day; b wages paid for 9 hour day; c wages paid for 10 hour day; d wages paid for piece work; e 1917 only.

Other sources correspond with the range of munitions wages available to women during the war identified by Price. Both women at McAvity’s, for instance, recalled earning twenty dollars a week. While such wages were in the upper range of

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12 Based on Table II in Price,
those surveyed by Price, they remain within the range.\textsuperscript{13} It is not certain what the women at McAvity's actually earned and if their memories are correct. The McAvity's coded the wage rates. Based on the codes, however, it appears that the wage received by Poiret and Arbo was the average wage paid at the factory.\textsuperscript{14} The IMB claimed that they had no power or interest in wages, particularly during the battle to have the Fair Wages Clause introduced into munitions contracts.\textsuperscript{15} However, IMB records are a source of some information on wages available to women. For instance, in a letter lambasting the policy of requiring women to purchase their own munitions badges, at a cost of two dollars each, Mark Irish reported that the wages of most female munitions workers were only "something over one dollar per day."\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{13} Interviews with Poiret and Arbo.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} The wages are indicated by combinations of letters and there is no way to determine what numerical value the letters referenced. The proportion of workers who were paid in any one code is available and suggests that most women at the factory made the same amount as Poiret and Arbo. McAvity's paybook.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15} Labour unions pressured the government to force manufacturers to include a fair wages clause in all contracts, particularly munitions contracts. The concept was familiar to the government. In 1900 the House of Commons passed a Resolution regarding a Fair Wages system in Canada. The resolution did not have the power of law, but in the case of government contracts, a fair wages list was customarily posted. The British government included a Fair Wages Clause in the Munitions of War Act. Canada was unable to follow suit because the government did not have control over the munitions contracts. Flavelle, who was a businessman and felt that any businessman in Canada willing to risk his business to produce munitions, deserved any profit he could make and refused to include provisions for fair wages in munitions contracts despite great pressure from labour and government. See for example, "Memorandum re Munitions Contracts, Fair Wages Clause, Etc," June 1917, prepared for Robert Borden, PAC, Borden Papers, MG 26, H 1 (C), Volume 219, C-4408.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Irish to Flavelle, April 4, 1917, PAC, Flavelle Papers, MG 30, A16, Volume 38.
\end{flushright}
Similarly, another IMB report suggested that women earned between 14.5 cents and 30 cents an hour. Media sources reported that untrained women could expect to start earning 15 cents an hour and more experienced women would start at 25 cents, which translates into a weekly salary of anywhere between $8.00 and $15.00.\textsuperscript{17}

Although there are a number of variables that we cannot measure, it certainly seems that women’s wages during the war were generally higher than pre-war wages. Comparing the range of wages available to women suggests an increase. For instance, the Postal Census indicates that women’s wages started at $4.00/week in 1915. In comparison, the starting wage for munitions workers was approximately $6.00 a week and as high as $9.00 by 1917 in Montreal. The Postal Census suggests that a small proportion of women earned more than $25.00 a week, and Price found that a small proportion earned $27.00 per week and potentially more. If, as Price found, most of the women made approximately $11.00 to 12.00 per week during the war, then there was a moderate increase in women’s wage rates. Only eleven percent of the foundry workers earned that amount in 1915 and the majority earned less.

Munitions wages were also significantly higher than wages available to women in non-metal manufacturing in 1915. A comparison between the wages reported by Price and the wages reported in the Postal Census for non-metal shops, where we can safely assume that female manufacturers are the majority of those listed, suggests women’s wages in manufacturing increased between 1915 and 1918. Indeed, wages increased as much as 25 percent. Price also reported that factories
manufacturing products other than munitions experienced a wage increase between 10 and 20 percent between 1914 and 1918. However, earning in munitions may not have been higher than wages in other industries. Price reported on the wages of women in other occupations in the factories and in Montreal generally. Her findings suggest that for the most part women's wages in munitions were not substantially higher than what women could earn elsewhere. For instance, the female clerks in the munitions factories earned anywhere from $12.50 to $20.50 per week, as compared to the range in munitions ($9.00 - $27.00). Similarly, female manual workers (non-munitions) in the two railway shops inspected by Price earned between $18.00 and $24.00 a week by the end of the war, which was very comparable to munitions work. Outside of manufacturing, Price reported that some domestics, specifically non-immigrant domestics, commanded upwards of $24.00 a week because of the shortage of domestic work coupled with the high demand during the war.

Before examining the wages earned in banks, it is important to note that the increase in women's wages was part of a general increase in wages during the war as opposed to a unique situation for female workers. Labour was in high demand during the war, especially in 1917 and 1918. Consequently, the working class was in

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17 See for example, Globe, August 4, 1917; Ottawa Journal, July 24, 1917.

18 Price, 44-48.

19 Price's study includes wage rates from a variety of businesses throughout.

20 Immigrant women's wages were substantially lower than non-immigrant women. One report suggested that most immigrant women were receiving approximately $2-3 per week. See Winnipeg Free Press, Saturday June 3, 1916, 13, 24.
position to force employers to concede to demands for higher wages. Several strikes occurred between 1916 and 1918 in which the issue of higher wages was the focus of the unrest. Manufacturers felt that the unions held the factory hostage and appealed to the government to intervene on their behalf. Employers used patriotic references to suggest that while men gave their lives in the trenches, workers at home threatened the lives of soldiers by holding up production. Nonetheless, the strikes were often successful and wage rates increased particularly in munitions industries. For instance, in seven strikes in 1917 wage increases were won in all of them. In Toronto, the John Inglis workers simply threatened to strike in February of 1917 and the manufacturer increased wages. However, because of wartime inflation, real wages declined throughout the war. Consequently, workers were actually poorer despite making higher wages. Jennie Arbo recalled being puzzled by the situation. “Here I was, making more than ever -- $20.00 a week was something then -- and still after paying my board, I had little left over. I had to share with another girl.”

Generally, women working in munitions manufacture earned wages that were significantly higher than what they had been able to earn before the war. Inflation, however, eroded the value of those wages.

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21 Letter between the Department of Labour, IMB and John Inglis Company, PAC RG 30 A16, Vol 2.

The system of piecework and the potential for overtime increased women's earning potential in munitions factories. High wages were not available to all women. As we learned in the previous chapter, increased opportunities, and we can assume higher wage rates, were restricted to various regions and ethnic groups. Further, the increased wage levels were also likely only available to women of the dominant ethnic groups, that is to say white women of British or Canadian heritage. Women's salaries at the Bank of Nova Scotia during the war were, in comparison to munitions work, rather poor. In fact, based on the median earnings they appeared to have declined during the war.

The median salary for female employees at the bank of Nova Scotia in 1914 was $13.50 a week. By 1916, the median salary was $9.00 per week. The salary range of female employees in that year ranged from a low of approximately $4.00 per week to a high of $21.00 per week. Two years after the war, the median salary of female BNS employees was $12.50 a week, or one dollar lower than in 1914. Women at the BNS were eligible for bonuses. Those, however, did not amount to more than one or two dollars a week at the most. Although it would appear from the following chart that the war actually depressed women's wages, it is more likely that wage rates remained static until 1920. The explanation for the depression of the median wages is twofold.

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23 Interview with Jennie Arbo.
24 The BNS staff record books recorded the yearly salaries of employees. For purposes of comparison, I calculated the weekly wage.
First, the Bank of Nova Scotia based salary levels on experience, which is how they could justify paying male juniors such low salaries in the first several years of their employment. The decreased median wage corresponds to the increased number of women entering the bank during the war. The large influx of inexperienced female workers meant a larger number of women in the lower ranges of salary, which caused the median wage to appear lower. Second, before 1916 women’s earnings reflected clerical workers only, and particularly stenographers. Stenographers potentially earned higher salaries than other workers did. As the war progressed, and mechanisation and routinisation increased at the larger branches,
some of which were included in the database, wages among female clerical workers became more differentiated.

For women with similar experience, there was little difference between their salary regardless of whether they were clerical workers or clerks. That began to change as clerical work became more specialised, which did occur in both the Head Office and large branches during the war. For instance, machine operators and specialisedfilers earned less than clerks or stenographers, sometimes 10 to 20 percent less. This suggests that the bank equated mechanisation or routinisation with deskilling, which would support Lowe’s contention that deskilling and feminisation led to lower wages for women. The data also suggest that the bank saw stenographers and clerks as interchangeable.

Generally speaking, women’s wages in munitions increased significantly during the war. High wages for women workers were not unique to the industry, but certain circumstances in munitions offered the potential for women to increase their earnings. In contrast, women’s wages in the bank appeared largely unaffected by the war. The large number of inexperienced wartime workers depressed median wage levels, however overall there was little change to the wage rates available to women between 1914 and 1918. There were also few wage differentials among different occupations. Whatever women earned, there were some contemporary perceptions that women’s wages increased and in doing so had undermined the ideology of a woman’s wage. For that to have occurred, the gap between men’s and women’s
wages would have to have declined substantially, which, with rare exception, it did not.

The Gender of Wages

The author quoted at the start of this chapter suggested that women’s wages during the war had closed the gap between men and women. If that was the case, and wages were equalised, a substantial change in gender ideology occurred. Wages were and are gendered. Many historians have demonstrated that paying women less than men for work of equal value has always been, and remains, a way of maintaining sex-differentiation in the workplace.\(^2\) Attitudes about masculinity and femininity defined wages. “A ‘man’s’ wage,” argues Alice Kessler Harris, “is a badge of honour. It conjures up images of self-sufficiency and strength, or ordered families, and of just rewards for service performed. A ‘woman’s’ wage,” she continues, ”in contrast, is frequently a term of opprobrium. It belongs to someone who is not male and therefore not deserving. Historically a measure of women’s exploitation, it has become a metaphor for women’s place.”\(^2\) The ideology justified the gap between the wages of men and women, and it justified not paying women a living wage. Most employers believed that women workers did not require a so-called living wage because they

\(^2\) See for example, Tillotson’s study of women telegraphers.

assumed that women contributed to, as opposed to supported a household. This is obvious from the testimony of several employers in the British Columbia Commission of Labour (1912-1914). One businessman argued that women "should not be away from home. I don't expect that they could live on [$1.25/day]. But these girls that get $1.25 have homes and help support the family...That is the way I look at it." Another British Columbia employer told the Royal Commission that, "We try to ensure that the girls come from families as we don't pay a living wage in this trade." Most Canadian employers probably echoed the beliefs of British economist William Smart, who argued that "...because her father partly supports her, or because her maintenance does not cost so much..." women's wages could be quite low. Manufacturers used the rationale for a family wage against female munitions workers. One foreman explained to a female worker that "A man,..., has got a wife and children. He needs more money than a girl, and women are cheaper than men because their wants are fewer. For instance, they don't require tobacco; and tea and toast is cheaper than beer and beefsteaks." Such ideology worked to the advantage of employers whose exploitation of working women by establishing very low wage rates based on a mythology that assumed working women were dependent was completely acceptable to society.

27 British Columbia Commission on Labour, BCARS, GR 684, Box 1, File 8, 105.
28 British Columbia Commission on Labour, BCARS, GR 684, Box 1, File 8, 123.
29 William Smart as cited in Kessler Harris, A Woman's Wage, 12.
During the war, the practice of paying women lower wages than men, even in cases where the women were doing the same job, undermined any challenge posed to existing gender relations by their integration into the workplace. In munitions, the wartime wages paid women reduced the wage gap somewhat, but it never eliminated it. Further, calls for equal pay for equal work had little to do with women's right to a living wage, but rather protected men's wages. Interestingly, in banking wage differentials certainly contributed to undermining any challenge to gender ideology posed by female clerks. There was also evidence that the bank was not unwilling to pay women wages equal to men of similar experience in order to maintain efficiency. In those cases, they had to rely on other policies to minimise the threat to gender roles such treatment might give rise to.

Munitions

Arguably, had the war caused the gap between men's and women's wages to decrease significantly, particularly in the munitions industry where women were already transgressing gender boundaries, there might have been cause for Canadians to worry that the war had a liberating effect on women. As the following table indicates, the gap between men's and women's wages did narrow somewhat. Women and men, however, were never paid equally. For purposes of comparison, I

30 Mary MacArthur, “Women Workers’ Fellowship,” Woman’s Life 217 (1 April
calculated the mean salary rates of men and women in several industries in the Postal Census in order to establish a ratio of men’s and women’s wage rates. I did the same with Price’s data and the results are compiled in Table 14. It is clear that the gender-based wage gap decreased during the war. In 1915 men earned between two and three times what women did. In contrast, in 1918 the differential declined. In the shops where the difference between men’s and women’s wages decreased the most, women were paid for piecework. This is an important point. Had the women been taken on salary, it would have suggested that they were more than temporary workers and that paying women close to equal wages was appropriate. We can speculate that it was safer to pay women high piece rates because it did not confer the status of full time worker, nor did it undermine beliefs about femininity. Had the women been paid salaries at the same rate as men, it would have challenged the foundation for the family wage. That is to say, if women did not need men to support them, men did not require a family wage.

Table 14: Ratio of Male to Female Earnings – Manufacturing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundry and Machine Shops</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>2.7 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>2.0 : 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1916) 1, also see Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, 122 – 12
Equal Pay for Equal Work

There were certainly calls for paying women doing the same work as men the same wage as men during the war. With few exceptions, however, those calls came from male trade unionists. Unionists in Toronto, for example, opposed the hiring of women at lower wage rates. In 1916, the Toronto District Labour Council (TDLC) demanded that employers pay women a rate equal to men in order to protect the position of skilled labourers in the labour market. The next year, Ontario machinists voted to include women in the unions in order to force manufacturers to pay union rates to female operators. In Toronto, Willys-Overland and Russell Motor Car Company struck over the issue of equal pay for equal work in 1917. While the unions claimed that they were acting in a selfless manner to protect the interests of women, their motivations were anything but selfless. Even members of the union's female auxiliary recognised men's wages and conditions of work were primary. As James Naylor argues, "The strikes ... reflected the growing ambiguity inherent in the demand for equal pay, a demand that could either be exclusionary or the reflection of
democratic desire to overcome inequities in the labour force." The former was more likely the motivating force behind the job action at Russell Motor Car and Willys-Overland. Forcing employers to pay women the same wages as skilled men would deter employers from hiring women thus protecting the status and work of skilled male workers. The unions did not oppose the lower wages because of any sense of feminism, they opposed them because paying women less undercut men's wages and threatened their jobs. Moreover, because women's role was defined as a support to men, paying them a wage that would allow them to live independently would have fundamentally challenged contemporary beliefs about women and work.

There were a few commentators who argued that women deserved equal pay for equal work on principle. For example, Mrs. Harold R. Peat suggested that employers had taken advantage of women during the war by paying them a "woman's wage." She argued that women's pay should be higher than men's "because of the extra effort we infuse in all our work." Indeed, Mrs. Peat took the gender-based argument for men's and women's wages apart in an article in Maclean's in 1918. "A dozen things we must have - things vital to our comfort and our well-being. Let the expenditures on such necessaries go against the expenditures on cigars, tobacco, cigarettes and chewing gum. Oh, I have nothing against these luxuries.... What I do object to is this: that woman is asked to scrape and save and forever practise self-denial on "women's wages"... No, women's wages did not meet the cause. Nor

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31 Naylor, 133.
partial training either. Equal pay – equal work. The new slogan for women.”\textsuperscript{32} For all of her egalitarian rhetoric, Peat concluded that women would naturally resume work more appropriate to their gender, which would not be equal to the work that men did. Nonetheless, she felt that those women who were widowed as a result of the war needed to be able to earn a living wage equal to men’s. Her beliefs, however, did not reflect an equal rights feminist analysis of wage inequities.\textsuperscript{33} Mrs. Peat believed in the need for a family wage for women as well as men in order to properly raise children in a safe and healthy home.

\textit{Banking}

The BNS data indicate that a gender-based wage gap existed. If we illustrate men’s median wages alongside women’s in a chart, as in Figure 19, the gap between them becomes immediately clear. The chart also illustrates that the war did nothing to reduce the gap between the wages of male and female bank staff, unlike the situation in some munitions shops. In fact, the wage gap increased during the war for the workforce as a whole. Before 1914, the ratio male to female earnings was 1:1.2. By 1917, the gap had widened to 1:1.7 and in 1922 men earned 1.9 times what women earned. Women earned 50 to 68 percent of men’s salary. Based on the data, then, it appears that women were paid less than men. However, we need to interpret

\textsuperscript{32} Mrs. Harold R. Peat, “Will the Women Go Back,” \textit{Maclean’s} October 1918.

\textsuperscript{33} Mrs. Harold R. Peat, “Will the Women Go Back,” \textit{Maclean’s} October 1918.
the data carefully. When we compare men and women in the same occupation, a different pattern emerges.

We would expect that female clerks received lower wages than male clerks. Initial examination suggests that they did, as is clear from the following table of the median wages for male and female clerks. To have paid female and male clerks comparable wages would have undermined the dominant gender ideology. However, a close examination of the data regarding salaries of male and female clerks suggests that the BNS paid women salaries equal to or close to men’s. In fact, early in their careers, female bank clerks could earn more than their male counterparts.

\[\text{Figure22: Male and Female Weekly Wage Rates, BNS 1910 - 1922}\]

\[\text{Figure22: Male and Female Weekly Wage Rates, BNS 1910 - 1922}\]

33 Mrs. Peat’s beliefs would have been more in keeping with contemporary maternal feminism
Performance, ability and experience were the factors that the banks used to measure an employee's salary. The bank justified paying juniors and junior clerks very low wages because they lacked experience in the bank. One employee suggested that a man was useless to the bank until he had three or four years under his belt. The salary scale reflected those beliefs. For the first three or four years of his career, a junior bank officer made less than $500.00 annually. For example, in 1917, 62.4% of all male clerks earned $500.00 or less, and almost 44% of those earned only $350-400.00. In order to earn a salary of $500.00 per annum, officers had to have three or four years of experience or have shown remarkable aptitude. In the case of women, almost 80% earned between $350.00 and $500.00 and those earning between $350.00 and $400.00 comprised fewer than 30%. This would appear to support the idea that women were paid less than men; however, the women had one to two years less experience than men earning the same salary. Almost ten percent of female clerks made between six and seven hundred dollars per year as compared to eighteen percent of male clerks. Most of the male clerks in that salary range had an average four and a quarter years experience. The women, by comparison, had less than three. If salary depended on beliefs about gender, we would expect that men's salaries would be increased to reflect their greater value. This was not the case. Salaries remained dependent on experience and ability and in many cases where women and men had the same number of years in service, women earned higher salaries. The pattern is clearer in the following comparison of median salary and

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34 British Columbia Commission of Labour, BCARS, GR 684, Box 2, File 1, 87-92.
experience. I compared the wage rates for male and female clerks based on the number of years in service.

Clearly, there is little to suggest that women were paid less simply because they were women. When I traced the careers of female clerks who stayed in banking until 1922, I found that their salaries were not significantly lower than male clerks over the same period granted the male clerks were not transferred and remained as clerks. Fewer women were available to be sampled with more than 4 years experience. However, four female employees had six years experience in the bank by 1922 and commanded salaries of over $1000.00 a year. At least initially, women
with the same experience could expect to earn salaries comparable to their male colleagues between 1910 and 1922. However, that does not negate the fact that fewer women than men were earning high salaries, which is reflected in the mean salary data. Rather than assume that this indicates that women were simply paid less, I am suggesting that what this indicates is that fewer women were being promoted into senior positions. So, although salaries for female clerks may have compared favourably to males, ultimately women earned less than men did because they were excluded from the career path. For reasons already discussed, albeit briefly, gender limited 'promotibility,' which in turn limited women's earning potential. Women in the banks were more likely to be temporary or short-term workers, a pattern that reflects both men's and women's expectations and existing gender relations. The senior male bank officers would not expect women to remain in the banks for long periods because they regarded women's work as a stopgap before marriage. As a result they likely spent less time training the women. The few women who seem to have remained at the BNS for the duration of the study were paid wages comparable to male clerks with similar experience. These women, however, were excluded from senior and managerial positions that commanded higher salaries. Ideas about gender also ensured that women were not often transferred between branches, which was considered an important part of a banker's training and was usually accompanied by a raise. We will discuss how ideas and attitudes about gender ideology were affected by the war in the next chapter.
The BNS justified paying men less in the early years of their career because they regarded those years as training. Said another way, they invested in training men for the future, which justified low wages at first. The bank was clear that they did not regard women as suitable for training, and therefore could not make the same argument. They were not going to spend money training the women for a long-term career, so paying them as juniors was out of the question. Similar rationale was used for not hiring the women as juniors. Further, we can speculate that the bank recognised that the low wages it paid its male juniors might hamper the bank’s ability to hire women in sufficient numbers. Whereas a young man might still take a position as a junior during the war, despite low wages, because of the future opportunity offered, women would not be attracted in the same way, because there was not change to the attitude that women would not desire a long-term career. The bank recognised that a failure to hire women in sufficient numbers jeopardised the efficiency of the bank. They opted for efficiency instead, and paid women wages commensurate to the expectations of the job and their education and experience, instead of commensurate with their gender.

Conclusion

The war certainly provided an opportunity for women, and men, to earn higher wages than they had earned before the war in metal factories. Largely the result of high demand for labour, wages increased during the war and the gap
between men’s and women’s wages declined in munitions. This might suggest that gender ideology was changing and that ideas about what women needed or deserved to earn for their efforts underwent some challenge. However, the women’s earnings were highest in temporary, piecework situations. Women did not make salaries equal to men; however, if a woman was a fast worker and was paid on piecework, she could make a wages equal to or higher than men doing the same work. That her wage was as high or higher did not undermine the fact that the man was likely regarded as a permanent employee who earned a salary, rather than a temporary one paid based on what he could produce. Indeed piecework helped reaffirm women as members of a reserve army, because it created a situation in which women had to compete against each other to earn wages. Competition among workers, particularly between temporary and permanent workers, is a characteristic of a reserve army of labour. Piecework encouraged female temporary workers to compete against permanent production workers, male or female.

In the bank, women’s wages remained unaffected by the war. The more important conclusion is that male and female clerks at the BNS may have been paid equal, or even higher, salary rates for equal work. Such a situation had the potential for undermining beliefs about women’s wages that were rooted in gender ideology. However, because the bank linked low starting wages to men to the career path, women remained defined as different. Consequently, the gap between men’s and women’s salaries increased because women did not have access to the same experience that male colleagues did and were not considered suitable for promotion.
Although women’s wage rates may have increased during the war, wartime inflation mitigated the value the wages held for the women in practical terms. Indeed, despite earning more money, they may not have been better off. Women’s wartime participation did not result in wages sufficient to liberate them. Nor did they challenge beliefs about gender. The family wage and men’s right to it was reaffirmed by the war. Paying men and women differently despite doing similar tasks is only one of the ways that gender ideology remained unchanged by the circumstances of the war. The next two chapters explore other factors that contributed to the continuity of gender ideology.
On Dominion Day 1916, an estimated 3,000 women marched through downtown Toronto in support of the war. An editorial in the Toronto Globe three days later described the parade as a measure of women's liberation. "The discovery of women' has been declared the greatest event of the twentieth century...It came to many as a surprise when they realised, through higher education, professional training, experience in prominent and responsible positions and independent ventures in commerce and finance that they possessed the qualities they had been taught to regard as reserved exclusively for men." In fact, the author suggested that women's "advance [was] among the compensation of war...." Just two months later women were again part of a large parade in Toronto heralding their participation in the war effort. Nurses, volunteers and female munitions workers marched with soldiers and male workers in a parade to open the Canadian National Exhibition in August of 1916. The next year, female munitions workers were again wanted in a parade in Toronto. Two companies that were reluctant to hire women in 1916 insisted on including their female employees on their floats in a patriotic parade in Toronto in 1917. Indeed, when it was suggested that only one of the companies needed to

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include female employees, both of the companies wrote to the IMB to complain.
The Russell Motor Car Company and Inglis refused to participate in the parade at all
if both of them were not allowed to showcase their female employees. Such
positive support of women workers also extended to women in banks. While we
might expect otherwise of an industry that described hiring women as a 'courageous
experiment', women appear to have been accepted in banks, as was the case in the
following:

No sooner do we get a nice boy installed as manager or teller than
the bugles come lilting down the street…. A week later you go in to
deposit your little cheque, and lo, the nice boy is gone, melted out –
enkhakied! And another reigns in his stead…. Yesterday I went by,
glanced in for the redheaded Scotsman and found, to my surprise, a
neat and precise little girl with a tailored blouse and an office
manner correct to infinity, crouched on the high stool as though
she'd grown there always.

William James, who was a pioneer press photographer in Toronto, took
several photographs of women during the war, including several of the 1916 parade
described in the *Globe* editorial. James' photos are interesting in a number of
respects, particularly the ones of the parade. For instance, one photo, reproduced as
Figure 22, juxtaposes female munitions workers with nurses. Having the munitions
workers, in their smocks, stand alongside the nurses, in their long white skirts,
illustrates something of the challenge posed by women's entrance into munitions

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2 Irish to Flavelle, PAC MG 30 A16, Volume Irish.

1916, 42.
work. The photo reveals that not only were women replacing men in fields of work generally left to men, but they were wearing masculine clothing – and they were wearing it in public, for a public celebration – without censure. The female munitions workers, wearing their dark coveralls and short kerchiefs or caps, are a stark contrast to the nursing sisters. The munitions workers "uniform" seems to mask their femininity. Throughout the war James captured many images of

Figure 22: Nurses and Munitions Workers on Parade, Toronto

4 Photograph used with the permission of the City of Toronto Archives, SC244 – 859.
Toronto's war effort and women. He captured women learning how to shoot, women getting their pay outside a factory and women engaging in a variety of public

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5 Photograph used with the permission of the City of Toronto Archives, SC244 – 858.
venues, particularly as volunteers. Interestingly he did not capture them actually producing munitions, although he did take several of male operators in the industry.

Canadians appeared to have perceived women as replacing men during the war, and they also appeared to have accepted, even embraced such replacement. In contrast, the idea that women had replaced men in the course of doing war work in Great Britain was not received with nearly such equanimity. Women workers, particularly munitions workers, who dressed in male attire, worked in male occupations and sometimes received a man's pay often faced censure and hostility. In fact, it appears that women war workers were often regarded as morally suspect. Working long hours alongside men led to accusations of "drunkenness and depravity amongst the women...." Sylvia Pankhurst argued that, "'Alarmist morality mongers conceived most monstrous visions of girls and women, freed from the control of fathers and husbands who had hitherto compelled them to industry, chastity and sobriety, now neglecting their homes, plunging into excess and burdening the country with swarms of illegitimate infants.'" According to British historians such as Angela Woollacott, Penny Summerfield and Gail Braybon, female workers in Britain presented a sufficient challenge to traditional gender ideology as to engender a significant backlash. Negative reactions to women workers often took the form of attacks on their morality, which served to maintain traditional gender ideology. The hostility was a direct reaction to the fear that accompanied the perception that women's work fundamentally challenged gender boundaries. Such opposition,
which was articulated as public censure, undermined the legitimacy of women working in non-traditional fields and in turn reinforced traditional concepts about masculinity and femininity.

We would expect that women working in banks and munitions factories in Canada would have similarly transgressed gender boundaries. It would be logical to expect similarly negative responses. Therefore, the relative dearth of controversy or opposition, and in fact the wealth of support, that women’s employment seemed to generate in Canada could suggest that attitudes about gender ideology changed as a result of the war. The perception that women achieved some measure of equality during the war, which the article in the Globe indicates, certainly lends validity to the arguments of historians such as Sandra Gwyn who regard the war as liberating for women or who link Canadian women's enfranchisement to the war. However, I would suggest that the relatively low level of hostility should not necessarily be interpreted as an indication that women’s participation did not challenge gender ideology. If that were the case, then it is unlikely that the editorial would have appeared at all.

The complexities of women’s experience during the war are not served by the historiographical debate that has developed. In order to understand what meaning wartime work had it is necessary to look carefully at the degree that attitudes both changed and remained the same. While there was certainly not the moral panic that occurred in Britain, women workers in Canada did arouse some concern, or some

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6 As cited in Braybon, 108.
anticipation that there would be concern, and there was a small degree of outright hostility directed towards them. The wartime participation of women affected attitudes about and towards women, positively and negatively. At the same time, ideas about femininity remained quite static, which may, at first, appear contradictory. In part, what explains the lack of hostility and censure of Canadian women war workers is the limited nature of their wartime participation. As already argued, the number of women working was insufficient to engender a challenge to gender ideology that was dangerous enough to warrant the reaction experienced in Britain. More importantly, although attitudes about women may have changed somewhat, gender ideology remained fairly static because a process of ideological accommodation accompanied the women into the workforce. Ideological accommodation also occurred in Britain, but was not as effective because the numbers of female workers, and the attendant threat to gender ideology, were simply too great to be completely offset. In Canada, the combination of the small numbers of women workers and the process of ideological accommodation mitigated the challenge to gender ideology that women's non-traditional participation posed. The nature of the work women did in banking and munitions also contributed to the lack of hostility, which will be further addressed in chapter seven.

Several historians of women and war, Ruth Pierson in particular, developed the concept of ideological accommodation. In her examination of women in the Second World War, Pierson illuminated the various ways that women's mobilisation
did not “undermine the established male-dominant sex/gender system.”7 Society consciously and unconsciously reassured itself that the women were feminine and as such deferential towards and dependant upon men. The response of the state, media and the public ensured that the “public and private domains remain[ed] conceptually unscathed in terms of occupants and tasks…. irrespective of what people actually did.”8 Women’s wartime work then was defined in a way that was within existing notions of gender ideology rather than outside. In the case of women’s work during the First World War, non-traditional work was couched in terms, usually of patriotic service, that served to undermine any real challenge. Regardless of what in particular women did, by defining it as supporting the war effort, and male soldiers, the gender dynamic was preserved. The process of ideological accommodation created a situation in Canada during the First World War that permitted women to enter male spaces and assume male behaviours without unduly threatening the underlying belief system about masculinity and femininity. While many contemporary observers praised women for assuming male space, attire and behaviour, they also focused on how the activities remained within the boundaries of femininity. In essence, a discourse that reassured the public of female workers’ femininity accompanied, and made possible, women’s inclusion into masculine

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7 Pierson, 'They're Still Women After All', 20.

spheres of work without necessitating a change to fundamental beliefs about women. Recently, Ian Miller argued that the image of women changed during the war without altering definitions of masculinity and femininity. I would suggest that no fundamental change to women’s image occurred. Women’s image, or role, was defined in a wartime context without changing the underlying ideology that constructed that image. No re-definition was necessary because of the process of ideological accommodation accompanied the women. Women doing volunteer work for the war effort could be defined within militarised femininity regardless of what activities they did. The attendant discourse of militarised femininity, which will be discussed later in this chapter, rationalised wartime volunteer activities, even those outside of traditionally accepted volunteerism, as feminine.9

Heterogeneity of Attitudes

As was the case with the nature and scope of the work that women were doing, issues such as region and class affected attitudes towards and about women. It should be made clear that there was no single attitude shared by all Canadians when it came to women’s wartime work. Regional differences in the nature and scope of

9 Ian Miller, “'Entirely From the Standpoint of Patriotic Service': Toronto Women and the First World War,” paper presented at the CHA Conference, Edmonton, May 2000. Women’s volunteer work is an area that requires a great deal more research, and would be a logical next step in my work. Indeed, in the course of my research I found that women as volunteers were central to the war effort, but regardless of activity, they too remained feminine.
women's participation resulted in regional differences in attitudes about women. Several exchanges between public officials and Mark Irish illustrate the regional differences.

Mark Irish and Joseph Flavelle were very concerned about ensuring that munitions factories had sufficient labour. In 1916, they both wrote to the federal Minister of Labour, T.W. Crowther, regarding the problems of the labour shortages in manufacturing and the urgent need to employ women. Crowther took six months to reply to Irish and Flavelle.¹⁰ When he finally responded, it was to remind Irish and Flavelle that munitions production was not the only industry in the country facing pressure. He further informed the two men that a surplus of male labour existed in Canada, particularly in the western provinces and Quebec. Crowther, unlike Flavelle and Irish, was concerned with all Canadian industrial and agricultural endeavours and suggested that perhaps the IMB needed to look beyond munitions production which was largely confined to one region. Crowther replied, "...that the Imperial Munitions Board may have one day to consider if Canada has not in this particular effort of shell-making reached its capacity, having regard to the efforts which it is making, and must continue to make, in many other directions, notably in agriculture."¹¹ Crowther argued that the need to employ women was a regional issue

¹⁰ Flavelle to Borden, February 17, 1916, PAC Borden Papers, MG 26, Vol. 51, H1 (a), 108925; also see correspondence between R. Durley and Flavelle, April 5, 1916, as above, 118732.

¹¹ T.W. Crowther to Robert Borden, July 2, 1916; C-4239, pp. 24447-52, Vlo. 51, MG 26, H1(a) OC 235 (6) 0 OC 236(1); also see memo sent under same cover.
that the munitions manufacturers in Ontario and some areas of the Maritimes needed to address. He did not believe it was an issue that required the attention of the Department of Labour. The attitudes held by R.B. Bennett, the Calgary M.P. who was the chairman of the National Service Commission Board (NCSB), also reflected the fact that concerns about women working, particularly in munitions, was a regional issue.

The government organised the NSCB to address declining enlistment. Canadian volunteerism was drastically diminished by the summer of 1916 and the Canadian Expeditionary Force was at two thirds the strength that Borden had promised the British. The government recognised that a labour shortage existed, albeit not equally throughout Canada. The NSCB undertook a national registration campaign, which the government anticipated would facilitate the management of resources and conscription. Initially, the IMB co-operated with the NSCB insofar as Irish agreed to consult with the NSCB regarding munitions production. Irish believed that he and the original Director General of National Service, Sir Thomas Tait, were “on the same side and working toward a very similar goal and could be

Borden agreed with Crowther and forwarded his reply along with Crowther’s to Flavelle.


13 Tait resigned within months of his appointment because of criticism of his staff selection.
of help to each other...." The NSCB and IMB worked closely together until Bennett took over as Director General in October of 1916.

After meeting Bennett for the first time in October of 1916, Irish recognised that the goals of the IMB and the NSCB were no longer in concert. He wrote to Flavelle, "I feel with deep regret, that our effort has no part in the National Service Commission’s new programme...." Bennett offered the IMB assistance, but Irish felt that help from Bennett would appear "to dwindle to proportions of mental recreation for spare time." Whatever his personal feelings for Bennett, however, Irish accurately recognised what was at the root of their differences when he wrote, "Mr. Bennett has some peculiar views on woman labour, springing largely, I feel, from the local conditions arising in the Riding which is distinguished by his representation." Irish realised that Bennett thought the real labour crisis was on the farms in rural Canada, not in the factories in urban Ontario, something made only too clear in an NSCB report released in 1917 by R.B. Bennett.

The report, which was issued to the press, purported to be the minutes of the National Service Commission Board, of which Irish was a member. In those minutes Bennett declared that there were as many women then being employed in munitions as possible and that women needed to look elsewhere to participate in the war effort. This so enraged Irish, because of the potential damage that could be done to the

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15 Series of letters and reports between Bennett and Irish in the spring of 1917, MG 30, A16, Volume 33.
recruitment of female employees, that he felt compelled to write a response to "set the record straight." In letters to Flavelle, Irish accused Bennett of pandering to regional, agricultural concerns at the expense of munitions. What Irish did not understand was that Bennett was not incorrect in his thinking. He was also not unique. We have already seen that the Minister of Labour felt much the same way. The ability to cultivate more acreage was as important as producing munitions. In 1917, as far as Bennett was concerned, the "most serious problem demanding immediate solutions was that relating to the providing of sufficient labour to seed the land available and ready to crop this Spring." Indeed, 375,000 acres above what had been harvested in 1916 were ready for cultivation and the labour shortage on the farms was estimated at 15,000.

Regional differences in attitude were not confined to members of government, as Irish found out when he reported on the labour situation in Winnipeg and Manitoba in 1917. Irish found that many munitions factories in the West had

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16 Irish was so angry that after Flavelle criticised his first draft as too personal and too angry, Irish wrote "this letter was a model of self-restraint. I should have liked to have written in a closed room, in company with Bennett and done all the writing with my fist shut tight and my glasses off." However, he did write a far more restrained letter to Bennett in the end. See Draft letter to R.B. Bennett from Irish, February 17, 1917, MG 30 A16 Vol. 38 and the response from Flavelle dated 21 February 1917 of the same file.

17 Ibid.

18 Minutes of the National Service Conference, February 5(?) 1917, MG 30 A16 Vol. 38.
ceased operation and that there was no shortage of male labour. He wrote that in Manitoba “It is quite unobjectionable to place one’s private interests first; the Province second and the war as an incident.” He contrasted that sharply with the eastern idea of “Service and Sacrifice for the Cause.” Further, he reported that “the thought of using women and releasing men has never been approached and when [Bennett] says that women are not needed either in the production of munitions or in agricultural pursuits he is quite correct, because no spirit has ever been fostered to create such a sentiment.” From his perspective, as the director of the IMB, Department of Labour, Irish would have found such attitudes disturbing, but it reveals very real differences among regions in Canada. In the west, there was very little change in attitudes regarding women’s work because the labour situation did not require the same degree of mobilisation as was the case in Ontario. The need for women in the west was for volunteer work and farm labour. Volunteerism would not have unduly threatened traditional gender ideology, because women generally engaged in traditionally feminine activities. Although farm labour was identified as masculine, it was not unheard of that women engage in farm labour. Historians have uncovered evidence that women have done such work at various times in the past. Regardless, women taking up positions in the fields would have been regarded as

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something of a challenge to gender ideology, although probably not as much as women working in metal shops. What I found, or more accurately did not find, in the newspapers in the west supported Irish’s observations of the west.

Media coverage of women’s paid work varied from region to region. In central Canadian newspapers and magazines there were articles about women’s work in munitions factories, particularly in Toronto during the summers of 1916 and 1917, and women’s work in non-traditional industries was the focus of several of those articles. A great deal of the commentary focused on what was appropriate and desirable for women, what women were doing and on what Canadians thought about women’s activities. The *Montreal Star* for example had a regular feature on “Women’s Duty” between 1916 and 1917. In 1916, contributors to the *Ottawa Journal* and the *Toronto Globe* debated the nature and extent of Toronto women’s participation in munitions for several weeks. In contrast, I came across no references to women’s work in munitions factories or banking in the Winnipeg press and only two in the *Victoria Colonist*. Similarly, in Nova Scotia just one reference to women in banks and one to women in munitions appeared. With respect to the latter, the *Mail* reported on the distribution of the IMB’s pamphlet “Notes on the Dilution of Labour,” and suggested that men who did work that women could do were “hardly giving maximum service to the state.”

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participation in the industry in Nova Scotia. In Victoria, the coverage actually had more to do with the nature and scope of munitions work in general. Several women complained that munitions work was insufficient and had petitioned Flavelle and the IMB for more contracts. The article simply used the women as an example of the unfair practices of the IMB. The volume and nature of press coverage also varied among regions. Only in the areas of high concentration of women in banking and munitions, primarily Toronto, did women's paid work receive media attention. As a result, our understanding of what attitudes Canadians held, as they were reflected in the newspapers and magazines of the day, comes from particular regions.

Attitudes were not only affected by different regional circumstances. The exchange between Irish and Bennett also shows that class affected attitudes towards women's non-traditional wartime work. Bennett appeared to understand that the working class may not have shared the same attitudes towards women's work that were held by the middle class. Bennett recognised that wartime participation, particularly in munitions, was about working and making a living wage for working class women. He was concerned that the employment of women during the war generally created a body of labour that would be in competition with returning soldiers. He anticipated that most working-class women would be reluctant to give up jobs that paid well. He believed emphatically that "the employment of women

23 "Women Munitions Workers in City," *Victoria Daily Times*, March 1, 1918, 8; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, February 8, 1918, 12.
will create a female industrial army doing the work of men at a lower wage, which, when the Overseas Forces return, will be opposed by a male army of unemployed… Women once engaged in factory work will never give it up.” Bennett was not alone in these beliefs. Another commentator argued that many men feared that war had created “a reservoir of female labour sufficiently skilled to carry on operations in many lines of business….” Essentially, Bennett was concerned that the women, whom he saw as appropriately a temporary reserve army of labour, would want to become permanent and directly compete with men in the post-war economy, which would not be appropriate in the context of gender ideology.

Irish thought Bennett’s beliefs very peculiar. Irish regarded women’s mobilisation in terms of service to the state rather than a livelihood. As such, it was temporary. Indeed, Irish assumed that all women embraced the middle-class ideal that women would prefer to be in the home as opposed to the workforce. Irish did not expect that women would want to remain in the factories after the war because the work was beneath them, a view that was shared by other middle-class men and women. For example, one manufacturer wrote, “In many respects the weaker sex (physically) have quickly adapted themselves to the changed environment, and are rapidly becoming an asset to the shell-making industry. Much credit is due to those

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24 Bennett to Irish, attached Irish to Flavelle, October 1916, PAC, MG 30 A16, Volume 38.

women who have recognised the needs of an unprecedented situation and adjusted themselves to an occupation that in normal times might be considered beneath their dignity.” As far as Irish was concerned, and I suspect most middle-class men and women shared his view, women’s participation was an emergency measure in support of a grander cause. Although Bennett recognised that working-class women may have found the opportunities afforded them because of the war attractive, his concerns were firmly rooted in the same middle-class ideology that Irish’s beliefs were. Both men operated from a perspective that women, by nature, were or should be a temporary reserve army of labour.

As I will discuss later in the chapter, much of the commentary about women’s work in munitions or banks regarded the work as a temporary, emergency measure. When the women were praised, it was for the sacrifice they were making. Few articles commented on the benefits that making a living wage or gaining experience in skilled trades afforded women, and even those that did related the opportunity to traditional values around femininity. For example, women’s work in banks was regarded as valuable training for their roles as wives and mothers. After all, they would be responsible for family finances. “If she marries and leaves the business world altogether, she is in a position by virtue of this training to manage her share of the financial arrangements of her home much more intelligently and with a proportionately greater degree of success and consequent happiness. She learns, too,

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26 Canadian Machinery, Volume 17, (April 26, 1917) 426,
the value of keeping a banking account and how thrift repays a hundredfold."\textsuperscript{27} The attitudes of the middle class were a product of the cult of domesticity, which defined women in relation to the home. The wartime activities that women received the greatest amount of press about were activities closely related to the feminine ideal. Volunteer and charity work, particularly the support of working-class soldiers' families through patriotic leagues, or canteen work were covered in media sources across the country. Articles on thrift, gardening, cooking during war, and fundraising activities appeared in every daily paper I surveyed.\textsuperscript{28} The women's work most often described in media sources was unpaid work, which arguably was the most gender appropriate. In an article entitled "Women Workers of Canada" not a single woman profiled worked for pay. Most of the women were farm women.\textsuperscript{29} The preponderance of stories on women's unpaid work reflects attitudes consistent with the ideal of domesticity rather than any change to beliefs about women working outside of the home. As I will discuss shortly, such attitudes also dominated the way

\textsuperscript{27} Murray, \textit{Journal of the Canadian Bankers' Association}, 314.


women were treated in the munitions workforce. In particular, middle-class concerns about the health and welfare of working-class women were entrenched in policies in the munitions factories.

It is somewhat more difficult to assess working-class attitudes towards women's participation in banking and munitions than middle-class attitudes. How women from working-class backgrounds felt about their wartime experience is largely unknown, not only because working-class women left few accounts, but also because their accounts were often viewed through a middle-class lens. In Britain, female munitions workers left written accounts in the form of newsletters and shop magazines. They spoke for themselves about issues that affected and concerned them. They even addressed issues of class and what they thought of the war. Their voices were undiluted. In contrast, the voice of the women's munitions worker in Toronto, for example, is heard mostly through the media. Women working in the munitions factories were quoted on occasion in the newspapers accounts of their efforts. For the most part, the quotations reflect what I would suggest was a middle-class attitude about women's work and the war. The women interviewed discussed the work in terms of its temporary nature and as wartime service. Admittedly, I don't find it surprising that working-class women may have been patriotic, but I do find it surprising that based on the newspaper reports, or other observations, that the women were not somewhat focused on issues other than patriotism. Female

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munitions workers in the Woolwich Arsenal were critical of the war, wages and their working conditions. Canadian women worked under similar conditions, but according to the available sources, were silent on issues of wage and working conditions. As we saw in the last chapter, these jobs may well have allowed some women to earn significantly higher wages. The openings in munitions work may also have offered women a sense of freedom, especially if they had left domestic work.

Working-class women most probably both embraced and challenged middle-class views about what was appropriate for women. Some of the evidence gathered through various oral history sources suggest that working class and middle class women had differing views on several issues, including how they regarded the experience of working. The oral history project that resulted in Daphne Read's *The Great War and Canadian Society* interviewed two munitions workers, one from a middle-class background and the other from a working class background. The woman from a middle-class background framed her experience entirely in terms of patriotic service. "Things were bad for the war, for us, and we felt we had to get our shoulder to the wheel and get down to business.... It was the thing to do....Everybody wanted to be there; you were in the swim of things; everything was war, war, war." In contrast, the working-class woman raised other issues. She talked about the pride she had in doing a good job in a position that was "very hard." She found her job turning shells "interesting work but very hard on your nerves."
The parallel she drew to the war was in describing an instance when a machine blew up. She said that they "had a little experience of what it was to be right in a war shooting up." Similarly, neither of the women who worked at McAvity's defined their work in terms of the war or patriotism. Certainly they recognised that if not for the war, there would have been no munitions work, but they did not associate their decision to work at McAvity's with patriotic service. Arbo needed to work and her uncle got her the job at the factory. Poiret was interested in the opportunity to work in a factory rather than the domestic work she had been doing. I am certainly not suggesting that I am able to draw sweeping conclusions from these few examples. I would suggest that the attitudes working-class women held about women's wartime participation may have been quite different from the dominant discourse that we are most familiar with. The same holds true for working-class men.

We would expect that working-class men would have the most negative attitudes about women workers. Generally speaking, they had the most to lose. It was working-class men whose wages and labour processes were most threatened by a reserve army of women. They held a variety of attitudes regarding the women who worked during the war, particularly in munitions. Some working-class men for instance clearly resented women's participation and regarded it as direct threat. Other working-class men regarded the women as sisters in a struggle against manufacturers. Several strikes occurred during the war, particularly between 1916

31 Read, 156.
and 1918, which were caused by issues arising from the employment of women. For example, employees from the Empire Manufacturing Company, the Russell Motor Car Company, Willys-Overland and the Toronto Street Railway all struck over issues related to the employment of women. The Empire Manufacturing Company workers struck for 23 days because they did not want the company to hire female operators. Instead, the employees agreed to the implementation of new machinery. Similarly, the Toronto Street Railway workers went on strike to protest the hiring of women and accepted mechanisation, in the form of fare boxes, which replaced the conductors on the streetcars, rather than accepting female conductors.  

32 In seeming contrast, the Russell Motor Car Company struck to ensure the reinstatement of several female operators they felt were unjustly fired and the employees at Willys-Overland struck to secure equal pay for equal work.  

33 The strikes at Empire Manufacturing and the Toronto Street Railway appear to suggest that working-class men were threatened by women workers and worked to minimise their employment. The strikes at Russell and Willys-Overland would seem to contradict that, and suggest that some working-class men supported women's right to work in male industries. I would suggest that the men at Russell and Willys likely shared the

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32 PAC, RG 27, Volume 308, File 18(67); and MG 28 I44, File C-4589.

33 It would seem that the shop steward, who was not supposed to be on the women’s side during working hours, was approaching the women. Likely the company trying to ensure the women did not unionise. “100 Machinists on Strike,” Globe, June 27, 1918; Machinists Want Women Reinstated,” Toronto World, July 11, 1918; “Employers State Their Side,” Mail and Empire, July 9, 1918; Also see PAC, RG 27, Volume 308, File 18 (67).
sentiments of their colleagues at Empire Manufacturing and the Street Railway. The strikers at Russell Motor Car Company regarded female workers as being used by the manufacturers in order to undercut wages of male workers and to deskill jobs, which was not an uncommon belief. The Toronto District Labour Council (TDLC) shared that view and worked towards protecting the women and in turn male unionists from such practices. Co-opting women workers into the union, and working with them, served to protect men's jobs. Striking to ensure that women were paid the same rate as men for the same work did not protect women so much as it protected men's jobs. Raising women workers' wages made them less attractive as employees to many manufacturers. Employers generally preferred to hire men, but women, as a reserve army of labour, were cheaper. By taking away that advantage, the workers at Wyllis-Overland protected the jobs of male unionists.

One group who can be accurately described as hostile were the street railway workers in Toronto and Kingston. The suggestion that women might be hired on Toronto's Street Railway system in 1918 sparked a strike, and in Kingston a similar suggestion sparked outrage. More significantly, in both cases it prompted a full scale attack on women's morality. The Toronto union argued that "no self-respecting female would desire to force her way through the jam that overcrowd the cars during certain hours of the day when passengers are wedged together about as thick as

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34 TDLC minutes, May 20, 1916, PAC, MG 28, 144, C-4589.
herrings in a box.” Kingston was not ready for women on the cars either, as was clear from comments such as the following: “They’ll never be able to climb along the sides of the car to collect the fares.... If Nickle keeps these girls in the summer, there are going to be some dead conductorettes under the sod before the snow comes round again.” We can speculate that women workers posed a greater threat to the railway workers because the industry was more permanent than munitions. The munitions industry was temporary. The jobs that women were hired to do, theoretically, were only in existence as long as the war went on. In contrast, the railway jobs were not changed by the war.

The specific attitudes of working class men are difficult to assess primarily because women working during the war were inseparable from the general degradation of the men’s ability to earn a family wage. Women working on the shop floor or on a streetcar were a direct threat to the working man, regardless of how they felt about the war. Women depressed wages, and were party, albeit guiltless, to the deskilling of various occupations in metal work. The threat posed by low paid unskilled workers male and female, had concerned skilled working class men for some time, and the war simply heightened that concern for those skilled men in affected shops or other industries that experienced an influx of wartime women workers.

36 *Kingston Daily British Whig*, August 24, 1918, 9 as excerpted in Wilson, 140.
Concern and Hostility

With the exception of the hostile responses of some male unions, the majority of commentary regarding women's work during the war was positive. The lack of hostility should not, however, be interpreted as meaning that there were no concerns about women working in non-traditional fields. Concerns about women's health and moral welfare were expressed throughout the war, and, for the most part, they reflected middle-class ideals about femininity. The concerns also reflected a high degree of continuity in beliefs about gender. Efforts made to protect women's health and safety in the munitions factories, as well as policies aimed at preserving standards of morality suggest that the division between masculinity and femininity remained intact despite the war. Perhaps the most obvious expression of concern, or indication that concern about women working was anticipated, was the IMB's support of and participation in the Canadian censorship campaign.

Canada, like many countries during the war, was involved in censorship during the First World War. Colonel Ernest J Chambers was Canada's Press Censor. Canada's press censorship campaign was inefficient. Although Chambers created censorship regulations and had the power to prosecute violations of the censorship code, compliance was voluntary. Prosecution occurred after the offending material was published and submitted to the censor for review. Editors and publishers were
aware of the regulations, but whether they followed them was their decision.\footnote{Chambers to Arthur Meighan, December 19, 1916; and “Canadian War Records and Censorship,” PAC, Borden Papers, OC/343, 39676-7; also see Jeff Keshen, \textit{Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War}, (Edmonton University of Alberta Press, 1996).}

Regardless of the weaknesses of the process, Irish wrote to Chambers to ask that he consider censoring stories that impacted negatively on women and munitions work. Chambers responded by issuing the following edict to publishers: “Officials of the Imperial Munitions Board consider of the highest importance from a national point of view that special caution be exercised by editors to exclude from publication reports of any occurrences which might tend to discourage a reasonable extension of the system of using female labour in munitions factories…. For instance, it is conceivable, but not probable, that some of these women or girls may be reported as being interfered with on the streets while going to or coming from places of employment, and it is believed that the publication of such reports might be harmful as causing a prejudice against the use of women in projectile production.”\footnote{PAC MG 30, A16, Volume 33, Irish.} It is unclear how effective the campaign was at keeping such stories out of the newspapers. We might speculate that if there were particularly “good” stories, publishers would want to print them. If they would publish troop movements, which could have serious consequences, why would they not publish stories about women munitions workers? The mere fact that Irish asked that stories be included in the regulations suggests that he may have anticipated some backlash regarding the
increased number of women working. Irish's concerns about women reflected the concerns of many middle-class Canadians. Those concerns were highest with respect to women's health and safety and their morality, all of which were linked to women's ability to be mothers.

Health, Safety and Morality

In 1914, Canadians were still coming to terms with the idea of women working for pay outside a domestic situation. It was not until the late 1880's that Canadian women found sufficient opportunities for paid employment, particularly in cities such as Toronto, to engender a response. Social reformers throughout the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were concerned with the social and moral implications of large numbers of young, single women working in urban environments. Carolyn Strange argues that by the end of the war, the perception of women workers had gone from being "worrisome aberrations from domestic femininity" to "temporary contributors on their way to their more profound contribution as wives and mothers."\(^{39}\) A great deal of effort on the part of social reformers throughout this period was focused on ensuring that women workers would remain suitable for motherhood, which it was assumed was the next step for all working women. Concerns about health and safety were not as paramount in the

\(^{39}\) Strange, 27.
minds of social reformers as were concerns about morality. There were few efforts towards raising single women's wages or standards of living. Instead, reformers and employers focused on protecting women's souls. Discussions of women's work "in the industrializing city, [cast] waged labour as a test of chastity rather than an economic or political issue." When the war resulted in increased numbers of women entering the workforce, attention was focused on ensuring that their participation did not negatively impact on future generations. Employers and concerned citizens determined to protect women's morality and to a slightly lesser extent, their health and safety.

Carolyn Strange has closely examined the moral dilemma caused by wage earning women in Toronto between 1880 and 1930. Although there appears to have been little increase in concern about women's morality during the war, Strange suggests that concern about women increased following the war. Despite the exhortations of several commentators and concerns about morality, actual transgressions against acceptable morality did not increase during the war. In Great Britain, perceptions that women were behaving immorally resulted in increases in policing, laws aimed at restricting women's social behaviour, and other public censure. In Canada, there seems to be no obvious parallel to the situation in Britain other than women gaining access to police forces. Throughout her study, Strange does not identify an increase in policies or activities aimed at curtailing women

40 Ibid.
during the First World War. This evidence supports the idea that there were not sufficient numbers of women working in munitions to unduly threaten the status quo. Had women been threatening gender boundaries, we would logically expect a reaction. This was arguably the case during the Second World War when Canadian women's participation raised several moral questions, including the campaign against venereal disease. In the First World War, the campaigns regarding sexually transmitted disease were not aimed at the domestic audience, which suggests that women's morality on the home front was not suspect. Strange does note one interesting change that she attributes to the wartime participation of women. Strange found that women's attitudes about work were a moral problem after the war. Throughout the war women were exhorted to do their duty and give up home and hearth to work for pay in support of the war effort. Once the war was over, women who were focused on their careers or on their wages were considered "bad girls." Commentators urged women to remain focused on their most natural duty, motherhood. Working women were advised to ensure that they remained feminine, but to be efficient. Good working girls, that is to say those who did not think of themselves, have a social life, or request higher wages, would be rewarded by

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41 Although Carolyn Strange argues that Canadian women were implicated as seducers in the military's campaign to fight sexually transmitted diseases, the campaign overseas and aimed at women in France and Britain was far more aggressive than that aimed at the domestic population. Strange, 206; Angus McLaren, Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945 (Toronto: 1990), Morton, When Your Numbers Up, 198, 200-202; and Pierson, They're Still Women After All. chapter 4.
marriage.\textsuperscript{42} Such attitudes affected women in banking and munitions. Although it is somewhat artificial to separate the health and moral concerns about women working, because they were very interrelated, for purposes of clarity I have done so.

There was less concern with respect to the health and safety of female bank workers than there was for munitions workers. The banks were relatively safe environments for women, which was often used in literature justifying the hiring of women. One employee suggested that "Compared with farm work, school teaching or shop positions, the routine employment of a bank is less arduous – or at least less exhausting. ….the element of social companionship is not to be forgotten…. many of the banks provide luncheon, and…. It cannot be denied that pleasant surroundings and a sheltered scene of activity mean much."\textsuperscript{43} There were few dangers to the female banker, other than perhaps monotony.\textsuperscript{44} In contrast, there was a great deal of concern about the health and safety of women munitions workers. Munitions work was much rougher, heavier and more dangerous than working in a branch bank. Women were exposed to explosive material, large machines, chemicals and many other dangers. The IMB and Canadian manufacturers were also very aware of the damage done to female munitions workers in Great Britain. Prolonged exposure to various chemicals had turned the skin of thousands of plant workers yellow. Known

\textsuperscript{42} Strange, 196-199.

\textsuperscript{43} Graham, \textit{Journal of Canadian Bankers' Association}, 364.

\textsuperscript{44} McDonald Murray, 316.
as the canary girls, there was a great concern that by using the women in industry for the war, Britain was not only in jeopardy of losing one generation on the battlefield, but in losing future generations on the shop floors. Canadians were unwilling to jeopardise the health of their future mothers. There were regulations set out about the length of shifts female workers could be employed; factories were reorganised to make them safer and healthier for female workers; canteens and restrooms were provided; and special arrangements were made to ensure that women received sufficient nourishment. The rationale for all of the measures was to protect women as mothers.45

A great deal of literature was available to the IMB respecting women workers’ health and safety, and much of that was put into policy in the factories. In particular, the IMB relied on the work of the British Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee. The committee was set up to address the physiological condition in factories that could negatively impact on “those contributions which women alone can make to the state.” The Committee identified five areas of concern regarding women’s welfare, four of which were about health issues: period of employment (night-work, overtime, length of shifts), rest pauses and provision of meals, sanitary conditions, physical condition of the workers. The fifth area, supervision, reflected concerns about morality, which I will address shortly. The IMB, employers and particularly Mark Irish took the recommendations

45 Ministry of Munitions Memorandum on the Health of Munitions Workers, PAO, RG 3, Box 17.
of the committee seriously and worked to ensure that Canadian factories met the standards established in Britain. For example, Irish tried to avoid the practice of hiring women on night work, an initiative supported by the Province of Ontario’s Superintendent of Labour, who wrote: “It is now almost universally recognized that serious physical and moral dangers surround the work of women at night. It has been clearly demonstrated that recovery from fatigue is obtained mainly through rest and sleep, and that sound sleep can rarely be obtained in the day time, especially in the noisy and crowded homes of many working people. The lack of sunlight tends to produce anaemia, tuberculosis and to predispose other ills. Night work brings increased liability to eyestrain and accident.”

The IMB also developed recommendations regarding what was required in a factory that employed women in order to ensure good health based on the memorandums of the good health committee. Canteens, rest rooms and proper lavatories were among the essential elements necessary to preserve women’s health. The IMB approached the YWCA to set up canteens in factories to ensure that the women had access to wholesome food, and appropriate company. According to Irish the canteens provided “a refuge for the woman in the factory where she receives the sympathetic and helpful encouragement of the voluntary YWCA workers, and many a kindly act could be

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46 Public Archives of Ontario, RG -12-0-10, Employment, Female, 1918-1919.

47 Irish spent a great deal of time arranging for YWCA canteens to ensure women had access to good meals and good moral company while at the factory. See for example, letter to George Edwards from Irish, June 21, 1917 MG 30 A16 Volume 38.
recorded connected with this welfare effort." The IMB insisted that everything about a factory was wholesome, clean and conducive to the health of employees. Further, the IMB insisted that women wear a particular uniform and cap designed for safety around the machines. Irish also supported several factories in requesting exemptions from regulations set out by the Canada Food Board regarding restaurants in 1918. The regulations reduced the amount of various foods that could be served and restricted the length of time the restaurants could serve certain foods. The regulations impacted on the canteens in the factories. Irish was concerned that munitions workers on evening or night shifts, would be denied a healthy meal with meat in it because the restrictions said that meat could only be served as part of evening meals. Evening shift workers ate their main meal at night and nights shift workers ate their main meal in the morning. When Irish wrote to the Canada Food Board he directed the board to consider the impact that restricting the canteens in such a manner might have on the welfare of the munitions workers, particularly the women workers.

Closely linked to many of the concerns about the physical welfare of women workers were concerns about their moral welfare. The Ministry of Munitions committee on the health of munitions workers identified "questions of management and supervision" as a responsibility of manufacturers employing women. Indeed, the


49 PAC, MG 30, A16, Volume 13, File 139 – Food Regulations.
committee identified a multi-level approach to supervising women. They recommended that all factories employing women hire a forewoman, a nurse and welfare supervisors to watch over and protect women. Canadian factories followed their British counterparts and hired women in these positions. Russell Motor Car Company, Inglis and McAvery's all had female matrons, nurses, forewomen and supervisors.

The final position, welfare worker, was deemed so important by the British Ministry of Munitions that it required a full memorandum to explain the necessity and importance of employing such women in factories. All of the issues raised in support of welfare workers were linked to health and morality. The duties varied, but they were similar to the duties of a mother. The welfare supervisor was charged with discipline, supervising and preparing meals, ensuring that employees were dressed appropriately, monitoring and keeping a register of appropriate lodgings, giving advice to girls, ascertaining the means of transit workers took to work, and to investigating irregular behaviour. In short, lady supervisors or matrons "secur[ed] good order and protect[ed] the moral welfare of the girls under her charge." Canadian manufacturers and the IMB agreed with the British approach. Indeed, one of the few expressions of concern about women's labour from the federal Minister of Labour during the war had to do with the availability of appropriate lodgings. This

50 Ministry of Munitions, Memorandum 1 and 2 of the Health of the Munitions Workers Committee, PAO, RG 3.
was not the first time the ministry had been concerned with where and how working-class women lived. Concerns that wage earners may have engaged in prostitution was often behind such efforts. 51 The argument about using women in explosives plants in Ontario highlights the fact that attitudes regarding traditional gender roles were reinforced during the war, not refined. The labour shortage simply did not countermand the need to protect women's health and safety, and in particular their moral welfare.

In 1918 demands for munitions were once again increasing after a decline the previous year. These increased demands came at a time when Canada was again experiencing something of a labour shortage, especially in Ontario. Munitions manufacturers and the IMB were concerned that the passing of the Conscription Act and the subsequent denial of any exemptions would hamper their ability to procure sufficient workers just as there was an increased demand for munitions. This prompted Howard Murray, the chairman of the Explosives Department of the IMB, to approach Joseph Flavelle regarding the use of women in the explosive plants being developed in Ontario. Citing the impact of conscription, Murray appealed to Flavelle to approach Irish to consider the employment of women in the explosive factories in order to release men for more important duties. He was primarily concerned with finding sufficient numbers of suitable women and whether or not accommodations would need to be provided. He assumed, based on his review of

51 PAC RG 23, Volume 1293, File 10; Strange, 53-88.
the successful use of women workers in the cordite factory at Gretna,\textsuperscript{52} that women could be used very successfully in the manufacture of explosives. At Murray's insistence, Flavelle urged Irish to look more seriously at the possibility.\textsuperscript{53} The final recommendations of both Irish and Flavelle reveal the ambiguities surrounding gender relations in the munitions workforce as well as the inter-related concerns about women's moral and physical welfare.

Irish's opposition to the employment of women in explosive plants was unequivocal. After reiterating all he had done in the cause of releasing men for essential services despite the obstinacy of IMB colleagues, manufacturers and the greater public, Irish argued that women should only be employed in explosive factories as a last effort. "It is my opinion," he wrote, "that this branch of employment should constitute our last effort...and not our first.... To do otherwise is, to my mind, economically unsound and to be deplored from the humane phases of the situation." Irish was not unconcerned with the labour shortage nor was he averse to employing women. Irish was one of the most vocal proponents of women employment in munitions. It may be surprising that he did not embrace this particular scheme as he had others. Irish's opposition was rooted in a chivalrous

\textsuperscript{52} Women were used fairly extensively in the manufacture of explosives in Great Britain.

\textsuperscript{53} The correspondence indicated that Irish had looked into the issue early in 1917. He also co-operated with Murray's initial examination into the situation in Trenton by sending Mrs. Fenton, whom Irish valued very highly for her work with him on dilution with the IMB, Department of Labour.
notion of protecting the mothers of future generations from unnecessary harm. He wrote, “The inherent danger in an Explosives Plant, no matter how well conducted is such that one must be loath to expose women to it except under dire necessity.” He further argues that even in England, where the labour crisis was much more severe, they had delayed using women in explosives until the last resort. He cited Ministry of Munitions memoranda, which discussed the debilitation, illness and disfigurement of women workers and argued that it was simply inhumane to subject the women of Canada to such danger if it was not a dire necessity, which he argues it was not. In fact, he claimed that even at the IMB there were still men working in non-essential work that was more suited to women such as office work.

The sustained welfare work that he spoke about did not only relate to the health concerns that women working in explosives factories raised. Irish was also concerned that the explosives scheme raised moral issues for the IMB, particularly if the women were to be housed by the IMB. Female colonies would have to be created that met standards of respectability adhered to by Irish and others like him. Work in explosive plants was simply not suitable for women and would require

\[54\] In another letter later the same week, Irish went so far as to suggest that what was at issue was not the patriotic notion of releasing men for more essential work, but filling the pockets of men who had an interest in the construction contracts for the housing that would be required for female workers. Several contracts in Trenton had just been completed for the housing of women at a new national airplane factory and the Irish felt that the construction interests might have been encouraging certain individuals of the IMB, particularly Murray, and the explosive plants to pressure for the employment of women in order to drum up similarly lucrative business contracts. See Mark Irish to Joseph Flavelle, January 28, 1918, PAC, MG30, A16, Volume 11, File 104.
“sustained welfare work afterward.” Many of Irish’s arguments were based on middle-class gender ideology that idolised women’s role in the home as mother. Even in his discussion of financial soundness of the plan, propriety was his first concern. The expenditures required to introduce women “on lines that would cause [them] no shame” were untenable (unless the British were paying). For a man who had worked so tirelessly to increase women’s opportunities in the public sphere, his arguments to keep women out of explosive plants were founded on separate sphere ideology.

Flavelle’s final response to Howard Murray shared in Irish’s recommendation to reject or at least delay the employment of women in explosive factories in Nobel, Trenton and Renfrew. Flavelle may have been prepared to employ women in non-traditional ways, but even he was not willing to jeopardise the mothers of future generations, either morally or physically. Although there were certainly concerns about women workers, there were very few negative or reactionary responses to their participation in the public sphere during the war. There are several explanations for the limited nature of the negative reaction to women’s entrance into fields of work previously dominated by men. The scope of women’s participation is a major factor, as I have already discussed. At this time I would like to turn to an analysis of the ideological factors that contributed to the continuity in attitudes about women. The way that women’s work during the war was characterised went a long way towards the maintenance and affirmation of traditional gender ideology. In particular, the
identification of women’s wartime work as a necessary, wartime service essentially undermined the challenge their work may have posed to gender ideologies.

Service, Subordination and Militarised Society

During a period of war, particularly total war, society becomes “militarised.” What this means is that roles, aspirations, direction and priorities of a society and its members change in order to meet the needs of the war. In many cases roles previously denied to a group are made available to that group as a result of mobilisation for the war. For instance, as was the case in Canada during the First World War, women’s access to what was men’s work resulted in part because of the need for male soldiers. Access to enhanced roles did not necessarily convey increased status or changes to beliefs about the previously marginalised group. Expanded access to paid work did not mean women’s status as worker, that is to say as a member of a temporary reserve army of labour, was improved. Why liberation or emancipation does not occur for marginalised groups, such as women, can be explained, in part, by the nature of gender roles in a “militarised” society.

Cynthia Enloe argues that in a militarised society, women’s essential role remains supportive to men, regardless of what women are actually doing. In effect, women may take on roles defined as masculine, and therefore have a higher status, but they are still seen as supportive and therefore secondary. As long as women
remain the helpmate of men, the gendered social order remains intact. Enloe describes the process as the militarisation of femininity. What she suggests is that the concept of femininity is subtly reworked to meet the needs of the wartime mobilisation. Although they do not employ the same term, other historians have identified similar processes. For instance, Margaret and Patrice Higonnet developed a double helix model to explain the same phenomena. During war, women take on roles traditionally defined as male, and in doing so, appear to ascend in the social order. "In this social dance, the woman appears to have taken a step forward as the partners change places - but in fact he is still leading her." Even as the material conditions change, "the fundamental devaluation of the tasks assigned to them remain." Similarly, Michele Shover suggested that "Virtually nothing about the war effort was directly intended or planned to advance the status of [working] women. Any benefits.... were incidental." The process, which is a process of


56 Higonnet and Higonnet, 35.

ideological accommodation, actually serves to marginalise the participation of women at the very moment they are most visible. In a sense, nothing women do during war supersedes men’s role in terms of status or importance. Whatever job women did during war, it was only to help meet the goals of the nation in the male war.

The experience of women in Canadian munitions shops and the bank of Nova Scotia during the First World War suggest that femininity was militarised, and as a consequence attitudes about gender roles remained unchanged. Women’s work in banks and munitions shops in Canada materially changed women’s lives. However, their work was defined in terms of how it supported the masculine war effort, which guaranteed that pre-war gender ideology would be reinforced.

In both industries the wartime employment of women was defined in terms of how it supported the war effort. Specifically, women were hired because it supported male enlistment. The BNS, for instance, needed to continue to operate and understood that men needed to enlist. In support of the war effort and to encourage enlistment, the BNS, like many employers, held the jobs and salary of men who volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The General Manager of the Bank wrote, “It seems to have been assumed by the staff that support to the point of encouragement would be given to any officer who felt called upon to offer himself for active service, that his salary would, in part at least, be continued and that his position would be held open for him until the end of the war. This is what we
They hired women as clerks only because it was essential to the BNS' ability to operate and support the war effort. In circulars 1610, 1646 and 1699, the General Manager made it clear that the bank's concern was replacing enlisted men, hiring women was incidental. "The difficulty has now reached such a pass that we shall not be able hereafter to send relief should any more members of their staff enlist. In that event it will become necessary for the managers to replace clerks by temporarily engaging ... young women...." Hiring women was a temporary measure that made it possible for the bank to operate and its officers to fight; hiring women supported male enlistment as soldiers, which was the highest status role in the society during war. Women's assumption of the role of wage earner, and in some cases breadwinner, permitted men to assume the even greater role of soldier.

Female bank employees recognised that their positions were in support of the war effort. Their employment made it possible for men to fight. "We forget," wrote a female bank officer, "that in every age our menfolk have gone forth to war while the women remained at home to plant, and reap, spin and weave, bake and brew, and do the thousand and one things needful at that time for the well-being of the nation. Once more the call is heard ... and once more women rise to the occasion, willing to do not only the things their grandmothers did, but also to go into the counting houses

58 BNSA, BNS Circular 1610, September 7, 1915.

59 BNSA, BNS Circular 1646, November 25, 1915.
and market places of the world."\textsuperscript{60} Women were simply doing what needed to be done in the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the war. That the female clerks and tellers proved themselves fully capable of working in a bank did not change the attitude that women were not suited to banking. Irrespective of wartime endeavour, the attitude that women were not appropriate bank workers remained intact. For instance, one female bank officer reported that even after women had discharged their duties competently, bank officials still believed women made poor clerks. The official argued that "women clerks [were] less able to bear the physical and mental strain of continuos clerical work than men, and show[ed] nervous exhaustion more readily when an emergency [arose]. Their output of work [was] not so large, and they [were] more frequently absent from their posts."\textsuperscript{61}

Similarly, munitions manufacturers and the IMB defined female munitions workers as a supportive, temporary measure, something Flavelle made clear in a letter to Borden in 1916. "I believe that I am right in indicating there is an increasing body of opinion which expresses anxiety as to our ability to carry on the necessary productive enterprises if further heavy demands are made upon the young manhood of the country for overseas service. All are agreed that we must furnish men who are required, but are asking 'Is it not possible that action be taken to mobilise the forces


of the country that the productive enterprise can be sustained and the overseas requirement met? It is believed that there is an important reserve in men too old or too young, ... as well as in the women, who, in such large numbers are asking what they can do to help." Flavelle identified a common social understanding that women had a responsibility to fulfil "a general obligation to offer for service" because it was "necessary for the good of the State." Women have largely taken the place of men in the industries, ... and it seems to me to furnish a means for setting free a large number of men for Military Service." Women's participation was crucial, but employing them only as wartime substitutes rendered them invisible and undermined any challenge their participation may have posed to gender ideology. In a militarised society, definitions of femininity expanded to include anything that was required for the war effort.

Patriotic language was used to justify and rationalise women's employment as a part of the general war effort. Patriotism, which is essential in a militarised society, was used to legitimise what was clearly a potential realignment of gender roles. The language used to refer to women's participation as war workers paralleled the language used about men as soldiers. In particular, the terms service, duty and

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62 Letter from Flavelle to Irish, PAC, MG 30 A16, Volume 38.

63 Correspondence from Joseph Flavelle to Robert Borden, February 17, 1916, PAC, Borden Files, 108925.

64 Correspondence from Major Ritchie, Nova Scotia Recruiting Officer, to Chief Recruiting Officer McMurdy, copied to Robert Borden, August 17, 1916, PAC, Robert Borden Letters and Correspondence, Volume 210, Reel C-4399, 118711-13.
sacrifice were used to legitimise the mobilisation of women. Women workers were “volunteering” for service on the home front in order to do their bit for the war effort. The point was made very clear in the following: “Women who offer themselves for positions ordinarily occupied by men, cannot be looked upon as in any way invading the territory belonging to male labour -- they are simply offering their services to fill positions for which no man can be obtained. No man able to work, whether a returned soldier or one unfit for military service, need be out of employment to-day. The position of women is, therefore, identical with that taken by every patriotic section of our people -- namely, they are expressing their willingness to serve the Empire in any way in which the need of the hour is greatest.” Whether or not the author was reminding the women of the nature of their role or simply identifying a common understanding, the statement reveals very clearly that women's work in non-traditional occupations was regarded as appropriate only in the militarised society. Women were not working to improve their position or to earn money and improve their day to day lives, they were serving the country. The latter was acceptable in a way that the former was not.

Further, we cannot underestimate the impact of the patriotic spirit that permeated Canadian society. There were many calls for women to do their duty. In fact, between 1916 and 1918, the Montreal Star ran a column entitled “What Girls May Do” in the women’s section. The column outlined “women’s duty” during the

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65 Globe, August 19, 1917.
Women were exhorted to do volunteer work and be thrifty, which was gender appropriate, but they were also urged to work in war industries, which was not completely within a pre-war gender ideology that idealised domesticity. In each case, the author of the section appealed to women’s sense of duty, even when recommending that women be optimistic. “One of the duties of these anxious times, when war is an accomplished fact, and when we are expected to do our bit for our country, is to keep a measure of good cheer and optimism.”

A few weeks later, another journalist stated plainly that, “The boys are fighting to make this a better world for ourselves and the coming generations to live in. They need help; therefore the girls and women must do all in her power to assist. Girls, you can help! Open the shutters and appear with your talents. Then you will be a soldier “doing your bit.”

A recruiter in Nova Scotia wrote in 1915 that women needed to be impressed into service, as men were, if the war effort was to be sustained. In a letter to Borden, another recruiter wrote: “I am equally impressed with the necessity for inducing every man, woman and child in Canada, who is capable of assisting in the maintenance of the great energising fabric of the nation, to come forward and serve

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66 “What Girls May Do” *Montreal Star*, August 9, 1917, 10; also see *Montreal Star* .... It is worth noting that as the need for women’s work declined, the column was replaced with a romantic serial about a young woman embarking on marriage with a returned soldier.

with the same spirit as is exhibited by those who have gone to the front. When Carnegie recalled women in munitions factories, he praised their service to the war effort. He said that "The women managed the work, but it was the "moral sense" that they brought to the work that is most worthy of mention." What he meant by the moral sense was that he believed, accurately or not, that the women in the factories felt that they were part of winning the war effort. The female workers were performing an essential service of war. Not to remember that, said Carnegie, "would be sordid." His vision of the ideal munitions worker was one who continued to work after hearing that her son had been killed. She "set her face like a flint and worked harder than before, after but a short moment of shock." The temporary masculinising of women for the war effort was acceptable as long as it was for the war effort, as is evident in the following excerpt from a CPR report on the war effort. "Eager to do their bit to speed victory, the gentler sex has replaced frills and lace with hard-wearing overalls and work shirts, and in some cases cosmetics with good old fashioned grease."

According to contemporary press reports, women workers appeared to define their work in militarised or patriotic terms as duty and service to the country, which

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68 Letter to Borden from H.K.S. Hemming, 21/08/16, PAC, Borden Papers, RLB 1407-1437, MG 26, H 1(c) Volume 219, 118719-20.

69 Carnegie, 257.

70 "The Canadian Pacific At War" (Pamphlet) CPR Archives, C-176.
may not have accurately reflected the experience of most working-class women. One columnist for the *Globe* seemed to suggest that every woman working in the factory felt that they were helping win the war. Bride Broder wrote, "'Duty' — over and over again the visitor heard the word as she stopped to talk to the workers, some of them young war brides, .... its use brought the conviction that things are not too bad with a nation whose sons fight for duty's sake abroad and whose daughters work in its strength at home..." One worker interviewed for the article reportedly said that "Yes, we are dead at nighttime, but it's little enough to do for the fighting men." Another was quoted "when I think of my poor hubby in the dirt of Camp Borden I feel that I've got an easy way of doing my duty." The article ended by quoting an older woman with four sons in the military who said, "Don't' ee (sic) think as we've cause to thank God greatly for giving us this chance of helping our dear men?"^71

In part, identifying women's work as service and comparing it — albeit not equally — to service in the military, served to undermine any alteration to the various patriarchal structures that defined women's lives. Pierson argued, "The incorporation and submersion of a woman into an economic unit of which she is a subordinate, however crucial, component is one of the ways in which women's work has typically been rendered invisible."^72 Women's work in non-traditional


occupations was clearly characterised as supportive and subordinate of the larger war effort. While the war gave women one of the greatest opportunities to be visible in the workplace, their very efforts were defined in such a way as to be complementary to the war effort. Militarised definitions of femininity could incorporate definitions that ordinarily would challenge gender ideology. Therefore women's work, regardless of the numbers or the success of the worker, would only be regarded as an essential support to the greater war effort. Defined in terms of service and support, women's wartime work was marginalised which resulted in a reinforcement of traditional gender ideology. Essentially, there was an ideological accommodation of the extraordinary situation that entrenched rather than challenged underlying beliefs about the nature of femininity in the long term. Traditional beliefs about femininity and women and work remained largely unaltered, and some, such as ideas about marriage, were reinforced by the war.

The "Eternal Feminine"

Women's wartime service did nothing to alter several traditional beliefs about femininity, including that women were only working until they could marry. It was argued that, "the prospect of marriage acts adversely on a woman's business energy and ambition, while it increases a man's." Further, a female bank employee argued that even the most successful banking woman would "cheerfully retire to her own
hearthstone, preferring the love of a husband and little children to thousands a year and a seat in the council of the mighty."\textsuperscript{73} Another wrote that, "No bank or business firm can count absolutely on a woman. Experience has taught them that the majority desert for homes of their own just when they have reached the point of efficiency."\textsuperscript{74} Such attitudes were not unique to the banks, but reflected the dominant discourse. Marjory MacMurchy, who was active in a great many volunteer activities during the war including the Canadian Reconstruction League, wrote,

For telephone operators the average length of service is only three years. A young woman remains in stenography on an average between six and seven years. The wage or salary earning woman may leave one paid occupation to enter another, but this does not happen often. When she gives up her employment, as a rule she does so to marry, ...A very large proportion, therefore, of women in Canada are first in paid employment and afterwards enter the more important occupation, socially and economically, of creating the homes of the country.\textsuperscript{75}

Railroad shops that were turned over to munitions production also claimed that women would marry "just when they [had] attained the highest measure of usefulness...." One article identified marriage as the fundamental detriment to hiring women. "When a man takes a wife his anchorage is assured; but when a girl enters into matrimony she is invariably lost with all the training she has acquired. The brighter they are the

\textsuperscript{73} Cowdry, 321.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.

greater is this danger, as I know from bitter experience. I have had ten office assistants of the gentler sex, and seven of them were lost to me through marriage. I am in mortal dread that the eighth is moving stealthily in the same direction.76 Another author assured readers of Maclean's that women would still be interested in marriage after the war: "Aren't those unnatural conditions making the girl so independent that she will look the marriage prospect over rather critically? Strange that we should think that the human instincts standing for some eight thousand years could change in five.... there will be a woman for every possible worth-while home."77 Such attitudes not only ensured that women remained unsuitable long term employees, it also relieved the banks and shops of the responsibility of training women as they would a male employee and restricted women's promotion. The dearth of women in senior positions is evidence that this very central feature of gender ideology -- that women's primary role was to marry and raise children -- was left unchallenged.

One fairly tangible sign that traditional gender ideology remained relatively unchanged by the war was the continuity of the idea that women were, by nature, subordinate to men. Throughout the war, female employees in munitions shops and the BNS were visibly subordinate. Wartime participation simply did not undermine the physical subordination of women in either industry during the war. The most


obvious evidence of this was the serious under-representation of women in supervisory positions in both industries. Traditional gender ideology dictated that women required supervision and guidance, and their wartime work did not change that attitude. This was true at home, where the male breadwinner was the head of the household, and it was true in the workplace. In munitions work, inspectors had some supervisory responsibilities. They oversaw the production of the armaments and if something was done incorrectly, it was their responsibility to bring that to the attention of the operator. The IMB also required that female inspectors operate as supervisors of female workers. The responsibility of the female inspectors included overseeing women’s welfare and ensuring their respectability. A foreman, or in a few cases a forewoman, oversaw the women’s work. Even in the Packard Fuze (sic) Company, which was almost wholly operated by female workers, men supervised the work. This division of labour is clear in the photographs of women working in the shops. For instance in the images reproduced here, men clearly supervised female operators. In Figure 24, for example, the female workers, seen in the last row (far right), are supervised by a male foreman. In this factory, the men and women were in the same area, which was unusual, and supervised by one man, who can be seen in hat and long coat on the far right of the photo. Such a division of labour was common in factories in both Southern Ontario and St John.

Employers’ attitudes also reinforced the belief that women were not appropriate supervisors. For instance, when the IMB first suggested that
manufactures hire female inspectors, the inspection companies protested vehemently. Women could not oversee men’s work because that was unimaginable. They could also not oversee women’s work, because the women required additional supervision. G. Ogilvie, the vice-president of the Canadian Inspection Company, argued “There was no question that women should not inspect work that men had done, even if that

Figure 24: Women in Toronto Shops

78 City of Toronto Archives, SC244-853. Used with Permission.
work was being inspected by educated, middle or upper class women. It was quite unimaginable that such a policy would be effective.\textsuperscript{79} Aurelien Boyer of the Canadian Inspection and Testing Labs joined him in his opposition. Both men felt

\textsuperscript{79} PANB P49/14. Used with permission.

\textsuperscript{80} Correspondence to Flavelle from G Ogilvie, 07/06/16 Borden Letters and Correspondence, PAC Vol. 210, Reel C-4399, Page 118701-118702
that women inspectors would prove “disastrous.” Boyer and Ogilvie also argued that the women available in Canada would need particularly close supervision in order to pay attention to the work they were doing, and that required male inspectors. The head of the IMB’s inspection branch concurred with the attitudes of Boyer and Ogilvie. In his report to Flavelle regarding how the branch could eliminate all men who were fit for service from its staff, Durley outlined the problems he anticipated with female inspectors. First, women would only be able to work on certain light work and where a sufficient number of gauges existed to allow all the work to be done during daylight hours, “no night shift being possible with women.” More problematic was that any shop employing female inspectors would need to provide double supervision. A male supervisor would be required to supervise the work of the women and a female supervisor would be “needed for purposes of discipline.” Simply put, Durley and Ogilvie regarded the role of the female inspector as overseeing women’s behaviour not women’s work. This raised another concern regarding efficiency in their minds, which is clear in the following: “difficulties would arise in settling disputes since men and women would not be in the same employ.” The male and female workers would be reporting to different inspectors for different matters and further, the female inspectors and the male inspectors would

81 Borden Papers, PAC, Volume 210, Reel C-4399, 118727

82 Memo to Flavelle from Captain Durley, Head of IMB Inspection, April 1916, PAC, Borden Papers, 118730.
be doing different jobs. Similar attitudes were held at the CPR. No female supervisors show up in the data for the manual labour occupation groups. 

The attitude that women were not capable of supervisory positions was quite widespread in the BNS as well. As we have already discussed, there were no women in traditional management or supervisory positions with one exception. Generally, the responsibility of supervision in a branch fell to senior clerks, accountants and managers. I compared the advancement of male and female employees in the branches of the BNS. Although there were fewer women with long careers, and therefore fewer women with the necessary experience to advance into senior positions, a small percentage had the experience to warrant supervisory positions. Men with equal or lesser service received promotion to accountant or assistant manager while women did not. For instance, of the male and female clerks who started with the BNS by 1916 56 percent of the men had advanced into senior or supervisory roles other than tellers by 1922 as compared to only 2 percent of the women. Lack of promotion was also linked to the belief that women were unsuited to career advancement generally. The implication of the lack of promotion was that women were not long-term employees, which reflected traditional beliefs about gender ideology.

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83 CPR Database.

84 BNS Database.
Throughout the war, and indeed into the 1960's, the Bank of Nova Scotia remained wedded to the idea that women were not suitable for careers in banking. They may have been prepared to accept women as a part of the workforce during the war, but only in a subordinate role. By restricting women's access to the normal banking career path, the Bank of Nova Scotia maintained and reinforced traditional attitudes about gender boundaries, effectively mitigating any challenge the female workforce posed. Their sex limited their geographic mobility, which was essential for the career advancement of a bank officer. "Mobility," it was argued "was not an attribute of women." It would not be appropriate to transfer women, so they were denied the varied experiences that opened the way to promotion. Working in different branches was essential to gaining the experience necessary to advance in banking. Despite evidence that female clerks were mobile, banks held to the belief that there would be too many objections to moving women about. The banks main concern was about the necessity for female employees to secure suitable, supervised lodging. As I've already discussed in the context of health and welfare concerns, place of lodging was linked to issues of respectability. A woman's morality could be suspect if her home was unsuitable. Because suitable lodging for single women was difficult to find in many areas, and because the BNS assumed many of its female employees lived with family, asking them to move to take a new position was not considered appropriate by management that was highly concerned that their female employees be beyond

reproach. In short, it would throw the banks' reputation into question if a female employee had to take unsuitable lodgings in order to take a new post. Male employees on the other hand could live in suspect lodgings for a short term until more suitable lodgings were found without concern about morality being raised.

Most men and women at the bank actively maintained the idea that women's gender limited their suitability for a career in banking. One female bank employee wrote,

The obstacles to promotion lie largely in the women themselves. In the first place very few of them can rise above their prejudices, which is a great handicap to success...; indecision is another fault, and always one must reckon with physical weakness--at least as compared with men.86

The general attitude was that women were acceptable for the short term, but they could not sustain the effort required for a banking career. "Women are splendid at rising to an occasion and at coping with an emergency but they lack the capacity for sustained effort."87 Further, male and female bankers agreed that training women was inefficient because women, by their nature, were temporary workers.

Assurances that Women Workers Remained Women

Reassurance that the female wartime workers remained feminine was also common. Even as the women were welcomed and encouraged to transgress gender boundaries by working in the non-traditional roles and spaces of the BNS and

86 Harris, 317.

87 Graham, 304.
munitions factories, they were being kept in their place. As delighted as employers were with female employees, there was a trend in both industries to emphasise the women's femininity. Pride in female munitions workers was fairly common among society generally, however, assurances that their work did not make them less feminine were as common. As one commentator wrote in an article praising women munitions workers, "Not all the munitions work in the world can eradicate the Eternal Feminine, however, as soon as those girls saw that I had some photographs they were bent upon seeing their industrious young selves...."88 Another article described the work done in a factory in domestic terms. "A blue-eyed girl who looked as if she would scream at sight of a rat put a pellet into gaine (sic) and dabbed a little powder on top as calmly as if she were making sandwiches for a party...."89

Banking had "always been regarded as outside of that region of duties vaguely known as "'woman's sphere'' and irrespective of the success of women in the banks, a career in banking remained outside woman's sphere. For the most part, female clerks won a grudging respect from management. However, others felt the women offered better service than some of the male clerks. There were few complaints. One commentator even suggested that the routine tasks of banking were quite suited to women. Again, this could suggest a shift in attitude, either towards

88 *Saturday Night*, July 15, 1916.

equalising gender roles or, as Lowe suggests, towards feminising banking. We can speculate, based on the available evidence that it was neither at the branch level. Even as commentators cheered women, they pointed out how different they were. Specifically, they qualified praise with gendered references to women's inferiority. For instance, women were regarded as timid and less mathematical, which made them ill suited for a career that required adding sums or protecting the assets of the bank. "When it came to assembling a mass of tabulation sheets and striking what are termed "balances," the male clerks showed an undoubted superiority. The girls shrank from any complexity, or what might be broadly defined as responsibility."\(^{90}\)

One writer made the central issue plain: "It need not be feared, however, that in the jostle of commercial life, the woman will lose her femininity." Why not? Because "Woman is the same in all ages and in her heart the homing instinct springs eternal."\(^{91}\)

That members of the banking community, munitions employers, and society in general found it necessary to reassure the community that female employees were feminine, argues that there was something of a threat to gender ideology. In this case, women entering the munitions workforce and banks appeared to be transgressing femininity and society needed to be reassured that their adoption of

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\(^{90}\) Payne, 821.

masculine behaviours and spaces could be rationalised to fit within the existing social order.

Conclusion

A woman dressed like a man was sending a lot of signals. She could be titillating men by inviting them to reveal the truth about her body and therefore her sexual identity.... Her apparent claim to be equal to a man could challenge men to prove their superior masculinity by dominating her physically and sexually.... Her manly appearances might mean that she would develop manly characteristics and male patterns of behaviour: drinking, swearing, spending her earnings, and making sexual advances.92

I have no cause to doubt the words quoted above. Indeed, in every other country during the First World War, women workers engendered the fears and concerns identified by the author. In contrast, in Canada, women dressed like men, doing men's work did not seem to worry Canadians unduly that they would end the war with a population of manly women. Certainly there were concerns about women's moral and physical health. Specifically, Canadians worried that the women who worked during the war would be able to fulfil their roles as mothers. That was not an unusual concern during a war that caused unimaginable destruction. It is not surprising that men and women in Canada would worry about women workers' health and safety. Canadians, particularly the middle-class, also worried about

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women workers' morality. Concerns about the morality of female wage earners was not unique to the war period nor were such concerns significantly exacerbated by an increase in the number of female wage earners.

One explanation for the muted response towards women workers is simply that there were not sufficient numbers of women to really threaten the foundations of gender ideology. The increase in women in the paid workforce was small enough that it could be explained in the context of the war without requiring masculinity and femininity to be redefined. Beyond that, the process of how women's participation was explained, the ideological accommodation that accompanied women into the workforce, mitigated the challenge posed by women in men's work. Defining war work in patriotic terms as a support of the war effort in general maintained women's secondary role in society. No matter what women did, they remained subordinate to men, and therefore feminine, and they remained in service to the state. In this way women's work could be understood not as an affront to traditional ideologies, but as an extraordinary sacrifice for the war effort. In effect, women were defined as heroines not mechanics or bankers. As Marjory MacMurchy wrote, “Working for pay was no longer a dangerous departure from domesticity or a contributing factor in the social evil; in short, it had become a patriotic duty.”

The muted response to the potential threat posed by women working in masculine endeavours was also affected by the nature of the work they did. Not only was women's work in masculine fields justified ideologically, the sexual division of
labour was maintained. As we will see in the next chapter, labour processes were changed rather than ideas about women. Consequently, women remained identified as temporary, unskilled workers and their wartime work, as extraordinary as it was, did nothing to shake the foundations of society. Gender ideology was not threatened. Women remained eternally feminine, even as they donned smocks and overalls and traded makeup for grease and grime. As commentators discussed the parallels between fuse production and baking and how a short-term career in banking actually assisted in training good wives, they marginalised women at the moment they were most visible.

93 Strange, 195.
My interview with Jennie Arbo taught me a great many things about oral history and it changed my thinking about women’s work during the war. When I began my work on this project I assumed, as have other historians, that the work women engaged in liberated them in some fundamental way. Instead I learned something that sent me in another direction completely. I fully expected that Arbo would tell me how the war and her experience as a “munitions” worker had changed her life. Throughout the interview, I waited for any indication that she had found her experience at McAvity’s emancipating. Aside from the chance to live away from her family and have something of a social life, she made no remark to suggest the war had changed her expectations or her horizons. She worked at the factory until she got a better job as a telephone operator and then she met and married a returned soldier. I listened to the tape of the interview as I drove away from her home outside of Boston, thinking that I had not asked the right questions or that I had missed something. Several hundred kilometers later, I realized what I had forgotten: I had not asked specifically about the skill level of her work. I called her from a rest stop and arranged to see her the next day. She was intrigued to know what question could be important enough for me to drive from St. John to Boston twice in less than 48 hours. Her response when I asked her if her work had required skill was “Skill?! No, just a strong arm. You pulled a lever and stamped a washer and did another and
another.” Louise Poiret gave me much the same answer two days and several hundred kilometers later at her home in Moncton, although it was delivered with less laughter than was Jennie Arbo’s answer.

At the time, the answers that both women gave puzzled me. Exceptional wartime circumstances created opportunities for Arbo and Poiret, and hundreds of other women, to enter occupations dominated by men. Although women successfully operated in those positions, women’s horizons did not expand significantly for the long term and, as I discussed in the last chapter, attitudes about what women should do and how they should behave seemed unaffected by the extraordinary opportunities in the paid workforce afforded them during the war. As discussed in chapter three, women worked in jobs identified before the war as men’s work. Many of the jobs would also have been defined as skilled work before the war. Would it not be logical to assume that if women were successful in doing skilled work that they would be redefined as capable of skill? The answers given by the two munitions workers I interviewed suggest that the war did not result in a challenge to that belief about women. An analysis of dilution, as a policy and broader labour process represents a window through which to examine why women’s status as a worker suited only for unskilled, secondary work remained largely unchanged by a wartime experience that afforded women the opportunity to prove otherwise. Such an analysis, in conjunction with the discussion of the interplay of ideological factors in chapter six, affords us a fuller understanding of the wartime experience for women workers.
Ava Baron wrote that “Skill is conceptualised as something men have, and which women lack.”¹ She was referring, of course, to a traditional gender-based concept that identified women as unskilled by nature.² We might expect the reality of women operating as skilled workers to alter the underlying structures of gender ideology. That is to say, when women took on jobs defined as skilled or semi-skilled, as they did in the banks and munitions factories during the war, the gender-based belief that women were by nature incapable of skilled work should, logically, have been challenged. As discussed in the previous chapter, why there was so little redefinition of gender ideology is explained by a variety of ideological factors. The lack of challenge to gender beliefs is also in part explained by the way dilution, as a word, a policy and a long term industrial process, influenced how women workers were treated and defined throughout the war by offering a way to incorporate women workers without redefining gender ideology. The dilution policy resulted in a


redefinition and a reorganisation of the work rather than a redefinition of the worker, which would have required a redefinition of gender ideology. Regardless of women’s performance in skilled work, their “status and experience as workers was overlaid with their status as women.”

Prior to the war the term ‘dilution’ most commonly referred to the “introduction of less skilled workers to undertake the whole or part of work previously done by workers of greater skill or experience, often but not always accompanied by simplification of machinery or breaking up of a job into a number of simpler operations.” The process called dilution is better understood, however, as a combination of two connected changes: first, the introduction of a more detailed division of labour in the work process; and second the hiring of larger numbers of unskilled workers, and in some cases women. Together, these changes seemed to preserve the contemporary equation of women with unskilled work. So when Irish spoke in terms of dilution, he referred both to the addition of female workers to the workforce in larger numbers than normal and the changes to the labour process that accompanied, and made possible, the hiring of those women. The necessity of hiring women justified the breaking down of jobs previously described as skilled into their component parts, often with the assistance of machines, thereby removing the skilled component of the work. In doing so, the work was made appropriate for women who

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were defined as unskilled. In a few cases the labour process of the work was not affected, and the work was simply redefined as unskilled. This appears to have been the case in banking more so than in munitions. The combination of large numbers of women, technology and deskilling ensured that women continued to be defined as workers incapable of skilled work. Before exploring the nature of women's participation in the two industries specifically, it is helpful to understand the broader context of dilution that was already occurring in Canada before the war.

**Dilution and the Labour Process**

The first decade of the twentieth century saw unprecedented industrial development in Canada, particularly in Southern Ontario. An essential component of the development was the rise of monopoly capitalism. As briefly discussed in chapter 2, capital was increasingly consolidated in the hands of a few, and business enterprises became more concentrated. The same period revealed a growing fascination with systematic management.\(^5\) Frederick W. Taylor, an important promoter of scientific management, advocated centralising “all control over the production process in the hands of ... managers through planning, routing, scheduling and standardisation.”\(^6\) Although acceptance was slower in Canada than in the United

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\(^5\) Palmer, 158-161.

\(^6\) Heron, 19.
States, owners of machine shops became great proponents of applying these principles to the shop floors in Canada. In particular, the labour processes were broken down into component parts, or deskilled, which decreased the need for skilled craftspeople. Aimed at decreasing costs and increasing production using mechanisation, routinization and a general degradation of the labour process, scientific management principles threatened the livelihood and social position of the skilled craftsman. Unskilled workers, who were more easily replaced and received lower wages, and increased mechanisation replaced skilled workers and drastically reduced the control that workers had over the labour process.\(^7\)

A great deal of research has examined the consequences of technological changes on the labour process, and the work of Harry Braverman remains the starting point for most studies. Braverman believed that mechanisation and scientific management were tools with which capitalists could take control of the workplace out of the hands of skilled workers. Mechanisation led to the deskilling of the workforce and "divested ... workers of their control over their own labour."\(^8\) Many others have demonstrated the various weaknesses of Braverman's thesis, not the least of which is that he underestimates the power of class-consciousness and does not


\(^8\) Braverman, 193.
recognise at all the development of new skills. More recently, however, Sheila Cohen argued that Braverman’s concern was not control or deskilling, “but the specifically capitalist logic which constructs these tendencies.” The efficient exploitation of the worker was what was central to capitalism, not the control of the worker. The more control exerted, whether by means of machine or method, intensified “the rate at which workers [were] exploited.” Increasing efficiency became highly important to manufacturers and control and deskilling became fundamental to efficiency. Cohen’s interpretation is most useful in terms of this study, because increased efficiency was the rationale for many of the changes to the labour process before and during the war. A complete restructuring of the labour process was by no means accomplished by 1914 and skilled machinists and moulders

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11 Rajala, 74.

12 Richard Rajala’s analysis of technological changes in the timber industry illustrates this very well.
remained in high demand, especially as the manufacture of munitions increased.13

Interest in the principles of scientific management did not stay limited to the shop floors. The process of deskilling and mechanisation that characterised clerical work affected banks during the twentieth century. The labour processes associated with clerical work underwent significant, even revolutionary, changes both in terms of technology and in management during the early twentieth century.14

The development of corporate capitalism and the application of scientific management principles in manufacturing resulted in a dramatic increase in administrative functions between 1900 and 1930. The increase sparked an administrative revolution, which was characterised by the development of large centralised bureaucracies and management principles focussed on rationalising organisation and operations. Rationalisation took the form of a restructuring of office structures and labour processes and general office management. Proponents of rationalisation wanted to decrease inefficiency and increase productivity and standardisation of tasks. Essentially the principles of scientific management,

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13 There was significant competition for skilled tradesmen throughout the war. Even the CEF was urged to release skilled men because of the shortage in Canada. See for example,

including cost accounting, mechanisation and deskilling, were modified and applied to the office.\textsuperscript{15}

The impacts that cost accounting, and other processes aimed at increasing efficiency had on clerical work are difficult to identify. Certainly increased mechanisation, rationalisation and bureaucracy were results of the process to increase managerial control over office work. According to Braverman, managers in offices implemented practices and processes that fragmented, deskilled and degraded labour in order to increase efficiency. Braverman further argued that clerical work, which he equated with skilled crafts work, was turned into the equivalent of an assembly line where the workers pushed paper rather than produced goods.\textsuperscript{16} Several authors have identified problems with Braverman's thesis. Mechanisation, for example, did not result in the universal degradation of work in offices.\textsuperscript{17} Other historians have challenged the idea that clerical work was equal to skilled craftwork.\textsuperscript{18} Arguably, the work was as tedious after mechanisation as it was before. Braverman also suggests that the clerical field was homogeneous, which it was not. Graham Lowe argued convincingly that clerical work was less concrete

\textsuperscript{15} Lowe, \textit{The Administrative Revolution}, 44-46.

\textsuperscript{16} Braverman, chapter 15.


\textsuperscript{18} Lockwood, 87-88.
than factory work and the extent of rationalisation was limited as a result. Taking
the entire debate on the issue into account, what remains is that office work
underwent a fairly radical change between 1880 and 1930. Degradation of clerical
work did occur when technology, rationalised management and large numbers of
female employees came together. To some extent, the Bank of Nova Scotia
experienced the convergence of all of those factors in the early twentieth century.

The bank’s interest in rationalisation existed long before the war. Systematic
clerical procedures and bureaucratic centralization were deemed necessary in order
to control the widespread network of branches. The Bank of Nova Scotia
implemented the Unit Work System in 1901 to measure employee productivity. The
system standardised all clerical tasks into work units and set performance levels.
For instance, a clerk with seven years service was expected to be capable of
performing 240,000 work units a year without overtime. Based on the data
provided by each branch, the Bank was able to efficiently manage branches. Staffing
requirements at each branch changed constantly, but the Head Office was able to
keep up with any change by relying on the data sent to them by managers. Office
rationalisation also included strict rules and regulations, and common job
descriptions. “The 1917 Rule Manual stated that productivity was attainable at every

19 See Nova Scotian, November 1907, 4 and 24; BNS Circular No. 964, February 4,
1905 and Rules and Regulations, 1917, 37, BNSA. Also Lowe, The Administrative
Revolution, 104-15.

20 BNSA Bank Circular 964, February 4, 1905.
branch 'by the labour saving methods of proper arrangement, [and] distribution and timing of office routine,'”

Even by 1902, the bank was heavily bureaucratised. Rules not only covered every aspect of an employee’s work, but also their life outside the branch. The banks Rules and Regulations were very specific about employee conduct, dress, behaviour, accommodation and attitudes. The bank demanded that any employee who did not exhibit exceptional conduct in their private life should be reported to the General Manager.

As we have already discussed, changes to the labour process and mechanisation were more prevalent in the Head Office than they were in the branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia. Because the Head Office functioned more as an office rather than a bank branch, it is not surprising. This pattern was not unique to the Bank of Nova Scotia. It occurred in the Bank of Ottawa and also at the Banque de l'Hochelega. The war occurred during a period when labour processes were changing in both banking and manufacturing industries. The nature of the

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22 Rules and Regulations, 1902, introduction, 13; and 1917 edition, 10, 27.

23 Rudin, 65. While the labour processes were standardised and common to every branch, technological change was not. Technological innovations were largely aimed at improving efficiency through standardisation of various processes, including adding and recording. Increased mechanisation did lead to the degradation of particular labour processes in the banks, especially after World War Two. Ultimately, as Graham Lowe has demonstrated, this deskilling process led to the feminisation of the banking workforce. It is important to note here, however, that this took place at different rates within the bank.
work that women did and how it was defined was affected by those changes in a variety of ways.

It seems logical that women doing skilled work in a factory or a bank should have challenged the belief that women were incapable of such work, which in turn would have fundamentally challenged traditional beliefs about gender. In linking a more defined division of labour and women's entrance into skilled occupations, managers and the IMB undermined any challenge to skill as a masculine preserve. In the munitions industry, the pattern was very transparent. Work was broken into its component parts and machines were used to enable women to do what had previously been skilled work. In a few cases, work was simply defined as suitable for women, particularly in cases where the work was new. In banks, the "dilution" process was somewhat more enigmatic. The BNS did not have a program to facilitate the increased hiring of women, but there was widespread replacement of men by women in skilled work. In the case of the bank, a degradation of the labour process was not immediately in evidence in the branches, at least during the war. Efficiency was paramount at the bank, and rather than jeopardise that by changing an effective work process, the bank relied on ideology to maintain the sexual differentiation of labour.
In many ways what Graham Lowe described as an administrative revolution at the Bank of Nova Scotia was very similar to the process identified as dilution in factories. As larger numbers of women were hired, the jobs available to them were deskillled and mechanised. In essence, what had been skilled work for men was feminised. Hiring practices underwent dramatic changes "as wartime labour shortages combined with an increasingly complex administrative division of labour to incorporate women into the clerical labour supply." An increase in the number of women hired in administrative occupations occurred concurrently with increased mechanisation and deskillling of jobs in several Canadian offices. Lowe suggests the pattern occurred in the Bank of Nova Scotia as well. I would suggest that while this may have occurred in the Head Office, the pattern was not apparent in the branch banks during the initial wartime influx of women. This becomes quite clear when we examine the work of the clerk in the branch bank.

Undeniably a large number of women were hired as clerks during the war. As outlined in chapter three, a significant number of women gained access to the occupation. It would seem logical that a process of deskillling the work might occur in order to preserve the identification of the skills associated with the work with masculinity. The process that we associate with dilution, where the entrance of

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25 As indicated in chapter 3, women accounted for almost 50 percent of all clerks by 1918.
large numbers of "unskilled workers" or women into an industry is accompanied by a process of deskilling the occupation, does seem to have occurred in the majority of the branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia during the war. It is clear that it did occur at the head office and to a lesser extent the downtown Toronto, Montreal and Halifax branches. In those branches we do see a small degree of specialisation and mechanisation. As I have already discussed, between 1901 and 1921, the level of mechanisation at Head Office increased and that in turn changed the structure of the office. An examination of Head Office records indicates a dramatic increase in new occupations, several of which were mechanised, between 1910 and 1922. Where machines, such as the multigraph, were incorporated, they replaced part of the work previously done by individual clerks. Clerical work became more specialised at the head office. For instance, there were several types of ledger clerks and file clerks, and a variety of specialised stenographers. These occupations were comprised of the component elements of other jobs. As was illustrated in chapter 3, the increased number of low-skilled or unskilled jobs available at head office corresponded with an increase in the number of women hired there.\textsuperscript{26} The pattern at the branches was quite the opposite. There is very little evidence to suggest that either the labour process was changed or mechanisation increased to correspond with women's increased employment.

\textsuperscript{26} It is even clearer that the process occurred in the branches in the late 1920's and early 1930's, as Lowe indicates. Interestingly, that was a time when the number of women working in the bank was greatly reduced.
The clerk in a bank was largely responsible for filling in forms and copy work. Handwriting was the foundation of the daily bank operations. Promotions were based in part on an officers' handwriting as is clear in the following passage from the BNS Rules and Regulations regarding training and promotion:

It can readily be seen and noted if [his books] are kept in a good neat hand, if there are any blots or erasures, and if they indicate any great degree of carelessness or otherwise. Speed, accuracy, and thoroughness in the performance of work are most important qualifications....Quickness of hand denotes quickness of head.\(^{27}\)

Clerks were required to complete all work from the day during normal banking hours, which ran from nine in the morning until five in the evening. If they were unable to do so, they were required to stay and complete it on their own time. They were also expected to serve as tellers. That many branches did not have tellers indicates that serving customers was a daily responsibility of clerks. There is very little direct evidence at the Bank of Nova Scotia that the nature of the work was altered in any way or that less was expected of the female bank clerks. There is also no indication in the revised manuals that male and female clerks had different duties. It was in fact, quite the contrary.

A clerk's work was identified as skilled work, which required a significant degree of training, and it was men's work. In fact, most male clerks who did not enter the service of the bank with previous clerking experience were started as a

\(^{27}\) BNS Rules and Regulations 1917, BNSA, RG 1/2/3, p12.
junior. Juniors were low-paid, apprentices. The justification for paying juniors very low salaries was that they were of little use to the bank until such a time as they were properly trained. According to the data I worked from, properly training a junior to become a clerk took between 18 months and 24 months. Training time decreased during the war because of the high demand for male labour, but even then, in a time of severe labour shortages, the bank continued to insist on bringing men into the service as juniors. We might speculate that policy may have contributed to the number of women the banks hired. Surely the bank would find it more difficult to find suitable male employees when they had to compete with other industries who were prepared to pay higher wages from the start. The years of training before a bank officer made a decent wage would not have been attractive during the war when wages increased because of the shortage of male labour.

Contemporary accounts seem to suggest that women proved themselves satisfactory in banking. One woman wrote, "She is giving to the public service that is just as speedy, just as efficient, and --may we hint it?--a more cheerful service than that heretofore received." This seems to have been a source of pride for women in the banks. They did so without the training available to male employees. The Rules and Regulations, which were revised during and shortly after the war, make no reference

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28 BNS Database. I was able to ascertain the time required to become trained by following the career paths of juniors through their promotion to clerk, or higher.
either to different labour processes for male and female clerks or any deskillning process to accommodate women. The trade journals, for instance, were concerned with the impact that decreased training would have on male employees and the future of the bank, which implies that they saw future bank clerks as male. More telling is the simple absence of articles outlining how to deskill labour processes in order to accommodate women that we will see were so prevalent in munitions. Instead, as we discussed in the analysis of attitudes regarding women's work, journals such as *Monetary Times* or *Journal of Canadian Bankers' Association* focused on explanations of why women made good temporary employees.

The only indication that any change to the work process was regarded as necessary to accommodate female clerks come from an article in the *Journal of the Canadian Bankers' Association*. The author argues that all managers recognise that female clerks were not as efficient as male clerks. Dismissing the fact that female employees received far less training than males, "bank managers were unanimous that ... the number of women required to complete a stated amount of work was found to be 30-50 percent greater than the staff of men."³⁰ Further, it was suggested that the average output of 100 men equalled that of 300 women. There was some sense that expectations were lowered for female clerks, and that managers allowed more time for females to finish the standardised work. Interestingly enough, the bank does not report any decline in efficiency or function over the course of the war.

³⁰ Murray, 327.
Further, the lack of any significant difference between the wages of male and female clerks suggests that there was little difference in efficiency.

Although dilution did not occur at the branch level at the BNS, I want to be careful not to give the impression that there was erosion of the sex-based differentiation in banks or that some process of degradation did not accompany women into the banks. As we've already seen, several processes preserved the equation that women were not skilled clerks or appropriate bank officers. Limiting women's access to promotion, which I discussed in chapter 6, served to keep women in lower positions with less responsibility and autonomy. Attitudes about women and marriage justified not training women or moving them to other branches to gain experience necessary for promotion also served to marginalise women and keep them from achieving skills. There is also evidence to suggest that women were assigned as stenographers when they were doing a much broader job. In her study of stenographic work, Lynne Marks found that many women listed as stenographers at the Bank of Nova Scotia actually performed a wide variety of tasks. Fewer than 20 percent of the women identified as stenographers in Mark's study performed purely stenographic functions. Indeed one woman was dismissed because the manager found her incapable of anything beyond strictly stenographic duties.\footnote{Marks, "New Opportunities," 30.} Identifying female employees as stenographers, when in fact they were expected to do the duties of clerks, further marginalized female employees by keeping them off the career
track, an issue I’ve already discussed. Instead of changing labour processes or introducing more mechanisation into what the bank considered efficient branch operation, the banks preferred to pay women the same wage as men and leave the labour process untouched. This is unusual. Generally when large numbers of women, or other workers defined as unskilled, enter an occupation designated as skilled, the labour process is degraded in order to make the work “suitable” for the new employees. This pattern occurred at the Head Office and, as we will see, in munitions plants, but it did not occur in branch banks. However, women directly replacing men in skilled work at the bank did not undermine concepts of femininity. Bankers and commentators worked to redefine femininity to include banking without redefining the work of the bank as feminine or redefining masculinity and femininity. In the branch banks dilution did not occur, with the exception of the larger branches where mechanisation and specialisation occurred.

MUNITIONS

The First World War witnessed technological changes that revolutionised the conduct of war. Technology was so prevalent that combatants described the war as “undisguisedly mechanical and inhuman.”32 Commanders and soldiers alike struggled to accommodate new weapons and the changes to tactics that accompanied

32 Siefried Sassoon as cited in Bill Rawling, Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 4
them. In fact, historians and commentators attributed high casualty rates, in part, to commanders' inability to accommodate the innovations. Inventions such as tanks, machine guns, and the use of poison gas gained widespread use on the Western Front.\footnote{33} One of the most 'successful' technological 'improvements' of the First World War was artillery, or firepower.\footnote{34} The accuracy and range of the artillery was vastly improved, as was the effectiveness of shells. Innovations in weaponry led to new strategy and tactics, including the sustained barrages that characterised the Western Front. The number of shells required for a campaign increased dramatically. For instance, it is estimated that during Ypres, in thirteen days the British fired 4,238,550 shells.\footnote{35} The increased demand for shells altered the process of manufacturing those shells. In particular, the need for complete uniformity in production led to technological innovations that made the process more automatic and less reliant on human skill.\footnote{36}

\footnote{33} There were also a great many inventions that never made it to the front, such as the large fish hook which was envisions as a way to remove German wire, or the huge Ingersoll Rand hydraulic boring machine. Morton, \textit{When Your Number's Up}, 135.

\footnote{34} For an excellent analysis regarding the impact of artillery innovations on the conduct of wars see Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, \textit{Fire-Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War, 1904-1945} (Boston: George Allaaan and Unwin, 1982).


\footnote{36} Canadian munitions works were required to conform to the specifications and machines of the British factories. The British factories were highly mechanized and standardized. See O.F.G. Hogg, \textit{The Royal Arsenal: Its Background, Origin and
During the war the British munitions industry, which included factories in many British colonies, was rapidly transformed into one that relied heavily on machinery that emphasised repetition work rather than skill. Essentially the manufacturers carried out an accelerated dilution process. The need to produce large numbers of shells to exact specification coincided with manufacturers' desire to reduce their labour costs by eliminating skilled workers. Jobs were broken down into their component parts not only so unskilled workers and machines could replace skilled men, but to ensure that the mass produced armaments met very specific standards. The need for absolute precision and mass production justified undermining the position of skilled craftspeople and trade unions. The munitions manufacturers, who were already familiar with the process of dilution, quickly converted machines into automatic or semi-automatic machines that would not require skilled labour. In her study of British engineering works, Barbara Drake demonstrates that the manufacturers added "foolproof" appliances to increase automation and make the work suitable for unskilled workers, many of whom were women. Gail Braybon has further argued that British factories subdivided work so that several unskilled workers or women could do a process previously done by a skilled man. Employers split a complex job into its component parts each done by a

separate operator. Wartime replacement workers, particularly women, learned only one or two processes.  

The Canadian munitions industry had to conform to the exact specifications of the British factories and there was close contact between the two countries facilitated by the Ministry of Munitions. Canadian manufacturers, like their British counterparts, brought in machines to replace the skilled workers they could not find in the necessary numbers. Indeed, the war afforded many employers a unique opportunity to alter radically their labour process with full government support. Patriotism and the needs of the war effort were used to suppress most worker protest over deskilling and mechanisation. “Mass production of munitions brought renewed managerial attempts to enhance ‘efficiency’ and ‘dilute’ craft skills,...” The employer had a “duty” to eliminate inefficiencies, and, as James Naylor demonstrates, workers concerns’ were devalued and regarded as “trivial and selfish in a world devastated by war.” Because many factories had to re-tool in order to produce munitions, owners could bring in new machines and new labour processes more easily than had they been attempting to apply scientific management to entrenched production models. Throughout the war, the trade journal Canadian

37 See Drake, 132; Braybon, 62 and Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, 116-117.


39 Naylor, 14.
*Machinery* was full of articles outlining the benefits of applying such principles to the manufacture of munitions. Articles introduced manufacturers to new machines or mechanisms that could turn traditional machines into foolproof machines. Others explained organisational techniques to increase efficiency.\(^40\) Essentially what they were doing was operating within the general context of dilution, which they were familiar with, and adapting to the special circumstances that resulted because of the war, including the shortage of male labour, skilled and unskilled. The Dilution Policy facilitated that process.

*Dilution as a Policy*

The British Ministry of Munitions developed and instituted the ‘Dilution Programme’ to mitigate the labour crisis in Britain. In Canada, the IMB Department of Labour introduced a similar policy. The Canadian policy was a close copy of the British policy in principle, which is not surprising given the IMB was an arm of the British Ministry of Munitions. In describing the Canadian policy Irish wrote, “The department frankly imitated the example set in England,...”\(^41\) The central difference between the two policies was that unlike the Ministry of Munitions, who, using leaving certificates and tribunals, exercised military control over workers and

\(^40\) Discussion of how this journal was sampled is in , fn ..

employers, Irish had very little authority over Canadian manufacturers or their employees. Effectively, the Dilution Policy was about two things at once: subdividing the work into component tasks, yielding a more detailed division of labour, sometimes with the assistance of machines, and increasing the number of women hired.

Ministry of Munitions Circular 129, issued in September of 1915, contained the foundation of the dilution policy:

(1) The employment of skilled men should be confined to work which could not be efficiently performed by less skilled labour or by women.
(2) Women should be employed on all classes of work for which they are suitable.
(3) Semi-skilled and unskilled men should be employed on any work which does not necessitate the employment of skilled men and for which women are unsuitable.

The intent was clearly the replacement of male workers who were capable of skilled work. The nature and scope of the replacement was articulated more fully in the Shells and Fuses Agreement in March of 1915. The government took great care to spell out the parameters of dilution because the unions in Britain, particularly the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), had immediately opposed the hiring of women. They recognised that hiring women would result in the degradation of the skilled component of their work. The union regarded women as a direct threat to

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their "hard-won hierarchy of labour, which elevated skilled labour to a class of its own."\textsuperscript{44} In the Shells and Fuses Agreement the government and unions agreed that particular jobs were skilled, that skilled men could not be replaced by unskilled men, that unions would be protected and that women were a wartime measure only and would be released after the war.\textsuperscript{45} Canadian unions also believed that the entrance of women into the metal shops threatened the position of the male craftsman. As was discussed in the previous chapter, some unions, such as the Empire Brass Works and the Toronto Street Railway workers, demanded the exclusion of women to protect the labour process. Others accepted women, but distinguished them as temporary workers. A few, such as Willys-Overland and Russell Motor Car company attempted to work with women to preserve the skilled nature of the work, whether through arguing for equal wages for equal work or other means.\textsuperscript{46} Regardless of the tactic, they were concerned that the labour process be protected.\textsuperscript{47}

The purpose of the dilution program, however, was to make it possible to operate the munitions factories in the face of a shortage of skilled labour. The only

\textsuperscript{44} Woollacott, \textit{On Her Their Lives Depend}, 117.

\textsuperscript{45} On the impact of the SFA on the degradation of work see, for example, Braybon and Summerfield; Braybon, \textit{Women Workers in the First World War}; Woollacott, \textit{On Her Their Lives Depend}.

\textsuperscript{46} See for example, \textit{The Toronto World}, July 11, 1918; the \textit{Toronto Globe}, June 18, 1918; \textit{Industrial Banner}, 17 May, 1918.

\textsuperscript{47} Naylor, 131-132.
way to do that was through the substitution of skilled male labour. Generally, the process of substitution was not simply direct, which would suggest that women could replace men on skilled work. Four kinds of substitution were recognised by the ministry as an acceptable implementation of the dilution policy:

1. complete or direct substitution (each woman replaced one man, doing all his work);
2. indirect substitution (women replaced unskilled or semi-skilled men while they moved on to more difficult work);
3. group substitution (several women replaced a smaller group of men);
4. substitution by rearrangement (the processes were changed, and women replaced men with the aid of improved or new machinery).

The distinctions reflect that the Ministry, and probably most manufacturers, regarded a deskillig of the work processes as a necessary accompaniment to the substitution of men by women. In effect, the Ministry operated on the assumption that women were not capable of skilled work, so processes requiring skill would need to be divided into processes that did not require skill so that fewer skilled workers could be hired. The architect of the dilution plan, Ben Henry Morgan, articulated this aspect of the policy most clearly. He wrote, "There is no doubt that war experience with women in engineering works has entirely destroyed all preconceived ideas as to what constituted skilled work. Previous to the outbreak of war fully skilled men were regularly employed on work which can now be performed by women after a few weeks of training. It is not that the woman is a skilled worker, but has been put to do a job which is a sub-division of skilled work on which a fully skilled man was

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48 Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, 61
previously employed. One of the reasons that the dilution policy was highly controversial in Britain, particularly with unions, was because it allowed, and even encouraged, manufacturers to change labour processes or simply redefine them as unskilled if they incorporated female employees.

The IMB’s policy, as articulated by Mark Irish, clearly reflected the British policy. “Dilution of Labour does not mean the substitution of a woman for a man, rather it is the spreading over either a greater time of a greater number of machines, the available men and, under charge of these men, placing women in their midst. For example: -- If one hundred men can produce quantity A, then mathematically two hundred men can produce quantity 2A. We had not the second hundred men, therefore the first hundred were “diluted” with one hundred women, the result being that one hundred men plus one hundred women produce quantity 2A. These measures, of course, are not perfectly accurate because trial has proved that one hundred men plus one hundred women sometimes only produces quantity 1 3/4A.”

The policy, like the British policy, assumed that women were incapable of work requiring skill and therefore if women were to be employed, the work had to be altered to accommodate them. In effect, the dilution policy created an environment

49 Ben Morgan, “Report” PRO, MUN 4/6361/14459

50 In fact there is some evidence to suggest that employers inaccurately reported the level and nature of substitution when it suited their bottom line. See for example, Braybon, 60-63; and Braybon and Summerfield, 50-56

51 Irish, “Dilution” in Canadian Machinery.
in which the participation of women in industries that relied on skilled male workers occurred without challenging gender ideology. As is evident from the following description of the Canadian policy in the Halifax Mail, there was little argument.

"Dilution of labor (sic) means, that under the sharp analysis of necessity, much mechanical work generally reckoned as "skilled" and heretofore reserved for "skilled men", can be sorted out and becomes within the capacity of unskilled or semi-skilled workers. By using the "skilled" labor (sic) with economy it can be made to go infinitely further and untrained labor(sic) be brought, under the guiding hand of the "skilled" into work were no one formerly imagined it could be used. The countless duplication of a single operation encountered in munitions making on a vast scale, lends itself peculiarly to this treatment."^ ^52

The policy that the IMB's Department of Labour adopted was firmly rooted in the principles of the larger process of deskilling that came with mechanisation and scientific management, a process already known to workers as dilution – a term that inferred the workforce was being watered down and weakened by the addition of women and other unskilled workers.53 The policy defined the ways that the dilution

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52 Mail, December 4, 1916.

53 Most simply dilution means a watering down or weakening of a solution. In the case of the workforce, speaking in terms of dilution inferred that the labour force was weakened. This reinforced the already accepted image of women as weaker and less capable than men did. Angela Woollacott identified dilutions with the "equation of women's bodies with water, floods and streams" as explored by Karl Theweliet, Male Fantasies I (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 272-88, in Woollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend, 91, f4.
process could incorporate the hiring of women, which was a necessary aspect of the wartime process, and it did so in such a manner as to maintain the construct that women were incapable of skill. This was accomplished in one of two ways. If women did work requiring skill, the work was redefined as unskilled. More commonly, women were not given the opportunity to do skilled work, which would have contradicted central assumptions about the nature of femininity. Instead, labour processes on a variety of work were deskilled to make them suitable for women workers.

Redefining Skill or Making Munitions Work “Women’s Work”

Manufacturers, IMB officials and other contemporary commentators remarked often that the true lesson of the war was that much of the work they previously identified as skilled was actually unskilled. In each case, what had indicated to the manufacturers that the work was unskilled was women’s success in the job. Rather than indicate that women were capable of skill, employers argued that the skill level of the work was exaggerated or could be mitigated through mechanisation. One manufacturer felt that women had done a wonderful job in munitions work, although he no longer had any in his factory. More importantly, he felt that employing women had demonstrated the value of mechanisation and routinisation. “the work on shells has taught them more than any technical education
could ever have done in so far as efficiency and despatch are concerned. They have realised to a great degree that time really means money, and any appliance that facilitates the handling of tools and materials on which they work relieves so much waste....”\textsuperscript{54} In addition to deskilling tasks thorough mechanisation and routinisation in order to make them suitable for women workers, employers also redefined the work without altering the work processes. Although simply redefining a particular task as unskilled happened less often than the deskilling of the work, both certainly served to maintain the traditional construction of femininity as not capable of skilled work.

Welding is one of the best examples that work was redefined as unskilled once women demonstrated an ability or an aptitude for. The use of oxy-acetylene blowtorches for the cutting and welding of metal was clearly an occupation that required skill. According to welders during the war, it was an occupation that required “Skill, concentration of mind, lightness of touch and deftness of hand and eye....” The development of the aeroplane industry in 1917 precipitated a shortage of welders and cutters. Employers, apparently much to their surprise, found that “the female temperament” contained the necessary qualifications for welding. It seems that an undisclosed number of women had demonstrated a high degree of proficiency as welders. In fact, the Carter Welding Co. of Toronto reported that a high number

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Toronto Globe}, September 15, 1918; also see PAC MG 30 A16, Volume 38, Flavelle file.
of female students went on to become successful operators in the field. The IMB aeroplane factory in Trenton employed female welders as did the Canadian Pacific Railway. However, regardless of their successes, employers did not regard the female welders as skilled workers. Instead they went to great lengths to rationalise that welding done by women was unskilled work.

Female welders were described as operators, a term used to describe other unskilled munitions workers. The CPR described the women as doing work that required "intelligence and training" as opposed to skill. More significantly, the work that women welders engaged in was limited to that which the employer defined as appropriate to their sex. What had occurred, as far as the industry was concerned, was that a line of work had opened in a new industry, which was "particularly suited to the employment of women workers." The welding necessary in aeroplane factories was "Of comparatively small dimensions, and light weight, and, from their very nature, necessitating the utmost reliability of manufacture." By defining the work as suitable for women, employers redefined welding and cutting certain aspects of the manufacture of aeroplane components as unskilled. This permitted employers

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55 One might also speculate that by proving that they could train women, the instructors were also demonstrating their own skill. See Canadian Machinery, Volume 32, and Railway Age Gazette, Volume 66, Number 2, 186 and Volume 68, Number 3, 245.

56 "Opinions Secured as to Women's Abilities in Various Occupations," Railway Age, Volume 66, Number 3 (January 17 1919), 186.

57 "Women Welders Use Oxy-Atylene Apparatus," Canadian Machinery, Volume 28 (XVIII), July 12, 1917, 47.
to hire women who were in reality operating as skilled workers as cheaper, unskilled operators. In doing so, they reaffirmed traditional gender ideology even as women defied it.

More common than simply redefining work as unskilled was the process of deskilling work to create “new” jobs which were simply components of the original job. Redefining work as unskilled because women could do it threatened male craftsmen because it undermined their status and position. The dilution policy instead encouraged employers to subdivide jobs into work suitable for women. While the central purpose of the IMB pamphlet was to illustrate the many jobs that women were capable of doing, it also clearly illustrated the importance of scientific management techniques. This was made clear in the foreword when Irish writes, “There are many and varied appliances which have been devised by engineers for convenient handling of small parts by women.... The photographs may be beneficial to manufacturers of munitions, in as much as they show novel and ingenious methods of tooling and general production,...”

Employers subdivided jobs into component parts because they believed it made the work more suitable for the unskilled female workers. Machines were used to further deskill jobs and increase efficiency of factories hiring women. The IMB argued that these steps were necessary for the employment of women and applauded manufacturers who took such steps. Irish believed that the manufacturer “faced with splendid courage the

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58 *Notes on the Employment of Women in Munitions.*
He did not point out that the application of the principles of scientific management led to greater efficiency and lower costs for most manufacturers. As factories were converted into munitions shops, the work was broken down into smaller tasks that were closely timed and supervised. The production of fuses offers an excellent example of the ways manufacturers altered the work to accommodate women without challenging gender ideology. There were two large fuse factories in Southern Ontario that had a high proportion of female help. Both factories had a similar division of labour. Only male employees did the core machining operations, such as the machining of the lower end from rough castings, usually on a lower floor separate from the women. Although they used automatic machines, they completed the work from start to finish. For example, the men turned and stamped the castings that made up the lower half of the fuse. As the castings came off the spindles, male inspectors immediately gauged and inspected the castings. In contrast, female operators worked on detail operations that were not as complex as the core operations. The machines they used were completely automatic, and set for only one specific task. The fuses would move along a conveyor and each operator was responsible for a certain part of the operation, such as the counterbore tap for the detent spindle. The next series of machines would then counterbore the spindle hole. The assembling of the fuses was also broken down into the component

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59 Irish to Flavelle, April 1917, PAC, MG 30, A16, Volume 33, Irish file.
parts so women operators only learned one part of the job. The organisation of the assembling department was described as “an efficient factor in the rapid assembly and inspection of the various fuse parts.” The process was as follows: “The girl operators and men inspectors are arranged along one side of a long table, the fuses being passed from one girl to another, each having her allotted duties to perform in the progressive assembling of the numerous parts. The fuses are placed in small pocket trays, each holding six fuses, these being moved from one operation to the next as each detail is performed, the movement being continuous.... The continuous nature of the operation is such that several girls are required for relief purposes.”

By organising the labour process in such a way, the company maintained a clear distinction between its skilled male workforce and the temporary unskilled female workforce. In doing so, they reinforced gender ideology. A similar situation occurred in factories machining 8-inch high explosive shells.

The production of high explosive shells involved rough, heavy work. The 8-inch howitzer was the second largest shell manufactured in Canada. A comparison of three factories producing the 8” howitzer clearly demonstrates that although men and women were engaged in very similar processes, women remained defined as unskilled. The descriptions of the three factories indicate that the difference between men’s and women’s work was somewhat artificial.

60 “Percussion Fuse Production with Female Labour Prominent,” Canadian Machinery, Volume 17 (March 8, 1917), 238-239.
All three of the factories were concerned with efficiency and the maintenance of high production levels. One author suggested that manufacturers dealt with the problems in one of two ways. Manufacturers chose either “a judicious combination of special and standard machine tools with such variations in tool equipment and handling methods as were due to the individual tool designers, or, a full equipment of specially built machine tools, each of which forms a unit of an inflexible system, the adoption of which allows the free use of unskilled labor(sic) with a maximum output, subject, however, to more frequent inspections.”61 The former approach relied on skilled labour more than the latter, and required less change to the labour processes in the shop. Two of the factories chose the former approach, and the third opted for the latter approach. Only the third factory hired women. Indeed the entire work of “machining, assembling and inspecting 8 in. shells and adaptors [was] accomplished by female help with one or two exceptions” in the third factory. The essential difference between the two types of factories was that in the factories that relied on skilled male workers, standard types of machines were set to do a maximum number of tasks. In the factory employing women, machines were set to do one task and the work was subdivided into separate handlings. The subdivision of work into a single operation on a machine rather than a maximum number of operations on a machine was the difference between the labour processes in the three factories and served to maintain the sexual division of labour. Simply, men were

regarded as capable of doing many operations on a single machine, and women were regarded as capable of doing a single operation on a single machine. The former required skill and the latter did not. Altering the labour process in such a manner made it possible to decrease the number of skilled workers necessary, which is clear from the following: “The subdivision of work resulted in about twenty-five separate handlings. While large, however, the time and labour involved is probably less, all told, than would be the case in a shop employing skilled mechanics and using standard types of machines which do a maximum number of operations at one setting.”

What is very interesting is that the three factories did not otherwise have substantially different labour processes. All of the factories, in an effort to maximise efficiency, organised the lay out of the shop floors to minimise slow down in work. In fact, diagrams of the three shops are almost identical regardless of the composition of the workforce. All three shops used labour saving devices such as conveyor belts and transportation tools. “The machines for each successive operation [were] arranged transversely across the length of the shop so that several streams of shells are proceeding parallel with each other....” More significantly,

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62 “Female Labor on 8 ins. High Explosive Shell Machining,” 207.

the shops employing the skilled male workforce used many of the same processes that were used ostensibly to make the work suitable for women. For instance, in order to make the process of drilling the nose of the shell "foolproof", drilling machines were modified so that the shell was properly aligned without the aid of the operator. Further, the drilling process itself was automated. All three factories eliminated the feed gears on lathe machines, opting for hydraulic power instead. Even in the photos of the three shops, the machines and processes depicted were similar. Men and women appeared to be doing similar jobs. However, in the shops employing men maintaining the machines remained the responsibility of the operator in most cases. Joy Parr found that often the only difference between skilled male machinists and female operators in knitting factories was that men maintained their machines and women did not. The composition of the job was as dependent on social conditions as it was on the properties of the technology. In the woven textile trade "'It was looked upon as a law of nature that a man could set a machine and a woman could not.'" Similar assumptions directed job composition in munitions factories as well. At McAvity's men set up and maintained the machines that women operated as they did at Packard Fuse. Even in the case of welding, some degradation to the labour process existed. Female welders, like their sister machinists, did not have full autonomy over the labour process. They were carefully

64 Ibid.

65 Parr, 69.
constrained in a manner that male welders were not. Female welders were regarded as capable of only certain tasks or types of work, whereas male welders were thought capable of doing a wide array of tasks.

Conclusion

Manufacturers and officials of the IMB linked mechanisation and routinization to the hiring of women. By doing so, they undermined the challenge to gender posed by female workers in skilled men's jobs. When Stellite used a picture of a woman operating a machine to sell its product, the message was not that women were metal workers. Having a woman in the ad likely indicated that the machine made tasks so simple that anyone, even a woman, could do it. As the following description of the dilution process in one factory illustrates, the war did not make women skilled workers. Machines and changes to the labour process altered skilled work into something that women could do.

Lifting tackle, ..., compressed air chucks, for holding work in its place to be machined, numerous devices for automatically stopping a process when complete, roller tracks got taking forgings to and from machines, these and other mechanisms so modified the fundamentals of shop practice that women successfully did all operations on 9.2" shells....It was not long before manufacturers learned that women did not

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displace men. There were too many successful shops in which each sex had graduated to its most productive duty.\textsuperscript{67}

Women's participation was made possible by mechanisation and deskillling for the production of munitions. The changes were clearly regarded as wartime, temporary phenomena. At the Bank of Nova Scotia, unlike munitions factories where a fundamental change in the labour process accompanied women's entrance into the workforce, the BNS did not alter the labour process. Women replaced men and did men's work in the majority of branch banks. With the exception of the Head Office and the largest urban branches, the process of dilution was not evident.

Conceivably, the dilution process, which opened occupations in the machine trades to women, was evidence of a challenge to traditional gender ideology. Certainly women were trained and employed in jobs that had been reserved for men before the war and they received higher wages than those that accompanied traditional women's work. Rather than shattering key stereotypes about women, however, the dilution process reinforced them. In Canada as in Britain, dilution was a term that was familiar to employers, government and workers as factory work was increasingly deskillled. As I have discussed, the literature on wartime dilution disseminated to Canadian manufacturers was concerned with employing women and with a general deskillling of work. Where women replaced men, either the job became identified as unskilled regardless of its previous designation, or as with

\textsuperscript{67} PAC, MG 30, A16, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 55, History of the Imperial Munitions Board, 14/08/1919.
fuses, the method of manufacturing was deskilled to accommodate women. In the banks, dilution was less overt and the result was that women maintained a foothold, albeit tenuously, in the masculine world of branch banking. There was not dilution in terms of reduced efficiency or deskilling at the BNS as a result of the influx of female employees. Rather, the traditional gender ideology was maintained through a variety of ideological processes and policies aimed at reinforcing the difference between men and women. However, at least through the war, men and women did the same job and although the number of women increased, it did not mean that the skill required day to day diminished.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Figure 26: Women Munitions Workers

The women pictured above were munitions workers at the national aeroplane factory in Trenton. Among them are welders, drillers, sewers, cleaners, clerks,

1 City of Toronto Archives, William James Collection, SC244-860. Used with permission.
matrons and women who did jobs that we have yet to identify. They stand behind a soldier, which wonderfully illustrates their purpose for dressing like men and doing men’s work. They were the women behind the men behind the guns. Behind the workers stand men who we can surmise are the skilled mechanics and foremen who run the shop. To the right, still overseeing her charges rather than looking at the camera, stands an older woman who was likely the matron. In many ways, this picture encapsulates much of what I discovered about munitions work, and for that matter banking, during the First World War.

The primary goal of this study was to answer several fundamental questions regarding the scope of women’s wartime experience, but to do so without becoming mired in the binary discourse which characterises the historiographical debate on women and war. By this means alone could I properly analyse the nature of women’s experience. The latter was easier than the former. I found it difficult to avoid entirely weighing in on whether or not the war emancipated or liberated women. The nature of this topic to some extent begs that the issue be addressed. In trying to ascertain more clearly what the war meant to women and to their relationship to society I came to conclude that both sides of the debate are legitimate. What some women did during the war, and the opportunities available to them, was undeniably remarkable. Women’s participation in the two industries brought women into the public sphere and dressed some of them as men and gave them the chance to be paid significantly higher wages to do men’s work. The female clerk in Star City made more money than her male colleague and conducted the business of a branch bank. In doing so,
she challenged the definitions of femininity and masculinity. At the same time, the opportunities did not translate into a shift in beliefs about gender. Femininity remained defined in much the same way at the end of the war as it had at the beginning. I find no contradiction in this middle road. In fact, I find that it offers an excellent perspective by which to examine the complexities and nuances of women's experience of the First World War.

A central feature of this work was simply to enumerate what women did during the war in these two industries. Clearly, some women's horizons were dramatically altered. We cannot overlook how remarkable it may have been to see women working in munitions and in banks. At the same time, we have to bear in mind that those extraordinary opportunities were available primarily to white women in central Canada. In the case of banking, the opportunities were also restricted to women from a respectable working-class or middle-class background. Nonetheless, those women gained access to men's work, which was remarkable for the time. The scope and nature of that access was different in both industries. Women's opportunities in munitions were really very limited. So although some of their jobs were completely divergent from anything women had done before the war, the number of women who had such opportunities was very low. Indeed, it is likely that only 3% of women in manufacturing worked in munitions. Once the war was over, there is no evidence to suggest that women maintained even limited access to the fields that had opened to them during the war. By contrast, in 1918 the number of women on staff in branches at the BNS had tripled. What was more remarkable was
the fact that women comprised 50 percent of the clerks on staff in branches in that year.

I am careful to qualify these conclusions with the caveat that they are not applicable to all women across Canada. In fact, it is clear that they are really only applicable to women in central Canada. There is only one instance where the war resulted in a long-term change to women’s opportunity, and that was in the bank. The bank’s experience with women clerks during the war translated into a long-term change in the composition of the branch bank workforce. The bank continued to hire women as clerks, a job to which they gained access because of the war.

However remarkable the experiences of women during the war, they did little to undermine traditional beliefs about gender ideology. This may at first seem puzzling. The evidence suggests that it would be logical to expect that women’s opportunities in the paid workforce would threaten contemporary ideas about masculinity and femininity. After all, women did operate successfully in men’s domain. Part of the explanation for the continuity of gender ideology is simply the limited nature of women’s participation, particularly in munitions. The explanation requires more than a reiteration of the scope of women’s work.

Canadians seemed proud of women’s participation and there were remarkably few hostile reactions to what must have been an affront to accepted notions about gender ideology. We should be careful not to conclude that women’s wartime participation was completely non-threatening to Canadians. There were signs that what women did during the war pushed at the boundaries of femininity. Concerns
about women’s health and safety; the IMB’s insistence that matrons be employed to supervise female employees; Mark Irish’s request to censor stories about women workers; the reaction of various unions and of female bankers all suggest that Canadians did not receive women workers with equanimity. However, the process of ideological accommodation that accompanied the women workers into the metal shops and banks assuaged their concerns. Significantly, women’s participation was characterised in such a way that it reinforced rather than challenged gender. Equally significantly, women’s work did not in any way challenge the notion that women were a reserve army of labour. With the exception of female bank clerks, everything women did was temporary. Women were simply a pool of available labourers that could be used in an emergency. The women who worked in munitions and banking met every one of the characteristics of a reserve army. They competed with one another, they were impermanent and they were cheap. Even as wages increased, they were still cheaper in the long run than male workers.

The process of dilution accompanied women into the workforces of both industries, albeit not equally, and served to further reaffirm traditional gender ideology. Women did not directly replace men in skilled work in munitions. The labour process was mechanised and routinised to make the jobs suitable for women, who were by definition unskilled. By breaking down jobs into component tasks, employers and male workers preserved skill as a masculine characteristic. This was a conscious choice on the part of employers, as was illustrated in the case of the production of High Explosive shells. Employers made a distinction between what
women could do and what men could do. Men could operate a machine that was set
to do a maximum number of processes; women could only operate a machine set to
do one process, and a man was required to maintain and set the machine. The
degradation of the labour process maintained women's secondary position and the
belief that they were incapable of skilled work. A similar process began in the Head
Office and large urban branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia, but did not occur in the
majority of branches. In fact, women directly replaced men in skilled positions and
occasionally were remunerated at salary levels equal to or greater than those paid
male colleagues. Of course, female clerks did not reduce the efficiency of the branch
bank, nor did they reduce the service offered the customers. The bank was not forced
to hire a greater number of employees because a higher proportion of their staff was
female. This completely challenged notions about femininity, but did not result in a
redefinition of gender ideology.

Despite successful participation in non-traditional jobs, the war left the
underlying definitions of masculinity and femininity unchanged. During the war,
women's waged work was regarded as heroic. Women in munitions factories were
making a sacrifice similar to the one men made when they joined the army. The
hundreds of women who took advantage of the opportunities that the war presented
were characterised as doing a patriotic duty; ironically, this marginalised them.
Regardless of what women did, it was a temporary wartime experience made
necessary by the circumstances in which the country found itself. In that atmosphere,
employers and commentators could justify women operating outside of the normal
gender boundaries. Similarly, at the bank, women workers did not change the thinking about women so much as it ultimately changed the thinking about banking. That shift did not occur during the war because it was not necessary. A process of ideological accommodation that rationalised female bank staff in terms of an emergency wartime measure mitigated any shift in the attitudes of bank managers.

Although I have found many answers, I am left with several questions about women's experience of war. Chief among them is a question about the relationship between women's wartime work and their enfranchisement. If fundamental beliefs about women did not change, as I argued in chapters six and seven, why then did so many commentators believe that women's wartime participation earned women the right to vote. Prime Minister Borden himself gave women's participation as justification for taking the step to grant the federal franchise to women after the war. He was not alone in his beliefs. In fact it makes some sense. Interest in suffrage declined during the war as women joined other voluntary pursuits. If the suffrage movement did not pressure the government, the argument runs, it seems only logical that women won the franchise because the government was grateful. Certainly that must mean that attitudes about women changed during the course of the war. I would suggest just the opposite. Women were praised and rewarded for behaving like women, not because definitions about femininity fundamentally changed. In the context of the war, many activities normally regarded as inappropriate for women were justified because they were deemed essential to the war and the support of the men fighting in the trenches. Women's work outside of the home, when defined as
essential to the war effort remained within the bounds of appropriate femininity. Women working in the home were subordinate to men working outside the home. When women worked outside the home during the war they were no less subordinate even when they worked in jobs that were regarded as men's work. In a time of war, the war effort is paramount and soldiers are the highest status members of society. Even making bombs or operating banks, women remained in their "rightful" place in support of and subordinate to men. This is an area that requires more research.

Women's volunteer work, which I also see as inextricably linked to their enfranchisement, also requires more research. In fact, this study identifies several more gaps in the historiography that need to be addressed in order to understand women's wartime experience. For example, more research is required on women in other occupations and in other regions of Canada. Although Linda Kealey and James Naylor have examined women's participation in unions during the war, more work needs to be done on the relationship among working-class women. A greater understanding of rural women's experience across Canada would be invaluable. Further, more regional studies are needed. In some parts of British Columbia, for instance, the lives of women did not change as a result of the war. Most importantly, and perhaps most difficult, more research is needed that gives voice to the women themselves and what they thought about the war.

Women may have done extraordinary things throughout the war. Their work in munitions and the banks far exceeded the boundary of what was deemed acceptable for women. Had they been perceived as doing it for themselves in order to
gain equality, I think that there would have been a much stronger reaction. However, everything that women did was regarded as part of the broader, national effort. Women’s wartime experience was part of a militarised context. All activities supported the military. If women, rather than men, made ‘bombs’, more men could fight. It did not mean that women could, or should, manufacture munitions. Similarly, if women minded the tellers’ cage, it meant more men could fight. It did not mean that women were good bankers.
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APPENDIX 1

LIST OF OCCUPATIONS AVAILABLE TO WOMEN

Adapters (Fuse)
   All machine operations.
   Assembling and packing.

Aeroplanes –
   Wing Covers:
       Machining and stitching,
       Doping, sizing, varnishing,
       Putting covers on main wings,
       Solution work (fastening envelope parts by solution),
       Assisting in the Rigging Department on wire splicing.

Light Wood and Metal Work
   Building and making ribs and small parts in wood.
   Finishing ribs, spars, etc.,
   French polishing,
   Wood screwing and gluing for framework,
   Acetylene welding on metal parts and fittings for stays and struts,
   Inspection of small parts,
   Marking pressure and other gauges in connection with fittings on cards and metal,
   Cleaning up and bending the metal fittings before enameling and enameling,
   Simple fitting and assembling of bomb dropper parts.

Aeroplane Engines
   Operating light automatic machines on parts of aeroplane engines and
   turning piston rings,
   Plain milling, drilling, filing and simple fitting,
   Milling, fluting, turning taps.

Bearings
   Fettling
   Drilling small parts on multiple spindle drill,
   Grinding,
   Sorting steel balls and rollers,
   Turning and grinding ball races,
   Assembling cages for ball bearings.

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1 These occupations are taken from a list sent to Irish by Ben Henry Morgan and represent a general idea of what women were doing in Britain and elsewhere. The purpose was to indicate to Irish what Canadian women might do for the munitions industry. PAC, MG 30 A16, Volume 38.
Viewing.

Boiler and Engine Fittings
- Dial writing,
- Pressure gauge making,
- Making asbestos washers,
- Core making in foundry,
- Glass grinding.

Bolts
- Operating turret and capstan lathe,
- Bolt making on automatic machines.

Bombs
- Core making Howitzer bombs,
- Boring, drilling, turning of Howitzer bombs,
- Welding trench bombs,
- Cleaning, varnishing, painting, testing and inspecting.

Brass Casting
- Core making for small castings,
- Fettling, cleaning, fitting, putting together and machining small parts,
- Tending drilling machines and lathes,
- General stamped work – press hands, stamping and lathes.

Breech Mechanisms
- Actual operations on breech rings and other mechanism with connection with breech of 6” guns.
- All fitting on breeches of 3” submarine guns,
- Drilling holes in “T” axial vents for 60-pdr. Guns.

Bullets
- Moulding shrapnel bullets.
- Washing
- Pressing
- Gauging and viewing.

Carbons
- Rolling, shaping and cutting to lengths electric light carbons for batteries for field telephones and trench electric torches.

Cartridges
- All processes on .303 cartridges,
- Making and packing blasting cartridges,
- Making grummets in connection with cartridge manufacture,
- Filling charges with cartridges,
- Bandolier testing and filling.

Cartridge Cases
- Turning, buffing, gauging, rolling out dents, sizing, tapping, softening and reforming (hydraulic process).

Chains
- Turning parts of conveyer chain links,
Recessing ends of Lincoln pins.

**Cranes**
- Operating electric overhead travelling cranes in general engineering shop.

**Crucibles**
- Work on clay to make crucibles of brass and iron foundries.

**Electric Motors and Apparatus**
- Stamping for armature cores,
- Core filling,
- Filling and trimming cores on 2,000 kilowatt generator,
- Filling up and assembling brass brush rocker and parts,
- Armature winding (up to 100 m.p.h)
- Coil, rotor, and stator winding, mica cutting,
- Manufacture of small transformers,
- Electrical wiring and fitting up of lighting and telephone installations,
- Switch gear polishing,
- Plating and dipping,
- Work in meter shops, testing rooms, and in Instrument Department,
- Assembling electric switches, small motors and small electric fittings,
- Cable covering,
- Operating cable insulating machines.

**Files**
- Machine cutting
- Branding, straightening and dry grinding,
- File cutting by hand.

**Filling (shells, smoke and gas bombs, grenades, star shells)**

**Fuses**
- Every machine operation in the manufacture of 65A, 100, 121, 44 and 18 fuses, and sizing, tapping, lacquering, gauging, electric-plating and polishing.

**Gun Sights**
- Work in Sight Department
- Working slotting machine on steel links,
- Slotting sight elevator bars,
- Tool work on dividing head,
- Fitting up parts,
- Inspecting,
- Working drills.

**Hand Grenades**
- Core making, casting, drilling, turning, tapping, milling, fitting up, finishing, assembling, loosening screw top, examining, cleaning, lacquering, filling, packing.

**Horseshoes**
- Drilling

**Machine Guns**
- Profiling,
- Cross Milling,
Machining parts,
Bench work on the less intricate fitting operations.

Manufacture of Machine Tools (over 125 occupations listed)

For eg.
- Milling square turrets for lathes
- Operating slot milling machines,
- Operating vertical milling machines making spiral scrolls,
- Milling lathes brasses,
- Milling key-seating in shafts,
- Turning and boring wheel blanks,
- Turning details for machine tools on turret lathers.
- Saw sharpening,
- Making flanges,
- Operating sensitive drill.

Motor Cycles
- Sand-blasting (cleaning)
- Shaft straightening,
- Scouring plating,
- Wheel building (fixing spokes),
- Assembling throughout,
- Machining all small engine parts.

Explosives
- Abelite — every process in production: drying TNT and nitrate of ammonia and grinding, mixing, cartridging and packing the same.
- Ballistite — all processes: mixing, pressing and sifting nytro-glycerine and cordite paste.
- Collodin Cotton — all processes: picking, teasing, drying, boiling, pulping, centrifugaling, pressing and drying.
- Cordite—pressing cordite dough into cords and strands, blending, reeling, drying and packing.
  (women capable of similar duties for 5 other explosives)

General Labouring
- Carrying and shoveling loam,
- Galleting — putting up of ore into briquettes for placing in furnace.
- Bagging and wheeling in slag manure,
- Washing and daubing oven doors,
- Loading at screens,
- Loading soap into wagons,
- Dry-soap making,
- Sorting scrap iron,
- Clearing up,
- Cleaning,
- Weighing and loading carboys on carts,
- Filling charging barrows with ore and weighing limestone.