

**LEARNING TO BE 'UNCIVIL':
CLASS FORMATION AND FEMINISATION
IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA 1966 - 1996**

by

Rosemary Warskett

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
November 1997

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0-612-26889-6

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Abstract

What kinds of associations did Canadian 'civil servants' form in the postwar period? Why and how did they learn to become 'uncivil', transforming themselves into militant unionists during the 1980s and 1990s? These questions are addressed theoretically and empirically through a case study of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). In 1966, PSAC leaders adopted a consultative, harmonious approach to staff relations, organizing the newly formed union to reflect the federal civil service's structure and practice. Class and gender divisions were submerged, hidden beneath the historical and ideological construction of the civil service as a distinctive, politically neutral category. Cracking apart of the unity of federal 'civil servants' began to occur in the 1960s. Class and gender divisions started to come to the fore with the expansion of the Canadian federal state, the increase of women in administrative support roles, and the enactment of collective bargaining rights.

During the 1970s and 1980s, working class formation and capacity developed within the Canadian labour movement in concert with feminism, even though the legal structuring of labour relations continued to limit this class and gender formation. In this respect the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Employment Act continued to reproduce the practices of the social category of civil servants. Nevertheless, within the PSAC, collective

bargaining, the right to strike and the pay equity provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act produced openings for learning and strategizing around subordinate class and gender issues and demands. Predominately female clerical workers, successfully challenged the structure and practices of the traditional 'civil service' associations. They learned to strategize and to incorporate a working class, feminist discourse into the union's practices. In the process the demand for pay equity was redefined and transformed into a demand of wage equity for all members, thus becoming a source of solidarity during the PSAC's 1991 general strike. PSAC activists learned to use openings in state structures to transform union agency, despite the existence of a legal regime that continues to constrain the development of working class and feminist capacities.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their support. Without the fellowship I received from the Council I would not have given up my 'day job' and undertaken full-time doctoral studies. My life would have taken a very different path.

Wallace Clement's support of my work is very much appreciated. His commitment to uncovering the basis of class divisions in advanced capitalist societies influenced me to take the research direction that I did. Thanks also go to Bruce McFarlane who, when I met him in the corridors and paths of Carleton, always urged me on with wisdom and good advice. Rianne Mahon as both colleague and friend encouraged me with her intellectual integrity and rigour. Her 'unequal structure of representation' has been a continual source of inspiration to me. It was this concept that made me look more closely at 'the cracks' in the administrative state.

Members and staff of the Public Service Alliance of Canada need special mention. In particular Penny Bertrand and Bob Allen whose understanding of unions and the importance of skiing offered a balance that I needed. I owe a debt to all the Alliance activists I worked with over the years, they inspired many of the ideas in this study.

Thanks go to all my friends who kept me going in difficult times, too numerous to mention here. In particular, Emer Killean is more than a friend. She

helped in so many different ways. Margie Mendell cheered me up with all the dinners and glasses of wine we shared over the telephone. Finally my love and gratitude go to my family, particularly Sam and Jay. Without their support, their good soup and dessert to cheer me up, this project would have been more difficult.

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List of Abbreviations

CHRA	Canadian Human Rights Act
CHRC	Canadian Human Rights Commission
CIO	Committee for Industrial Organization
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CLRB	Canada Labour Relations Board
CNTU	Confederation of National Trade Unions
CPEA	Canadian Postal Employees Association
CPU	Council of Postal Unions
CSAC	Civil Service Association of Canada
CSFC	Civil Service Federation of Canada
CSN	Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
CUPW	Canadian Union of Postal Workers
GLT	General Labour and Trades Group
IRDIA	Industrial Relations Disputes Investigation Act
LCUC	Letter Carriers Union of Canada
NAC	National Action Committee on the Status of Women
NJC	National Joint Council
OWW	Organized Working Women
PIPS	Professional Institute of the Public Service
PRB	Pay Research Bureau
PSAC	Public Service Alliance of Canada
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSEA	Public Service Employment Act
PSSRA	Public Service Staff Relations Act
PSSRB	Public Service Staff Relations Board
SORWUC	Service Office and Retail Workers' Union of Canada

Chapter One

Learning To Be 'Uncivil'

For the learner is not a passive and mechanical recipient, a gramophone record ----- even if the liturgical conformity of examinations sometimes makes him appear so. The relation between these educational forms and the child's psychology is always active and creative, just as the relation of the worker to his tools is active and creative (Gramsci, "On Education" 1971:42)

The Canadian state has experienced remarkable changes since the end of World War II. The postwar political settlement resulted in radically reorganized state administrations in Canada as in other liberal-democratic societies. At that time, Canadian federal and provincial state policies were directed at preventing a repeat of the depression and the social unrest that developed in the late 1930s and 1940s. This entailed the development of policies directed at controlling market failures, the development of social welfare programmes and the extension of collective bargaining rights (Albo 1993 & Jenson 1990). In Canada the expansion of the welfare state took the form of a liberal rather than social-democratic regime (Esping-Andersen 1989). Nevertheless, Canadian state policies were directed at the elimination of regional disparities and the distribution of social and economic benefits based on the principles of universality and equality of opportunity. As in other liberal democracies, this resulted in a greatly expanded state both in terms of state agencies and government administration.

In the twenty years following the end of the war the Canadian industrial relations scene changed significantly. In the early 1960s the representatives of

labour and business, within the arenas of the economy and politics, were well into the process of forging a distinctly Canadian version of the postwar settlement. By the 1960s the certification approach to collective bargaining, which had facilitated collective bargaining in the large industrial plants, began to produce results for employees within government departments, hospitals and other recently expanded state institutions. At the beginning of the 1970s the majority of state employees had opted to become members of unions and engage in collective bargaining with state managers (Rose 1984).

By the late 1970s, it was apparent that the postwar settlement was increasingly under pressure. Recurring economic crisis and double digit inflation led to repeated attempts by federal and provincial governments to impose wage controls on state employees (Panitch & Swartz 1993). It was clear by the mid-1980s that the period of progressive reforms was at an end and that Canada, and many of its provinces, were following Britain and the United States in developing the politics of neo-liberalism (Wolfe 1989). One of the effects of this form of politics has been the reconstruction of the public/private institutional distinction. The notion of public and state activity has undergone a radical change both ideologically and practically, although in hindsight these changes had been in the making since the mid-1970s. State activity and public enterprise has fallen into disrepute in popular depictions of reality. The administration of state and government is now constructed as inefficient and unproductive with private economic activity being perceived as beneficial and

positive. While high inflation and high interest rates contributed significantly to the ballooning of government deficits during the 1980s, neo-liberal arguments for deficit reduction portrayed the state, both in terms of its administration and the generosity of its social programmes, as spendthrift.

By the beginning of the 1990s, a new era of capital formation and expansion was well underway together with a complete restructuring of the Canadian state and its administration (Mahon 1993). Both federal and provincial state administrations were and still are engaged in a process of 'lean and mean' restructuring. Cutbacks, privatization, own-account employment and layoffs are the order of the day in keeping with the 'new right's' mantra of competitive austerity (Albo 1993). In part as a reaction to this austerity, 'civil servant' strife has become a constant feature of life in Canada over the last ten years. The redefining of the public/private distinction, however, has gone virtually uncontested by opposition political parties, leaving 'civil servants' unions with an uphill battle, fighting the policies directed at dismantling the social programmes put in place in the immediate postwar period.

At this point in the late twentieth century, the term civil servant has an archaic ring since in many liberal-democratic state bureaucracies, civil servants, at lower and middle levels of government administration, are now members of unions (Ferner & Hyman 1992; Kumar 1991). In many cases they have opted to organize, negotiate, demonstrate and at times to strike in support of their collective interests as employees. In this sense they have learned to be 'uncivil'

and 'unservant' like.¹ This study outlines a theoretical approach to civil servant unionization in Canada, and utilises it to examine the development of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC),² the largest union of employees working within the Canadian federal government system. In this sense it is about 'civil servants' and the kinds of unions they organize and form. In broader terms, it contributes to the debate about the difference between public and private sector workers, their class location and the kinds of resistance in which they engage. There are two main objectives. The first is to reconstruct a theoretical approach to 'servants of the state'³ which can fruitfully explain both the developing militancy of civil service unions throughout the 1980s and the form that these unions took in Canada over the last 25 years. The second objective is to use the approach developed in the first three chapters to explain the developing militancy of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the largest union formed by those in lower and middle level positions within the federal government bureaucracy.

Images of PSAC resistance in 1991 contrast sharply with those of the

¹ The title for this thesis was sparked by a brief sentence in Craig Heron's book The Canadian Labour Movement in which he writes about the new resistance by public sector workers during the 1960s and 1970s. He points out that by the mid-1970s "Government employees had thus become decidedly uncivil (1989:109)". The title was decided on after a discussion with Rianne Mahon.

² Within the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) it is common to refer to the union as the Alliance. This name together with the acronym PSAC is used throughout the text.

³ This is the term used by Ralph Miliband in The State in Capitalist Society (1969).

same union at the point of its inception in 1966. In 1966 the largely male member association of the Civil Service Association of Canada (CSAC) and the Civil Service Federation of Canada (CSFC) came together to debate the formation of their future union -- the Public Service Alliance of Canada. They were concerned to project a vision of themselves as moderate, responsible civil servants, more than willing to continue consultation and maintain harmonious relations with the employer. It was a form of labour/management relations that was in marked contrast to the militant actions undertaken by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) in the struggle to win the legal right to bargain and strike (White 1990).

In the fall of 1991 the image of the PSAC that appeared in newspaper pictures and articles across Canada was fundamentally different. Not only were members of this union involved in one of the largest strikes ever organized in Canada, but 'feminist' issues such as pay equity were amongst the most vigorously supported demands. In twenty-five years the union appeared completely transformed. This case study attempts to identify the forces within the PSAC that were successful in changing the orientation of the union. It also asks why certain radical challenges failed. It is a story that ends five years after the PSAC general strike of 1991, the high point of resistance by the members of this union. By 1991 members of the PSAC had become 'decidedly uncivil' given their origins as obedient public servants.

One of the main arguments of this study is that the roots of 'civil servant'

dissent are to be found long before the current restructuring of the state. The roots of their militancy are to be found in the actual expansion of the state in the 1950s and 1960s, the growing fragmentation and differentiation of the civil service during this period, together with the acquisition of collective bargaining rights in the 1960s. By the early 1970s the second wave of feminism was gathering strength and influence within all Canadian institutions including unions. The development and impact of union feminism was felt particularly within unions of state workers. Not only were these unions composed of large numbers of female members but government policies of pay and employment equity fed into their demands for equality both at the workplace and within the union. These issues and union feminism in general became important ingredients in shaping the militancy that developed during the 1980s.

My overall argument is that the civil service that developed in Canada at the federal level, from the turn of the century onwards, began to be changed radically during the 1960s. The current militant response of many civil service unions to the restructuring of the Canadian state is the culmination of the learning that started in the postwar period and that gained strength and greater focus with the acquisition of legal collective bargaining rights and the development of union feminism. The form of unionism that developed within the Alliance was a unique combination of working class and feminist capacities, mobilized and organized during the 1980s. The mobilization culminated in the general strike of 1991. This general thesis is explored both theoretically and

empirically throughout the study.

Chapter Outline

Chapter two begins with a discussion of theoretical approaches to the Canadian state, its administration and 'servants of the state.' It argues that neo-marxist approaches of the 1970s to understanding state and class were overly deterministic. While neo-marxist state theories contribute to our understanding of the state, I argue that an emphasis on the strategic selectivity of the state can overcome the problems of determinism associated with them; this emphasis allows for an understanding of the role of human agency and open-ended outcomes. In the second section the role played by state administration and the social category of 'civil servant' in the construction of the dominant hegemony is considered (Gramsci 1971; Poulantzas 1978; Mahon 1984). This approach is examined in the context of the Canadian administrative state in the third section. In the last part of this chapter the structure/agency approach adopted in the case study of the Alliance is discussed.

Chapter three questions the thesis that the working class is no longer an agent of change within liberal-democratic societies. This is followed by the development of the proposition that the feminisation of the Canadian labour movement has the potential to expand working class capacities and develop a different kind of counter-hegemony from that established during the postwar period. This chapter also addresses the question of the class location and

capacity of those working within the Canadian state and the changes that occurred from 1950 onwards. It makes the argument that the same class locations are found in the production of state services as in the production of goods and services in the private sector. What is different is the form of unionism that is produced on the strategic terrain of the state.

Chapter four explores the 'feminisation' of the Canadian union movement. It also examines the Canadian collective bargaining system and the gender and class biases embedded in this system. It makes the argument that although the Canadian labour movement, in important senses, has become feminised, there are fundamental ways, linked to the legal collective bargaining system, in which unions remain unchanged. Although union feminism has increased the working class capacity of the Canadian labour movement, it has been unable to overcome the gender and class biases and limitations of both the collective bargaining system and other legal processes such as pay and employment equity. It is argued that the strategic limitations of the labour relations system are more restrictive for civil service unions in general and the PSAC in particular.

With **chapter five** the study focuses on the case of the PSAC. It briefly traces the development of the federal Civil Service unions before 1966. The formation of the PSAC in 1966 occurred in concert with the institution of legal collective bargaining rights in 1967 in the form of the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA). The beginning of the 'cracking' of the social category of

'civil servants' in the immediate postwar period is attributed to a number of factors: the growth of state administration and its expansion both vertically and hierarchically; the contradictory goals of the newly expanded state structure; the growth of working class positions occupied by women who were limited to secretarial and clerical work and denied career mobility; the granting of legal collective bargaining rights and the developing discourse of the second wave of feminism that began to transform the Canadian union movement in the 1970s.

In **chapter six** I explore various challenges to the conservative 'civil service' union leadership of the 1970s. All of these challenges failed to develop a new solidarity and identity among the PSAC membership. I argue that the PSAC, structured to reflect the Canadian state's administrative structure, fed rivalry and dissent among components and opposition to the centre. The PSSRA created bargaining units that crossed component lines and fragmented the structure of the union. The strike action of the 'blue collar', male-dominated General Labour and Trades Group (GLT) in 1975 brought this contradiction to the fore. It is claimed that the PSAC's discourse and practices were structured and organized around consultation and consent with the upper levels of the 'civil service'-- in other words, in order to maintain the social category of 'civil servants'. Challenges could not be successful until the discourse and organization of the union were fundamentally changed.

In **chapter seven** the focus shifts to the clerks' strike, involving nearly a third of the members of the union. It was this strike that required the union

leaders and activists to learn and change. The learning and change occurred in immediate and dramatic ways when clerks, seventy-five percent of them women, walked out without the union's permission. The clerks in effect 'disobeyed' the male-dominated union leadership and violated parts of the PSAC constitution and collective bargaining regulations. In this sense they struck their own union. The leadership had no choice but to bring the regulations in line with the clerks' action, much in the same way that the federal government earlier had to bring the PSSRA in line with postal workers strike action.

The clerks' strike was the crystallizing point for the new PSAC. Reverberations from the conflict echoed throughout the union during 1980s in terms of the development of union feminism and militant unionism. It is argued that feminisation and working class formation became cemented and constituted together in the process of contesting both the class and gender hierarchy within the Canadian state administration. The clerks' strike broke apart the social category of 'civil servants' and provided the impetus to move the Alliance into a new set of discourses and practices.

Pay equity, which developed into one of the main issues of the general strike in 1991, is dealt with in **chapter eight**. Equal pay for work of equal value, as enshrined in the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA), provided an important mobilizing vehicle for PSAC union feminists. The issue was joined directly, but it also surfaced at the collective bargaining table and in subsequent strike

mobilization and organization. It was this issue that became the rallying call for Alliance women during the period leading up to the 1991 strike. Mobilization around equal pay for work of equal value resulted in the redefinition of the scope of pay equity so that it was applied to all members of the union, and, as such, it became part of the union's main business. Together with job security, pay equity cemented solidarity in the 1991 strike. A new job security policy was won as a result of the strike but it was agreed that pay equity should be settled by the tribunal established under the provisions of the CHRA. Women in the federal government administration are still awaiting the resolution of this matter.

In the conclusion it is argued that the 'cracks' that appeared in the social category and social relations of 'production' within the Canadian 'civil service' were in part due to the expansion of working class positions which were also feminized to a large extent. Working class formation and capacity developed at the same time that the second wave of feminism was reconstituted within the Canadian union movement generally and within the PSAC in particular.

Methodological Issues

The methodology that I adopt in this study is a historical sociology approach. A concern with the dynamic interaction between human agency and social structure is at the centre of historical sociology (Abrams 1982). Structures, especially those of the state and capital, remain important in constraining the development of working class and feminist capacity. Any

contestation, any new struggle by the subordinate must confront and be confronted by structures set in place in the past. By structures I mean recurring patterns of human action and discourse. Some structures, however, are set in place more firmly than others and hence are less easily changed than others. Legal structures are particularly hard to change, not only because they are entrenched in legal statutes and reinforced by state sanctions, but also because of their legitimizing effect on those subordinated within them. Human agents, however, acting collectively in organizations such as unions, can strategize and make some choices, albeit often of a limited nature. Furthermore, they can learn from their past actions where possibilities and vulnerabilities exist within structures and strategize on that basis.

The first two chapters of this study deal with theoretical issues with regards to 'civil servants' and the learning they undertake when transforming themselves into unions. Chapter three examines the learning of the Canadian Labour Congress in the face of challenges from women unionists. Chapters four to seven provide a case study of the process of learning and strategizing by members of the Alliance within the federal state administration. This case study of the PSAC is not simply an examination of how an association of civil servants was transformed into a militant union but is also a study of the important role played by women clerical workers in this radical change.

Case studies are instructive. They are a detailed examination of a particular set of facts viewed through the prism of theory, and are important to

formation and revision of theory itself. In this case the prism is focused on how the members of the Alliance learned to be 'uncivil' through the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s. These experiences taught them to strategize and mobilize the collective around issues associated with the lower paid and with union feminism. The transformation of the staff associations resulted in the rejection of the consultation methods adopted by their male leaders and the adoption of confrontation by strike, a strategy taken up by clerical workers in the 1980s.

The evidence for this study was collected using the following three methods:

1. Document Analysis:

The study draws on documents of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress and the federal government. Many of these documents were collected during the period I worked for the Alliance and the Congress (1976 -1993). Unpublished union documents collected in this manner from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance (PSAC), and one of the PSAC components, the Canadian Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU) are listed in the Section One of the Sources list. All other sources are listed in Section Two.

2. In-depth Interviews with Alliance Activists and Staff:

The interviews were conducted between 1989 and 1995. The questions were designed to be open-ended, specifically targeting events that had occurred. The data gathered from the interviews supplemented that gathered from union and government documents. The interviewees were asked questions that drew out the details of an event or verified facts that were not totally clear from the documents. A list of the interviews is given in Appendix 1. Some of the interview subjects wished to remain anonymous and I have respected their wishes. In cases where subjects agreed to disclose their names, I have done so. All the interviews are dated and numbered. Interviews are identified by number in the text.

3. Personal Experience and Personal Communication:

A most important part of the evidence for this study comes from my experience and the notes I compiled while working in various capacities in the union movement from 1976 to 1993. From 1976 to 1981 I was a regional representative for the PSAC, then senior representative for the Ottawa-Hull Region from 1981 to 1987, and a lecturer at The Canadian Labour College from 1988 to 1993. During that period, I was directly involved in events that are key to this study as an educator in seminars and courses focused on women in unions; as an appeal representative under section 21 and 31 of the Public Service Employment Act; as a regional organizer of the 1980 clerical workers

strike; and as a speaker and organizer concerning pay equity complaints. Other roles I played within the labour movement -- President of Organized Working Women 1988-1990 and Organizer of Bankworkers Organizing Campaign for the Canadian Labour Congress 1978-79 -- also contributed to the questions that led to this thesis.

While crucially important for identifying key events in the story of the Alliance, my labour movement experience has another very significant role. This twelve year experience was a period of formulating questions and seeking answers not only for this study but for other work on organizing the unorganized, women in unions and pay equity conceived as equal pay, equal value and wage solidarity. Much of the work I undertook resulted in a critical evaluation of unions and their relationship to the state. After this experience I returned to university, read, theorized and wrote. It was work that was guided by the questions I had formulated earlier. This study, therefore, is an integration of theory and practice and an attempt to make sense of events in which I was directly involved.

Chapter Two

Canada's Administrative State: 'Civil Servants' as a Distinct

Social Category

Contradictions between the dominant and dominated classes reverberate as gaps between these sections of the state personnel and the strictly bourgeois summit, thus manifesting themselves in the shape of cracks, splits and divisions within the personnel and apparatuses of the State. To be sure, such divisions depend not only on the general relationship of forces, but also on the characteristic demands of the personnel within the inner-state division of labour. And, to be sure, contradictions between the dominant and dominated classes are reflected in a complex manner within the state personnel, given its specificity as a distinct social category (Poulantzas 1978:154-155).

What kind of workers are 'civil servants' or employees of the administrative, liberal-democratic state? In what respects do they differ from workers in the private sector and even the greater public sector? In this chapter and the following one, I explore the class location of these workers and develop an argument regarding the kinds of unions they form. I contend that all employees within the Canadian state bureaucracy are part of the social category of 'civil servants' and as such have a tendency to be part of the dominant hegemonic bloc. This bureaucracy is, however, cut through with divisions and conflicts over class, gender, language, race, etc. and to the degree that these conflicts generate collective strategies and action by those in subordinate power positions they have the potential to contribute towards the construction of a counter-hegemonic bloc and movement. But there is nothing determinant about this process. Indeed the fact that those in subordinate class,

gender and race positions form an important part of state bureaucracies produces a type of contestation that is distinct and different from the forms of contestation practised by those occupying subordinate class locations outside the state and government bureaucracies. The important point I emphasize is that the fact of belonging to the social category of bureaucrats produces a form of unionism that is different from that of the private sector, although the class location of the members is the same.

I begin this argument by discussing neo-marxist state theorising and the impasse of structuralism. Following this I focus particularly on state workers and their position within the social category of civil servants. The last section outlines the structure/agency approach of this study linking it to the notion that collectivities of human beings can learn to deal with and strategize around the limits imposed by structures put in place in the past.

State Theories and State Bureaucracies: Neo-Marxist Theory at an Impasse?

It has been said that the 1970s was *the* decade of state theorizing. Certainly it was a period of renaissance for marxist theories of the liberal-democratic state. The beginning of this revival was marked in the English-speaking world by the publication of work by Ralph Miliband (1969) in Britain and the translation into English of the work of Nicos Poulantzas beginning in the late 1960s. Both theorists were engaged actively in the revolutionary politics

that rocked postwar Western Europe.

One of the very important effects of the work of Miliband and Poulantzas was to offer an alternative to the pluralist and positivist conception of politics and the state dominating academic thinking in the 1950s and 1960s.¹ The work of Miliband was particularly important in this respect since it was an internal critique of the liberal-democratic state and the premise that the state acted as a neutral arbiter between a multitude of competing groups or elites. The debate between these two theorists had the further important result of bringing French structuralism into the thinking of English intellectuals (Blackburn 1972:11-12). Even if both Miliband and Poulantzas seemed to be talking past each other from their different starting points, their interaction was a significant contribution to the development of the neo-marxist conception of the state.

Both Miliband's 'instrumentalist' approach and Poulantzas' structuralism conceived the liberal-democratic state as a structure acting to guarantee and provide the conditions for the private accumulation of capital. Both made an important contribution to state theory but neither could escape from an overly functional and structural analysis and in these senses failed to escape from the very Parsonian model they criticized.² Human agents, even in terms of their

¹ It is interesting to note that Theda Skocpol's (1985) neo-institutional critique of Marxist State theories is compelled to give credit to both Miliband and Poulantzas for the problems and questions they raised in the late 1960s.

²Talcott Parsons' interpretation of Max Weber and equilibrium model of the societal evolution dominated North American social science during the immediate post-war period.

classes and their struggles, appeared to have little or no power to effect change and other kinds of agents, whether gendered or otherwise, were invisible and excluded. Miliband's work did focus on the relationship between state personnel and the bourgeoisie, but he concentrated on the similarity of their class location and its determining effects. Poulantzas, who debated with and argued against Miliband's personification of class structures, did attempt to bring agency into his overtly structural and deterministic view but, rather like class location and formation discussed in the next chapter, these two aspects remained separate and apart.

Neo-marxist conceptions of the state were led into a 'dead alley' by James O'Connor's (1973) functionalist formulation of the liberal-democratic state in particular. The 'spotlight' was shone on the ways that the state functions to ensure the dominance of capital and the subordination of labour. The focus was on how state policies functioned to fulfil these ends: here there could not be any open-ended outcomes. The emphasis, furthermore, on state structures as a functional system of equilibrium fell into all the traps and problems associated with the Parsonian structural-functionalist model. As a consequence, the theory took on a historical determinism, allowing little possibility for change in state structures that did not stem from internal contradictions. Human actors were simply perceived to be the bearers of structures, passively impressed with the logic and consciousness which flowed from the functioning of the system and the structure of the state. State policies functioned to maintain the capitalist

class in a position of control and dominance. As a consequence the class struggle generated by human agency seemed to have little role to play in the movement of history, the structuring of capitalism or the operation of the state.

Despite these criticisms, neo-marxist state theorizing of the seventies did contribute significantly to our understanding of the state and class relations. By the end of the 1970s the lessons learned resulted in the refocusing by some marxists on class struggles and contradictions generated in relation to state structures. Interestingly, Canadian scholars vigorously took up the challenge of this renewed view of the state. In 1977 The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power, a collection of essays edited by Leo Panitch, was an important landmark in the development of the new Canadian political economy. While the authors were influenced by both instrumentalist and structuralist conceptions of the state, there was an emphasis on the working class as agent of historical change.³ Mahon's contribution, drawing on the work of Gramsci and Poulantzas, developed the concept of the "unequal structure of representation". Within the framework of structural marxism this concept has withstood the test of time better than most developed in the 1970s. Incorporating Gramsci's conception of the state as hegemony armoured by coercion and Poulantzas' notion of the state as the condensation of the

³ Albo and Jenson (1989) argue that the working class is absent from The Canadian State (1977) because there is no specific article on the working class. The introductory article by Panitch, however, emphasizes working class contestation and the articles by Mahon and Armstrong focus on the relation between the state and labour.

relationship of forces between classes and class fractions, Mahon (1977 & 1984) conceived the state as a dynamic site of struggle, conflict and change. The state is a set of conflictual relationships that reflect but are not reduced to those existing in civil society. Dominant and subordinate classes and groups are, therefore, represented within the Canadian state -- in departments, agencies and policy outcomes -- but not equally so.⁴ Mahon's work came near to integrating human agency into the neo-marxist structural approach to the state. Despite this contribution, her formulation has not escaped criticism. Albo and Jenson point to the lack of possibilities for "an open-ended outcome", and *a priori* assumptions concerning the role of the liberal-democratic state as guarantor of the core interests of the bourgeoisie (Albo & Jenson 1989:180-211). The reasons for this are that state structures are the principal focus of the theory, making it, in the end analysis, too one-sided.

Towards the end of the 1970s Poulantzas' theory of the state had evolved to the point of placing emphasis on the state as both the product and the producer of class relations and class struggle. He argued that an emphasis on the state's "repression and ideological inculcation" is too restrictive and one-sided. Making explicit reference to Gramsci's concept of hegemony he pointed out that

⁴ In chapter seven the concept of the unequal structure of representation is applied to the development of the policy of pay equity within federal jurisdiction when examining the relationship between the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Federal Treasury Board.

...in working for class hegemony, the State acts within an unstable equilibrium of compromises between the dominant classes and the dominated. The State therefore continually adopts material measures which are of positive significance for the popular masses, even though these measures represent so many concessions imposed by the struggle of the subordinate classes (1978:31).

This emphasis on class struggle and agency marks a significant departure from the Althusserian conception "of a complex structured whole with causal priority over its economic, political and ideological parts...(Jessop 1990:50)". State policy and action with regards to both the dominant and subordinate classes is not unidirectional and state decision makers must act to provide a material basis for consent. Class relations, however, exist for Poulantzas as two separate and distinct kinds of phenomena. As "...an ensemble of structures in which individuals act as the *trager* of capitalist reproduction, and a field of social relations in which they engage in struggle as members of classes (Jessop 1985:157-158)". In this way Poulantzas offers a reformulation of Marx's concept of a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself. The problem of correspondence remains however. If class actors are perceived as bearers of structures how do they transform into members of a class in struggle and contestation? Poulantzas' later work demonstrates that his thinking was developing towards a very different conception of human agency than in his earlier work but the link between state structures and class agency remained as an unexplained dualism.

At the time of Poulantzas death in 1979, rethinking the revolutionary role

of the working class and that of other social movements was already well underway amongst other European marxists. The discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) was explicitly post-marxist, rejecting the idea of the working class as agents of historical transformation, and developing a theory in which all agents are in a sense 'torn free' from structures and are instead products of discourse. They argue that the positing of the wage labour/capital relationship as inherently antagonistic is essentialism. "Only if the worker *resists* extraction of his or her surplus-value by the capitalist does the relation become antagonistic...(Mouffe & Laclau 1987:3)". For Mouffe and Laclau there is no relationship between class location and class formation; indeed for them class location only exists in the shared discourse of wage labourers who collectively attempt to gain a higher price for their labour. The extraction of surplus value is only an economic phenomenon limited to the workplace. Furthermore, the discourse that the working class constructs cannot be radical or revolutionary because it has limited possibilities for interpellating other identities and movements (Mouffe & Laclau 1987:3). In this position they joined a growing number of ex-marxists who bid farewell to the working class.

With the rejection of the theory of valorization Mouffe and Laclau moved outside the tradition of marxism and historical materialism. Material structuralism was also rejected since it was argued that there is no material connection between the social relations of production and the struggles that take place at the level of the state and politics. Their approach is not only a reaction to

deterministic and economistic marxism, but also a reaction to the 'failed' working class movement of advanced capitalist society. French structuralism of the 1960s and 1970s was an attempt to explain the apparent consent of the working class to the exploitation of monopoly capitalism. Given the rejection of the inherent antagonism within the social relations of production, for radical discourse theorists the answer is that it is initiated and constructed by intellectuals who *interpellate* the masses and give focus and meaning to their struggles. Mouffe and Laclau accuse marxism of conceiving workers as imprinted with objective interests as "a gift from Heaven", however, their conception of human agency seems to be no less unconscious, nor does it conceive agents capable of making their own history. Social agents, according to Mouffe and Laclau, are 'constructed' by means of ideology or discourse and their lived material experience seems to have no active role in this construction. This approach denies the possibilities of learning from lived experience and from struggles to overcome exploitation and oppression.

Gramsci's (1971) conception of the relationship between intellectuals and the popular masses recognizes that both can learn from each other. He argues vigorously for a different conception of the relationship between leaders and led than that found in both feudal and capitalist societies.

The popular element "feels" but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element "knows" but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel..... One cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation..... If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the

leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge then and only then is the relationship one of representation (Gramsci 1971:418).

Organic intellectuals have a very different relationship to workers than that conceived by Mouffe and Laclau. Contestation develops precisely because workers do collectively and materially experience subordination in the wage labour relationship. And it is this material experience that organic intellectuals learn from, in the process helping to articulate an alternative discourse and understanding of the economy and the state.

The thinking of Mouffe and Laclau did bring into clearer relief, however, two important problems with neo-marxist analysis: the narrow conception of the working class as traditional, male-dominated proletariat and the economic determinism of politics and the state. But interestingly they also emphasized, albeit in a negative manner, the basis of the marxian problematic: that the exploitation inherent in the social relations of production is crucial to the perpetuation of capitalism and that the consent or opposition of wage labour is an important part of reproducing or transforming the system.

Gramsci's work in prison was in large part an attempt to answer questions concerning the way hegemony, which underlies the existence of any state/nation, is established, developed, continued, reproduced and replaced. Linked to these concerns were questions related to the political strategy of a class/group that attempts to contest the dominant hegemony and construct an alternative vision of society and the economy. In other words under what

conditions does hegemony develop and what is the role of the state in this process?

The liberal-democratic state and its organic intellectuals are also educators,⁵ in that the state acts through its various institutions and agencies to create and to perpetuate a world view that supports the actions and policies of the hegemonic bloc. Law is an important institution in this respect. Through statutes and administration of justice it produces a positive, normative view of what society should be. It lays down obligations and rights, creating consent by imposing inhibitions on the arbitrary use of power and in this sense is "an unqualified good (Thompson 1975:265-68)". But law also plays an equally important role in organizing repression and attempting to ensure that the core interests of the hegemonic bloc remain untouched. It is the institution of law that above all others arms the liberal-democratic state with coercion. "The Law is the repressive and negative aspect of the entire positive, civilizing activity undertaken by the State (Gramsci 1971:246-47)". Law rewards and punishes, acting both positively and negatively in its coercion, and so reinforces the consent of the subordinate and the power of the hegemonic bloc. Contestations through parliament by subordinate groups and classes also change law and sometimes these changes have unintended practical effects

⁵ Paul Craven's (1980) study of William Lyon MacKenzie King emphasized the role played by King in creating the Canadian state of the pre- and post-war period. He was an organic intellectual in that he created a vision for the hegemonic bloc but also help to transform the bloc while retaining the core interests of North American capitalism.

that challenge the dominant hegemony.⁶ In other words, the liberal-democratic state can be conceived as a strategic terrain where the hegemonic bloc is constantly challenged, reproduced and reformed (Poulantzas 1978; Jessop 1990). This strategic terrain is composed of specific political projects and contestations in the process of attempting to arrive at a coherent unity. But no determining unity can ever be arrived at because the state is always in a state of flux and change.

Neo-marxist theory of the state reached an impasse of determinism in the 1980s, but the argument here is that discourse theory with its emphasis on agency does not provide a way out of the impasse. States structures confront the subordinate, including workers and unions, at every turn. These forms place material constraints on the actions of unions while rewarding and encouraging appropriate behaviour. At the same time these structures do provide openings for action and strategizing by the subordinate. Learning takes place from experience but also in response to the openings provided by the 'strategic selectivity' of the state. Workers can learn from history and experience, but that experience is itself particular. In other words, workers confront challenges in the present on the basis of what they learned in the past. Furthermore, their responses to present challenges are limited strategically by the structures that were created in the past.

⁶ In chapter seven the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, in section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, is conceived as both perpetuating and challenging the dominant view of women's subordinate position in the work place.

As Jessop points out a strategic-relational approach means rejecting the determinism of class structure and placing emphasis on how classes act strategically in the pursuit of their interests. There is nothing that is determinant about the outcome of this process, however.

...a strategic-theoretical approach requires us to re-think the nature of class identities, class interest, class antagonism and class struggle as well as to redefine the "logic of capital" and its so-called "laws of motion" (Jessop 1990:262).

Rethinking the nature of class relations does not mean that class, gender, or any other kind of power relationship of domination and subordination is only constructed subjectively. Human beings are always formed in and through specific practices which have both material and ideological components and consequences. This means that we need to rethink the link between class location and class formation and the way in which gender and class relations are continually in a process of reformation. In chapter three emphasis is given to this process in the context of unionization by workers.

Any state in order to continue to exist must be strategically biased in favour of the dominant hegemony which in liberal-democratic states is composed of class, gender and other kinds of relationships of domination and subordination. The way in which these relationships are 'inscribed' within the state, however, is always problematic and must be empirically researched to ascertain the way in which state policies and structures are contested, reinforced and changed. Liberal-democratic states and the Canadian state in particular are not neutral arbiters between the dominant and subordinate. Within

the Canadian federal state, structures and practices exist that are 'strategically biased' in favour of the dominant classes and white men of both British and French origin. These structures and practices work against the development of counter-hegemonic movements. This 'strategic bias' has a particular heightened impact on state administrative workers and their unions, making the development of their collective capacity, as a part of the working class, more problematic than for 'private sector' workers, and contributing to the formation of a different kind of unionism from that of the 'mainstream' labour movement.

There are countervailing tendencies, however, even if they are weaker than the dominant orientation. Working class contestation is one of these and stems from the fundamental contradiction between capital and labour and the Canadian state's 'strategic bias' in favour of the dominant classes. At the same time the Canadian working class is not homogeneous. It is composed of groups who are situated differently in terms of occupation, skills, region, public and private sector etc. and in terms of gender and race. All these differences, found among those in working class locations, can build the unity and strength of the class or they can undermine it. In the next chapter this problem will be taken up. The focus in this chapter is on employees within the state administration and how their structural position as part of the state administration limits their strategic selectivity as agents of class and gender conflicts.

'Civil Servants' as a Social Category: Hegemony and the State Bureaucracy

In many ways this section is one of the most crucial for this study. This is because it deals with the puzzle of how and why workers within the liberal-democratic state and the organizations they form are constructed differently, both materially and ideologically, from those of other workers.

The idea of 'civil servants' as a social category is not new, it has its origins in the work of Nico Poulantzas and before him Antonio Gramsci. It was Gramsci (1971) who identified intellectuals as a social category and pointed to their importance to the dominant classes and hegemonic block. In this respect he indicated that the need of any class

...that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals (1971:10).

By traditional intellectuals Gramsci means those who seem to have an independence from class relations, but who in fact derive their position from past and present social relations of production. Gramsci wanted to expose the 'myth' of intellectual autonomy and freedom, and reveal the attachment of the traditional intellectuals to certain classes. The organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are overtly the thinkers and organizers of a particular class.⁷

⁷ As was noted earlier Gramsci was committed to revolutionising the intellectual in the sense of allowing everyone to develop their intellect and thinking potential. In 'The Study of Philosophy' he points out that every person is a philosopher
 though in his own way and unconsciously, since even in the slightest

A social category, in contradistinction to a class, is defined first and foremost by its place in ideological and political relations. In this sense intellectuals are important in both elaborating and applying a particular conception of the world and social relations. It was Nicos Poulantzas (1978), however, who developed the idea of the state administrative bureaucracy as a social category within the capitalist mode of production. Drawing on the work of both Marx and Weber, Poulantzas pinpoints how state administration is a "...social category deriving from bureaucratism as a normative ideological model of organization (1978:154)". He argues that it is the relative autonomy of the political sphere from the economic that characterizes the capitalist mode of production and makes possible the bureaucracy's existence as a specific category (1978:346).

Work in the state bureaucracies of liberal-democratic societies is governed, in varying degrees, according to the characteristics identified by Max Weber: appointment by merit; impersonal, standard operating procedures; and a hierarchical, specialized, division of labour. Employees of state bureaucracies operate under politically defined financial controls; and they are involved in degrees of confidentiality and secrecy that have the effect of limiting public scrutiny of internal decision making (1946:229). These characteristics are important for moulding the bureaucracy into a unity apart from other social

manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in 'language', there is contained a specific conception of the world, one then moves on to the second level, which is that of awareness and criticism (1971: 321).

groups, into a social category that is set apart not only in the world of work, but also from the market economy. Poulantzas points out that

...the members of the State apparatus, which it is convenient to call the "bureaucracy" in the general sense, constitute a specific social category - not a class. This means that, although the members of the State apparatus belong, by their class origin, to different classes, they function according to a specific internal unity. Their class origin - class situation - recedes into the background in relation to that which unifies them - their class position: that is to say, the fact that they belong precisely to the State apparatus and that they have as their objective function the actualization of the role of the State (1972;246).

One of the fundamental differences between Weber and Poulantzas is that for Weber the liberal-democratic state and its administrative bureaucracy has real, not relative, autonomy. This approach to the state was revitalized by neo-institutionalists in the mid-eighties (Skocpol 1985). The argument was made that states and their personnel have the capacity to adopt policies and shape institutions according to their own agenda and interests. Neo-institutionalist criticisms of marxism produced an over willingness to carve out a state-centric approach that neglected the obvious inability of liberal-democratic states to develop accumulation policies independent of the main actors in the market economy. Also their portrayal of politics as limited to conflicts within the state and bureaucracy ignored obvious links between state actors and those they represented in civil society.

Despite these criticisms of Weberian and neo-institutionalist conceptions of the bureaucracy, there are clearly insoluble problems with the concept of relative autonomy. Jessop has logically made the point that "either a system or

a political agent is autonomous or it is not - autonomy cannot be relative". He goes on to say that,

to avoid this quite unnecessary logical difficulty the same point can be made in terms of the need to explore the structural contradictions and dilemmas involved in the dialectic between operational autonomy and functional interdependence of different orders (Jessop 1990:102).

Others have pointed to the contested nature of the 'relative autonomy' concept and the multiplicity of problems associated with it (Albo and Jenson 1989). To avoid these difficulties the emphasis in this study is on the relative strategic capacities of class and gender forces in civil society and the way in which conflict and contradictions arising from these forces are inscribed in legal and ideological structures and state administrative rules and regulations. It is these structures that act to reproduce the unity of the social category of civil servants while at the same time resulting in contradictions and providing openings for contestation by subordinate class and gender forces within the state.

Reproduction of the dominant hegemony in any liberal-democratic state is historically linked to the various kinds of state policy that are formed and administered by 'civil servants'.

The dominant ideology, which is reproduced and inculcated by the State also serves as the internal cement of the state apparatuses and their personnel. In this ideology, a neutral State appears as the representative of the general will and interest, and the arbiter among struggling classes: the state administration or judicial system stands above classes..., and the state administration is the motive force of efficiency and general well-being (Poulantzas 1978:156).

Civil servants in liberal-democracies have historically played a part in

constructing the 'neutrality' of the state and its politics. They, like the state itself, have stood above competing interests, arbitrating between conflicting claims and generally standing apart from and above the operation of the market and other 'private' interests. It is civil servants who administer state policies through the application of law and regulation. Many of these policies are the material embodiment of the compromises and sacrifices made by the hegemonic bloc in the past. Even employees in the lower echelons of the civil service, be they secretaries, clerks, cleaners or maintenance people, contribute to the running of a bureaucracy dedicated to public service and to the operation of the state programs consistent with the maintenance of hegemonic domination. It is civil servants, at all levels of the service, who must deal with challenges to the dominant hegemony and put in place the response to them.

An important practice that is essential in reproducing the category of civil servants and cementing its unity, is the requirement that members of the service be appointed according to the principle of merit. This principle was part of the 1918 Canadian Civil Service Act. The appointment and promotion practices that developed were designed to ensure that the civil service was staffed by personnel who would act neutrally and apolitically, accepting their role as servants of the general will. Merit as a principle embodies the idea that positions should be allocated to those with the highest qualifications of aptitude and demonstrated skill for performing the required duties. As such the principle "is central to legitimating a hierarchical division of labor in a liberal democratic

society which assumes the equal moral and political worth of all persons (Young 1990:200)". Merit as a principle and practice assigns individuals a place in the job hierarchy without any consideration of a person's gender, race, ethnicity or class position in the society. In other words the "unjust hierarchy of caste... [is] replaced by a 'natural' hierarchy of intellect and skill (Young 1990:200)".

Within the liberal-democratic paradigm there is a range of criticism about the application of the merit principle and the way that practices and conceptions of meritorious behaviour are biased against those who are in a subordinate position within the dominant culture. Within the Canadian context, Judge Rosalie Abella (1984) undertook such a critique of employment practices and was instrumental in developing the principle of employment equity which is found in the present federal Employment Equity Act. Abella criticizes systems of merit that discriminate against certain groups and proposes that bias and discrimination be eliminated by producing a set of practices that are truly based on the merit principle. In this view, employment equity perfects the merit principle.

Criticism from outside the liberal-democratic paradigm portrays the merit principle as a myth that cannot be reconstructed in an objective and unbiased manner. The merit principle is an important part of the reproduction of the status quo and its practices operate to keep others subordinated. Merit, in practice, is constructed to value those of a certain class, gender, ethnicity,

ableness and thus reflects dominant cultural predispositions. In practice, the appointment of the most meritorious is related to maintaining the political neutrality of the state administrator. This is because those appointed to upper level positions in the bureaucracy will be those who are judged capable of reproducing the dominant hegemony (Offe 1985; Brenner 1987; Young 1990; Warskett 1990).

Within the Canadian state there are a number of legislative structures and practices that act to reinforce this hegemony and as such are 'strategically biased' against the development of unions' working-class capacity and feminism. These include the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA), whose 'raison d'être' is the merit principle and the political neutrality of civil servants. It is a significant vehicle for atomizing and individualizing state workers and its practices are important in the ongoing construction of the social category of bureaucrats.

According to Poulantzas, the social category of bureaucrats has a distinctive class place in the social division of labour, as it is reproduced within the state, relating to the division between intellectual and manual labour (1972:154). He argues that intellectual labour is concentrated in the state and that state personnel have "bourgeois affiliation or place for the upper reaches of this personnel, and of petty-bourgeois affiliation for the intermediate and subaltern echelons of the state apparatus (1972:154)". In other words, intellectual labour has a political control function, exercising authority and

domination over the working class. Empirical evidence from a number of liberal-democratic countries calls this classification into question (Hoff 1985; Simms 1987; Fairbrother 1989). The social category of civil servants, and those within the federal Canadian state bureaucracy in particular, are made up of personnel who are located in class positions identical to those found in civil society.⁸ Civil servants are found in a hierarchy of classes within the bureaucracy -- management, the new middle class and the working class. The state bureaucracy is also divided in terms of gender, race, language and other differences. In this study my focus is primarily on class and gender cleavages, but at certain moments other divisions have been salient within the Canadian administrative state.⁹ This means that the way in which bureaucracy and civil servants are constructed has an impact both on the formation of class and gender and other 'differences' and, in turn, the way in which the social category of bureaucrats is constructed is affected by the internal divisions of class, gender and race and other characteristics.

⁸ This argument is elaborated in the next chapter.

⁹ The demand by francophones in Quebec for recognition as a nation has meant that French language and culture has played an important role in the composition of the federal bureaucracy. This important aspect of the Canadian administrative state is not pursued in this study, but the divisions between francophones and anglophones within the federal bureaucracy take a specific form and are a 'condensation' of these relations within Canadian Society.

The Canadian Administrative State and the Political Construction of Civil Servants

In keeping with the characteristics of a rational-legal administration defined by Max Weber, the transformation of the Canadian patronage state to a modern liberal-democratic state bureaucracy had taken place in large part by 1919 (Rasmussen 1992). Appointment was by merit rather than patronage; the bureaucracy was hierarchically structured with control emanating from the top down; the division of labour was becoming more specialized with a 'modern' classification system and job descriptions that were based on the principles of the new scientific management (Lowe 1987:97). Furthermore, there was a growing emphasis on the neutral, non-arbitrary application of legal rules, reliance on specialist expertise and systems were put in place to increase financial control and accountability (Hodgetts 1973; Whitaker 1987). All these elements were part of an effort to 'modernize' the federal civil service, make it efficient, effective and removed from political patronage. These changes took place under the direction of the Tory/Borden government, which was influenced both by the demands of the upper levels of the bureaucracy for a professionalized service, free of patronage, that could command the respect of its citizens (Rasmussen 1992:29),¹⁰ and by "capitalist supporters who

¹⁰Rasmussen argues that those in the senior ranks of the civil service showed a strong interest in reform because they wished to increase the autonomy of the service and protect it from political interference. He examined seven public service inquiries that took place between 1867-1919 in which senior civil servants advocated reform.

demanded a strong and effective state apparatus to act as their agent, especially in external trade and the search for foreign markets (Whitaker 1977:55)".

As part of the changes a new Canadian Civil Service Act was passed by the Dominion Parliament in 1918, extending the powers of the Civil Service Commission. The Commission was given power to make appointments on the basis of merit; section 32 of the legislation explicitly stated that employees must not engage in partisan political activities (Hodgetts 1973:315). The Commission used its new powers to make a sweeping reorganization of the service and contracted Arthur Young and Company of Chicago to devise and implement a new classification plan. After parliament accepted the plan the Civil Service Commission pronounced that the unscientific methods of the past had been replaced by the principles of "scientific classification" (Lowe 1987:97). The overall effect of the plan was to standardize tasks and rigidly lay out a hierarchy of duties with assigned levels of position and pay. The service was organized with the intention of applying 'Taylorist' principles of efficient management by separating conception of the tasks from their execution.

The introduction of the new plan and revised salary scales in 1919 caused an uproar amongst the staff associations and their members, who launched appeals against the proposed reclassification. The general dissatisfaction of labour in the post World War I period was echoed by the employees of the state, and in 1920 there was an attempt to organize one big

union of civil servants, the Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada. It was unsuccessful since the associations were unwilling to act in unity or take a strong stance in opposition to the government's reorganization of the service (Hodgetts et al. 1972:70). It was also in this year that the Professional Institution of the Public Service of Canada (PIPS) was formed, the union of professional employees who mainly occupied middle class, professional positions within the bureaucracy. Like other staff associations, PIPS was certified as a bargaining agent after collective bargaining rights were introduced in 1966. At this stage the Alliance and PIPs shared a consultative, harmonious approach to the employer. Unlike the Alliance, however, PIPS retained its non-confrontational approach in subsequent years.

As part of the reorganization, the Civil Service Commission introduced the concept of indeterminate appointments, thereby distinguishing between permanent career civil servants and those employed on a contractual or casual basis. This was an important step in creating a professionalized service and constructing a social category of career civil servants. Through this process it became clear that women, in general, were not to be part of the category. In 1921 severe restrictions were placed on the appointment of married women to indeterminate positions. They were only to be appointed when qualified men were not available (Archibald 1970:16). This meant that women already appointed to the service had to resign. They were then rehired as temporary employees and paid the lowest rate for their classification (Civil Service Review

1947:20/148-149). This violation of the merit principle appeared to escape the Commissioners, but was quite in keeping with the dominant ideology of the time. The proper place for married, middle-class women was thought to be in the home, even though prior to marriage the role of secretary and clerical worker had become acceptable as an occupation for young, respectable females by the 1920s (Lowe 1987:47-62).

The reorganization of the Dominion Civil Service in the early twenties, based on the principles of scientific management, resulted in the creation of routine clerical jobs that were for the most part filled by women (Lowe 1985). A major exception to this was the Post Office Department, which continued to be dominated by male postal clerks right through to the 1980s (White 1990). The position of postal clerk, like that of stenographer and typist, was set apart from the position of general clerk.

The rationalization and reorganization of the Civil Service in this period set in place a hierarchical system of work organization that continued in place until the introduction of collective bargaining in 1967. Career civil servants during the interwar period were mainly drawn from the upper and middle class ranks of white, Anglo-Saxon men. General clerical positions, at the lowest levels of the service, were the entry points for young men who potentially could advance rapidly upwards through the ranks. Women appointed as stenographers either left the service to be married or stayed on as higher level secretaries and clerks (Archibald 1970:14-17; Lowe 1973:86-112). Later on, in

the post-war period, this gender differentiation in employment policy fed the growing disaffection of 'civil service' women. As noted above, an important exception to the upward mobility of male clerks was the occupation of postal clerk. Postal employees were classified as a separate clerical category, not part of the recruitment ranks for upper level positions, although the majority were indeterminate employees. Their close association with mail handlers and letter carriers meant that their work was classified as blue collar rather than white collar, clerical work. The skill of a postal clerk prior to automation was the ability to sort letters "into a pigeon hole case with up to one hundred separations (White 1990:16)". Postal clerks were required to pass sorting examinations and employees prided themselves on their ability to memorise over 2,000 destinations. The social construction of postal employees as blue-collar employees, separate from the general clerical classification, was an important factor in their separate development as public-sector unionists. Long before collective bargaining rights were enshrined in law in 1966 postal workers had developed a trade union identity that included an identification with the mainstream labour movement.

Blue-collar men, those occupied in the trades and general labour categories, were also marginal to the social category of civil servants, although they were members of the staff associations. Many of these jobs were term or casual appointments and patronage continued to play an important part in the awarding of public works contracts. Those who did have permanent positions

aspired to earning better wages and benefits than their counterparts in the private sector, together with the security of an indeterminate appointment. In this sense, although they were not able to move up through the bureaucracy, they too experienced the respect and benefits of being civil servants and gave their loyalty to the state.

For the most part, however, the social category of civil servants was constructed on the basis of young, male, clerical workers entering at the bottom of the service with the expectation that they could rise through the ranks to become part of the upper-level bureaucracy. With very few exceptions women remained as administrative support workers. The highest position they could aspire to was secretary to a deputy or assistant deputy minister. They achieved this by 'rising' in rank with their male supervisor much the same way that a politician's wife experiences the material benefits of her husband's promotion. This system of 'rug ranking' came under attack from women in the early 1970s.

The unity of the social category depended on the perception of privilege and respect accorded to its members. In the interwar period, women, blue collar males, francophones and other minorities were excluded from the permanent civil service. This did not mean that cleavages of class, gender and ethnicity did not exist within the service, but they were minimized as a result of the exclusions from the category.

Civil servants were set apart from other employees and constructed as a

special category in part because of the doctrine of sovereignty. Employees of the state were perceived as different from other employees because of the construction of the state as standing above society. The idea that servants of the state must be politically neutral, acting only in the interests of the state, meant, in practice, that the state was perceived to have "peculiar prerogatives over its employees (Hodgetts 1973:Ch.14)". The unity of the social category meant "commands emanating from the top and obedience rising from the bottom". For those young men who perceived themselves as possibly being part of the command at some future date this worked well. For others -- tradesmen, postal workers and veterans returning from the war -- this posed a problem. Since women secretaries and clerks were required to leave the service on marriage until the beginning of the 1970s, they were invisible to the dominant actors in the civil service and hence discounted as possible agents of change.

During the war, the number and proportion of female appointments to the civil service increased sharply. Restrictions on the appointment of married women were relaxed and as a consequence more than fifty percent of all civil service appointees were women. Restrictions, however, were reintroduced in 1947 with the return of the war veterans (Archibald 1970:16). Once again the merit principle was side stepped and veterans were given preference for appointment. This measure was one small part of the Liberal government's policy on jobs laid out in the 1945 White Paper on Employment and Income,

and was part of the transformation of the economy from war to peace. Even though the White Paper laid out a policy of creating jobs by encouraging investment in the private sector, the postwar experience resulted in a rapid expansion of government programs and thus in substantial growth at all levels of the state. Federal government employees increased in number from 146,257 in 1946 to 258,281 in 1966, an increase of seventy-seven percent (Armstrong 1977:297). The increases at the provincial and municipal levels were even greater as provinces and cities began to assert independence from the federal level and as regional social programs related to health, education and welfare were expanded.

The growth of the Canadian federal state added programmes and departments resulting in both horizontal and vertical growth, and a burgeoning of bureaucratic structures. In 1955 the restrictions on appointment of married women to the Federal Civil Service were revoked in response to the need to fill newly created lower and middle level positions, especially clerical and typist positions. Women were appointed to the lower level administrative support positions, while white-collar men continued to rise rapidly upwards through the hierarchy (Archibald 1970:19-27). Rapid growth of both departments and positions, however, increased the distance between the highest levels of control and front line workers (Albo 1993) and resulted in the divergence of the rationality of the internal bureaucracy from the requirements of the social system served by the bureaucracy (Offe 1985:302). These contradictions began

to be felt by 'front line' civil servants attempting to provide services while at the same time acting within the legal-rational system. Demands by the staff associations for more input into the determination of their terms and conditions of employment were becoming more serious by the mid-1950s. Cracks were starting to appear in the unity of the social category of civil servants. In chapters five and six the development of contestation within the category is pursued through the case of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Structure and Agents: Strategic Action and the Limits Imposed by the Past

Men (sic) make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. (Marx 1968:98) ¹¹

This famous quote from Marx's the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte continues on: "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living". This points to the contradiction between structure and agency, between past solutions to problems weighing on, and limiting, the actions and strategies of present actors and groups. Developing counter-hegemonic movements involves strategizing to deal with the limitations

¹¹ This famous quote from Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte begins the historical account of how the contradictory interests of the French peasantry and bourgeois classes led to the construction of the second Bonaparte Republic. Marx's emphasis on class agency in this history was echoed this century by E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class, which examines the counter-hegemony constructed in the C19th by stockingers, croppers, weavers and artisans.

imposed by state and societal structures constructed in the past. Need these structures be always experienced as the "dead weight of the past", or are there possibilities for learning to act within the limitations they impose or indeed to stretch the limits and change the structures?

By insisting that it is human agency which makes history it becomes necessary to bring abstract class and gender structures down to the level of historical social formations and undertake concrete analyses of structures and agents in the context of specific strategies adopted by certain classes and other groups. In addressing the working-class capacity and feminisation of the Canadian labour movement and the Alliance as a union, therefore, there is a need to examine not only key structural changes and instances of resistance to change at the level of the labour process, the union and the state bureaucracy, but also to examine why the union chose a certain strategy rather than another. Or why it chose to remain with 'the same old' strategy. Was it a matter of continuing along the same traditional path because no challenge or conflict occurred? Or was there conflict and challenge from certain groups within the union which was either accepted or rejected.

In taking this latter approach Barrington Moore's (1978) notion of "suppressed historical alternatives" is particularly useful. It has been pointed out that this idea is akin to Gramsci's notion of "blocked" hegemonic project (Mahon in Hunt 1990:327). Both were intended to analyze not only history in the sense of what actually happened, but what might have been if other paths had

been followed (Moore 1978:376). In order to make this a useful method, Barrington Moore argues that it is feasible to show what other alternatives were available to those involved and why. In doing this the method prescribed is no less rigorous than that used in other forms of history. It means

...marshalling evidence, creating and testing an argument, in the same way one goes about explaining any form of human behaviour.... Thus suppressed alternatives have to be concrete alternatives and specific to concrete situations. A big part of the task of any empirical investigation would be to determine the extent to which any given situation actually was open: more precisely what facts limited the range of options open to those men and women whose behaviour strongly influenced the course of events (1978:376-377).

The strategies of activists within the Alliance will be the focus of later chapters. What were the range of strategies available at certain key moments, why were certain ones rejected and others taken up? Why were certain possibilities that might have increased the feminisation and working-class capacity of the union left aside and what were the structural and other kinds of constraints preventing these possibilities from being adopted? In chapter three the feminisation of the Canadian Labour movement is examined in these terms. The case of the Alliance is a specific and more particular part of the larger picture. The agency of union women is explored together within the structural constraints placed on the movement as a whole by the Canadian labour relations system.

It has been argued in this chapter that the social category of civil servants was historically constructed and reproduced within the Canadian state

administration throughout the first part of the twentieth century. By the early 1920s elements crucial to its construction were in place. It was a service that was intended to reflect political neutrality, free of patronage together with appointment on the basis of relative merit and hierarchically ordered. This construction was an important ingredient in establishing the material and ideological dimensions of liberal-democracy in Canada and reproducing the dominant hegemony of market society. Through this construction the Canadian state increased the possibility of acting and appearing as a 'neutral' body arbitrating the interests of unequal groups in civil society.

The employees of the federal state administration, who were not part of management, formed an important part of the social category of 'civil servants'. Young men who entered at the lower clerical ranks were able to climb individually through the ranks to occupy middle and sometimes upper management positions. This was not the case for blue-collar men or women clerical workers who were excluded from permanent appointment to the service until well into the postwar period. In the following chapter the 'underside' of the category of 'civil servants' is examined. Civil servant organizations are composed of different classes, genders and other divisions. In forming 'civil service' associations and unions, class location and gender composition of the membership are important to the kinds of organizations formed. It is how the material base of the organization interacts with the materiality and ideology of the social category of civil servants that becomes crucial to the kind of

organization formed. It is contended that since civil service associations and unions were formed on the strategic terrain of the Canadian liberal-democratic state, this fed into the structure and agency that was created within these organizations and hence resulted in very different kinds of unions from those found in the mainstream labour movement.

Chapter Three

Class Formation, Feminisation and Unions

Classes must be seen, not as veritable geological formations once they have acquired their original shape, but as phenomena in a constant process of formation, reproduction, re-formation and deformation (Therborn 1983:39).

... was not the old proletarian stereotype - the muscular male hewing coal or hammering metal - always a minority within the working class? A mythical belief in some previous golden age of proletarian unity and unproblematic trade union solidarity distorts our perception of current labour movement dynamics (Hyman 1992:166).

Startling changes have taken place in the labour movements of advanced capitalist societies over the last fifteen to twenty years. So much so that these 'old' social movements bear little resemblance to the union movements that developed after the depression of the 1930s, during the second world war and the cold war period of the 1950s and 1960s. The changes have been so radical that certain labour movements of today appear to have more in common with the 'new' social movements -- such as the women's movement, the environmental movement, the movement of Aboriginal peoples, etc. -- than they do with the labour movement of the past (Weir 1993). The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the key debates and questions concerning gender and class relations that have arisen in the context of the changing Canadian labour movement. The quotes cited above hint at two key assumptions which underlie the following discussion: that classes are dynamic

sets of relations which are in a constant process of change and unions are always implicated in class and gender relations which are also in a constant state of flux.

With the transformation of the economy and the increased participation of women in the labour market and unions, the old model of the working class and the labour movement as male, industrial proletariat at the forefront of revolutionary change appears a relic of the past. Changes in the worlds of production and reproduction, the class relations and gender politics that characterize them, and the community and civil society in general have wrought profound changes in our ways of conceiving the working class and the labour movement. As Hyman points out the labour movements of capitalist societies were never homogeneously composed of male, industrial workers. The unions representing this part of the working class, however, did achieve an intra-class dominance after the second world war in terms of the practice of unionism, social democracy and the discourse of labourism. In Canada today the dominance of private sector, industrial unions is on the wane. A new set of labour activists has been making its presence felt since the early 1970s. Women, particularly in public sector unions, are a crucial element in this new labour movement. Furthermore, changes in the nature of production and reproduction mean that old conceptions of who composes the working class no longer fit the current realities. What is needed in order to understand the new realities is a new approach to class and gender formation and reformation,

focusing on how relations of gender and class are constituted together both within and outside the work place.

This study, therefore, takes its inspiration from the need to reconceptualize the key processes of class and gender politics within advanced capitalist democracies in the light of the dramatic transformations that have taken place in the political economies of these societies over the last twenty-five years. In most Western industrialized countries, the working class has changed radically over this period. In many countries, including Canada, the working class has changed internally in terms of gender relations at work and home, its party politics and its relations to new social movements. This really should not come as a surprise to academics or activists; historical changes at all levels of society mean changes to gender relations, class structures and agents. As Therborn points out "... in a perspective of the class analysis of contemporary social change, the problem arises of how to tackle class formation as an open-ended process with no fixed destination (1983)".

Theoretical debates continue to rage over who belongs to the working class, its relevance as a source of counter-hegemony (Gorz 1980) whether it has salience for an understanding of the kind of politics we practise or the society we live in (Laclau & Mouffe 1987), and indeed if it continues to exist at all. Among those arguing for the continuing relevance of workers as a class, even in a much diminished form, debate in the 1980s centred on how class formation takes place at the point of production, within unions and at the

political and cultural levels (Wright 1989; Przeworski 1985; Burawoy 1985). Still others argue for a focus on the internal dynamics of class relations and relations of gender, race and other differences (Jenson 1986). It is argued that gender relations always constitute, and, in turn, are constituted by class relations (Maroney 1988). While others argue that class still has relevance, both in terms of analysis and social change, other forms of identity are as important (if not more important) to the transformation of society (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Barrett 1991).

As stated in the introduction, this study focuses on those working within the administrative state. Where do state workers fit into the class structure? What about their unions, do they contribute to working class formation and the development of a counter-hegemonic movement? In what ways is this development restricted or limited by the kind of unions that these workers organize and form? This chapter will begin to address these questions by focusing on gender relations, class formation and unionization.

One of the arguments of this thesis is that despite recent analysis and prognostication, the working class does indeed continue to exist in advanced capitalist societies and can play an important role both in terms of resistance in the workplace and through its contribution to counter-hegemonic strategies in society generally. It exists, however, in a very different form from that forged in the immediate postwar period. Change has occurred at the levels of the labour process, politics and culture, and these changes have contributed to the

deformation of the old working class in advanced capitalist societies. There has been radical change both in inter-class and intra-class relations and the way that production and reproduction are now organized is a crucial part of that change. Is a new working class solidarity in the process of being formed that includes different conceptions of the collective worker in terms of labour processes and gender relations? This study is a contribution to answering that question.

Too Early To Say Farewell To The Working Class?

In the light of changes that have occurred in advanced capitalist societies since the postwar period, there is a pressing need to re-examine the concept of the working class. One of the important theoretical themes arising in the wake of these changes was that the working class was no longer capable of being an agent of social change. As a class, workers have 'bought into' economic growth and consumerism and are as much supporters of capitalist development as the business entrepreneur. In large part the 'downgrading' of the working class as a primary actor in resisting capitalism needs to be seen in relation to the earlier optimism about the possibilities of this class as an agent of revolutionary change. All through the first part of the twentieth century and a good part of the next quarter, the idea that the industrial proletariat could radically transform capitalism was seen as a distinct possibility. Theorists of class and revolution were, therefore, concerned to outline how this would

happen and to map out the best strategic approach for the working class in the prerevolutionary period.

Class is a theory of economic structures, argued Karl Kautsky (1971) at the end of the nineteenth century, and the subjective construction of class at the political and ideological levels necessarily follows. Eventually the working class would occupy a majority position, given the systemic nature of capitalist development, and the formation of a proletarian class-for-itself would follow automatically. The end result inevitability will be socialism. It is difficult to find a more deterministic and mechanistic view of class formation.

In the 1920s Eduard Bernstein (1961) argued, on the contrary, that rather than the working class becoming the majority through the polarisation of the class structure, there would instead be a substantial growth in the middle classes as capitalist development continued. This would oblige the formation of an alliance between the two classes in order to transform parliament into the evolutionary instrument of socialist reform. Both approaches assumed that class formation and the development of counter-hegemonic strategies are a direct outcome of the development of economic class structures. In this sense both positions are class reductionist.

As it turned out, throughout the twentieth century working class politics have been infinitely more complicated than what was envisioned by either Kautsky or Bernstein. The formation of the working class is not simply a matter of those in working class locations becoming a majority of the population. It

involves the construction of a collective solidarity in terms of strategies and practices. I will return to this point later when discussing hegemony and counter-hegemony.

The debate over whether there has been a growth or decline in the working class continues on today. Braverman's (1974) renewed emphasis on the labour process attempted to demonstrate the increasing proletarianization of employees during the twentieth century. He argued that both manual and non-manual labour processes were subject to deskilling in the course of the century as a result of the separation of the execution of tasks from their conception. Following Marx he argued that the decline of craft work marks the move from formal to real subordination of workers and the assertion of managerial control over the labour process.

Although there is much that is useful and valid in this thesis, subsequent research has pointed out that the picture is more complicated and varied than that laid out by Braverman (Wood 1982). Many studies reveal that while there has been a decline in skilled craft work, a wide range of skilled jobs have been created at the same time, with the subsequent result that one cannot conclude that there has been a linear movement towards deskilling of the working class (Elger 1982). In Canada the evidence points to a bimodal distribution (Myles 1989): there has been a growth of low skilled jobs in personal services at approximately the same time as private, business services, with both highly skilled and well paid jobs in computer technology and lower skilled and low

paid employment, have expanded.

The degradation of work thesis may be very appealing when one considers the large numbers of workers performing very routine, boring tasks, be they the thousands of women keying in data (poignantly depicted in the film Good Monday Morning by Laura Sky), working at word processors, coding postal codes or men, segregated in their work from women, shooting screws into car doors, constructing prefabricated buildings or hurriedly picking up sacks of garbage off our streets. Degraded work, however, is not a phenomenon unique to advanced capitalist societies in the twentieth century. In fact, the male-dominated craft work described by Braverman occupied a minority of the working class in the nineteenth century (Hobsbawn 1964; Elger 1982). Braverman's emphasis on the decline of the skilled, craft worker has a backward-looking, nostalgic flavour, as though the 'making' of the working class was something that occurred in the glorious past and cannot be recaptured. Whether the focus is on craft workers or on the industrial proletariat, care needs to be taken not to romanticize the old working classes of either early or interwar capitalism.

Many researchers have noted that the workers who formed the mass proletarian movements in the capitalist societies of the late nineteenth century Europe and North America were not particularly homogeneous. In fact historical evidence reveals that there was a 'striking heterogeneity' of the workers in these movements in terms of the skills they exercised and the sectors of the

economy from which they were drawn (Thompson 1968; Hobsbawn 1964; Mallet 1975; Palmer 1986). Agreed they were homogeneous in terms of the maleness and whiteness of their members. At the same time it is clear that these movements were marked by divisions and sectionalism that caused problems for working class solidarity.

Another variation on the farewell, or at least the guarded approach, to the working class is found in the arguments of Claus Offe (1985), who suggests that, since the 1970s, there has been growing heterogeneity within the labour movement. As a result, a problem of unity within the ranks of labour has developed in industrial capitalist societies, putting in question the ability of labour movements to act in solidarity as they did in the past. "Arising out of the conditions of economic crisis and tendencies of cultural change", he argues,

the problem consists... in an accentuation of the economic and "moral" divisions within the working class. The result... is a growing heterogeneity in the objective situation of different groups of employees, as well as in their subjective perceptions and interpretations. These lines of division emerge more clearly as a consequence of the worsening labour market situation. (Offe 1985:154)

It is not difficult to agree that worsening conditions in the labour markets of advanced capitalist societies present new problems for labour; rising unemployment and an increase in precarious or 'flexible' forms of employment, for example, characterize labour markets in a wide range of advanced capitalist societies, including the United States and Canada (Albo 1989; Edwards 1979; Myles 1989). Yet the problem of labour unity is not new. Divisions existed within

these western labour movements to a greater or lesser degree both during the postwar period and before.

In particular, women, newly arrived immigrants (in European countries "guest workers"), aboriginal people and the unemployed have long been marginalized; they did not, and still do not, have the power to assert their particular interests within the Canadian labour movement as a whole. In Canada some of the more salient divisions occurred between craft and industrial workers (Babcock 1988), between white and non-white immigrant workers, and between private and public sector workers. Furthermore, there is now a growing literature on the ways that women were subordinated within the trade union movement and defined in terms of their roles as wives and mothers rather than as co-workers and union members (Steadman 1986; Gannage 1986; Gabin 1990; White 1993). Casualization of work is not a new phenomenon for many women or for 'minority' groups. What is different is that certain groups of men, many of them young, who earlier would have been core workers now also have joined those on the periphery of the work force. All these differences and divisions, rather than homogeneity within the working class, do not add up to the end of the working class either as a collective agent or as a concept of analysis, but they do lead to the need for a more complex approach than that adopted by Braverman.

What may be nearer the truth is that recent labour market changes, together with the rise of certain popular movements, have provided openings

for marginalized groups within the working class to make their particular experience and needs felt. Acting on the basis of their experience, women and minority groups have made existing divisions *visible*. They have brought to the fore their subordination, within the labour movement and the working class, challenging the ways in which union identity and solidarity have been constructed in the past (Warskett 1992). As has been pointed out recently

the issue is not that the working classes are less homogeneous than they used to be, and hence that the political expression of class is now impossible. The working classes were never homogeneous. The real question is whether and how political solidarity may be reforged as the working classes' internal composition undergoes inevitable change (Panitch 1992:13).

The theme of farewell to the working class was taken to its logical conclusion by Andre Gorz (1980) in Adieu au Proletariat. There he argues that "there is a crisis in Marxist thinking because a crisis has developed within the labour movement (Gorz 1980:14)". He attributes this crisis to the break in the link between production and the growth of class conflict. Workers -- and it is clear that for him this means male, industrial workers -- no longer identify with their work and as a consequence they have lost a sense of belonging to a class. Workers no longer envisage freeing themselves within work but rather reject the notion of work altogether. In rejecting work, they reject the traditional organizational forms of the working class. "It is no longer a question of winning power as a worker, but of winning the power no longer to function as a worker (1980:67)". From this approach he concludes that the working class and its primary organization, the labour movement, has entered into crisis. Gorz

pushes this thesis to its ultimate end point: since workers no longer define themselves by work, the agents of social change must be found outside the workplace.

The evidence for this thesis is slight. Paid wage labour remains the single most important means of earning a living in advanced capitalist societies and there is no evidence that workers do not wish to participate in the paid labour force. Indeed the evidence is to the contrary. In Canada, the loss of jobs in the manufacturing and industrial sectors together with downsizing in the public sector is paralleled by a rise in self-employment in the 1990s. The self-employed, however, still account for only 14 percent of the workforce; a high percentage of this group are women earning a very low income. In 1994 self-employed women earned on average \$7,051 per year, just over half of the \$13,168 that self-employed men earned on average (Globe & Mail, July 11, 1996). Self-employed earnings for most Canadian women and men do not provide even a subsistence level income and many of these workers would prefer the security and benefits of unionized paid employment.

Andre Gorz wrote his 'farewell' at the very moment the participation rates of women in the paid labour force were rising rapidly in all OECD countries. In Canada, as elsewhere, the increased involvement of women in the paid labour force and in unions has had a transformative effect on the workplace, in unions and in the home. Gorz's conception of the working class as male, industrial production workers thus limits the relevance and strength of his analysis.

Another major problem with Gorz's thesis is his depiction of workers as totally alienated from conceptual and creative work and, as such, controlled by management. Such a conception leaves aside the resistance of workers both to managerial control and to their exploitation in the valorization process. Gorz is able to write Adieu au Proletariat because he conceives that the basis on which the industrial proletariat previously resisted capital no longer exists and that we must look to other groups outside the workplace to oppose the power of capital.

Farewell to the working class is heralded from yet another direction by a growing number of post-marxists and post-structuralists. Laclau and Mouffe took the lead in laying out this position in the mid-1980s (1985; 1987). They and others argue that the working class cannot be the agent of revolutionary change because there is no structural, material antagonism inherent in the relationship between wage labour and capital. Extraction of surplus value only exists as an exploitative phenomenon to the extent that it is constructed as such by the discourse of labour leaders and marxists. Since there are no inherent material interests, it can only be radical democratic discourses, generated by intellectuals, that are capable of *interpellating* the masses and giving focus and meaning to their struggles. Furthermore, they argue that the extraction of surplus value is only an economic phenomenon and as such there is nothing radical or revolutionary about labour's contestation since it is a discourse that has limited possibilities for the *interpellation* of other identities.

Ultimately they are led into a position that denies the possibilities of wisdom and knowledge derived from lived experience in dealing with and struggling against exploitation. Their thinking, however, has alerted us to two important problems with marxist analysis: the often narrow conception of the working-class as the traditional proletariat; and the attachment to a form of economic determinism that ultimately accords no place to working class agency.

Undoubtedly the notion of the working class as a conscious, dynamic community and culture seems in tatters in many advanced industrial societies, given the decline in numbers of unionized workers and the apparent defeat of social-democratic politics. Surprisingly, in Canada there is not the same sense of defeat within the labour movement as is found in the United States and many Western European countries (Hyman 1993). The alliances between the union movement and newer social movements seem to be producing a new chapter in the history of the Canadian working class.¹ Public sector workers constitute an important part of this movement. During the 1960s and 1970s public sector unions were perceived as the poor second cousins of American international industrial unions, but in the last fifteen years they have achieved a new status within the labour movement. Faced with state restructuring, neo-conservative agendas and marketization of the public sector, public sector unions in Canada

¹ In January 1993, the CLC and various social movements held a joint conference calling for "A New Agenda". Since that time the alliance between the CLC and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) has developed and in June 1996 the cross-Canada march for Bread and Roses culminated in a demonstration in Ottawa.

have exhibited a new degree of militancy. Strikes by public sector unions occurred from the 1990s onwards in all of the provinces and at the federal level. The 1991 general strike by federal government workers that reached every corner of the country forms part of the case examined in later chapters of this study. There it is argued that the growing militancy of federal government workers is linked to the feminisation of the Canadian labour movement and the transformation of the Canadian working class.

Those who would say farewell to the working class fail to comprehend the far-reaching changes that have taken place in the nature of work, politics and culture in advanced capitalist societies. To posit that the workplace no longer has the same relevance as it had at earlier periods of capitalist development is simply wishful thinking. Paid wage labour is still the primary means of making a living for most people in advanced capitalist society, despite high rates of unemployment and rising rates of part-time, precarious and own-account employment. Indeed, with the increased participation of women in the paid labour force more people than ever before expect to directly earn a living through wage labour. In Canada rising rates of female participation in the paid labour market, the continuing importance of state employment despite government cutbacks and the high rates of unionization among these workers point to a different conclusion -- that the Canadian working class has been reformed and reconstituted. Furthermore, the lack of alternative forms of subsistence means that to be unemployed is a personal disaster that normally

is only solved by paid employment.

The problem remains, however, of the limitations of analysis centred wholly on the workplace. Yet this problem is not simply created by the too narrow focus of researchers. The form which production and reproduction takes in advanced capitalist society makes it difficult to separate out 'work' from the conditions of life within which work is conducted. Market relations in advanced capitalist society demand that people serve the economy. The economy is not embedded in society and culture but rather defines and forms culture, politics and society. Production and growth means that for most people paid labour is the centre and means of life. Yet any counter-hegemonic movement that simply reflects this outlook on life misses the potential of developing and building an alternative view of society. If instead we stand the economy on its head and argue that any viable set of social relations must be served by, rather than serving, the economy then we immediately have a different concept of social life and the working class community (Polanyi 1944).

In large part the failure to retheorize the working class comes from a static definition of who makes up this class. But the static definition of the working class is linked to a larger problem of human agency and the relationship to structures inherited from the past. Neo-marxist theory that developed in the post-war period, formed in reaction to the individualism of liberal theory and politics. Its emphasis on structures of capital and the state left little room for the development of a different conception of the working class as

agents of change and the way such agency is constituted in terms of gender relations and other kinds of differences. In the following section I take up the debate of class as structure and agency and class formation and feminisation within unions.

Gender, Class Formation and Unions

Class is both a relationship and a process of formation (Thompson 1978; Therborn 1983; Wood 1995). At the level of the Canadian economy in the late twentieth century, class is predominantly a set of social relations between those who produce and those who manage and control production. But it is much more than this. While class relationships play a crucial role in the organization of labour processes, they also have political and cultural consequences within the workplace (Burawoy 1985). Furthermore, the politics and culture of production have a profound impact on other levels of society, the state and culture, while at the same time these other levels of class politics make their presence felt on the organization of the labour process at the point of production. The politics of production has an important impact in the home where the relationship between producers and reproducers is moulded to an important extent by class relationships; at the level of the state where the relationship is embodied in politics and law; and culturally, where it expresses itself in a wide range of cultural practices and discourses.

Class is also a process of class formation where people act together to

make sense of, and devise strategies to deal with the circumstances of their shared experiences arising from class relationships, not only at the level of production but within society generally. How we conceptualize class both as a relationship and a process of formation, and the link between the two aspects is important for identifying class practices, strategies and discourses and how they relate to other kind of relations of domination and subordination that exist at all levels of Canadian society, the economy, state and culture.

The history of marxist ideas is full of debates, problems and complexities concerning the link between class as an objective economic situation (location) and class as a process of formation. It is a problem that remains unresolved both theoretically and practically, and indeed in the context of globalization and restructuring of capital it is even more perplexing than before because of the juxtaposition of the localities where people live and work with the international where control and dominance is constituted to a large degree. As was noted earlier, certain forms of marxism that developed at the turn of the century posed the problem of class location and formation in terms of base and superstructure. The determining economic base structures class relations and forms objective classes. A class-in-itself is conceived, therefore, in objective, structural terms and the superstructure is determined by the economic base. Class consciousness is part of this superstructure and produces members of a 'class-for-itself'. Members of such classes are prepared to act in opposition to other classes and on behalf of their own *raison d'être*. In this view the base is

the real, objective social existence of people whereas the superstructure is ideational, cultural and subjective.

The base/superstructure formulation leads down a long, false alley, not only because of the arbitrary way that economic and cultural practices are divided into one or the other but also because of the objective economic class location and subjective class consciousness divide. This results, amongst other anomalies, in some workers being designated as productive while others are not. Raymond Williams points out that in this view the "piano-maker is base, but pianist superstructure.....As a way of considering cultural activity, and incidentally the economics of modern cultural activity, this is clearly a dead-end (1980:35)". It is also a dead-end in terms of the divide between private and public sector workers, since the latter are conceived as belonging to the state superstructure and therefore not part of the 'productive' working class.²

The base, superstructure conceptualization is misleading in its division between objective class location and subjective consciousness. Class consciousness is perceived as providing the link between the economy and politics and the motivation for classes to act. Class consciousness, however, has not proved to be a fruitful concept in explaining the process of class formation. To begin with, it leads to a focus on individual attitudes (Therborn

² It is not the intention here to review every writer who has ever made a contribution to this debate. What follows is a discussion of key issues involved in developing a workable solution for dealing with class formation in the context of this study of state workers.

1983), and all the difficulties associated with the validity of attitudinal studies. Collective behaviour often runs counter to individual survey data.³ Collective organization and practice can change individual attitudes and behaviour overnight because they draw on a different viewpoint from that of the individual thinking alone. On becoming part of a collectivity, individuals often act and think differently. This seems to be the result of the collective "chemistry" among workers (Fantasia 1988:7). Andrew Friedman argues that the resonance from acting and thinking with others of similar experience changes the individual's perception of what is possible and motivates him or her to act with others to change power relations (1977). This point is also argued by Carol Smart (1989) who maintains that group consciousness raising "links knowledge with strategy, breaking down isolation and constructing alternatives (1989:80)".⁴

Furthermore, when there is no apparent link between objective class location and class consciousness, individuals are depicted as 'falsely conscious'. Not only is this concept unfruitful but it is also marked with all the

³ The most famous example of this in the labour relations literature was the interviews conducted by J. Goldthorpe with results published in his book The Affluent Worker. He argued that autoworkers were firmly integrated into the capitalist system. While the study was at the printers, a 'wildcat' strike took place with rioting and singing of The Red Flag (Fantasia, 1988:7). Another example occurred in the Alliance's 1991 general strike. Voting three months prior to the strike revealed marginal, membership support for a strike in many regions. In the Ottawa/Hull region only a minority voted in favour of the strike. Yet three months later, members in the region strongly supported the strike, undertook the largest demonstrations in favour of it, and some of the strongest action against members who crossed the picket lines.

⁴ Carol Smart's conception of women's consciousness raising is fundamentally different from that of Catherine MacKinnon's (1983) who conceives of it as a method for obtaining truth.

difficulties of proving the unprovable. Class consciousness should not be treated as a "static ideational 'attribute' or 'possession' subject to simple verification" but rather as "an active cultural 'process' that is complex, shifting, and problematic (Fantasia 1988:107)".

If we stop the clock of history and statistically examine class structures, it is possible to say what percentage of Canadians belong to a particular class. In doing this we are simply stating how many Canadians at that point in time occupy a particular class location. But there is no necessary link between these facts and class formation. Class formation does not follow automatically from the momentary capturing of historical material relations. What we can say is that there is a potential for class formation, or, indeed, deformation, arising out of the actions of those situated in similar class locations. Class location and the experience that arises from that situation of class relations is an important element in the development of the intrinsic strength of a class and feeds into "the capacities of a given class to act in relation to others (Therborn 1983:38)".

The intrinsic strength of a class is linked to the forms of organization and practice that a class is capable of developing. In Canada trade unions have been traditionally one of the key forms of working class organization since the early nineteenth century. Class location does not determine class formation but rather provides a potential for class action based on the shared experience of a certain kind of class relation. The choice of strategies open to class agents cannot be simply reduced to 'objective' class structure and the intrinsic strength

flowing from certain economic, class positions. The intrinsic strength of a class derives from its position in socio-economic relations. For example, the intrinsic strength of the bourgeoisie is its market expanding capacity, whereas the power of the working class rests in its collectivity, "especially in its capacity for unity through interlocking, mutually supportive and concerted practices (Therborn 1983:41)". Conflict between classes and the form of politics taken in these conflicts, are important ingredients of class formation and class action. Class is not only a relationship between classes but also a set of relations internal to a class itself, and these internal relations are crucial to the formation, deformation and reformation of all classes (Therborn 1983; Przeworski 1985).

Class theories that focus primarily on objective class structures are concerned to define and analyze empty class places (Clement & Myles 1994; Wright 1989). In this study class structure is operationalized on the basis of Clement's minimalist class categories (Clement 1990). At the highest level of abstraction within capitalist societies there are the two dominant classes, capital and labour, "with Capital seeking to appropriate the value which only Labour can produce (Clement 1990:467)". In the late twentieth century, at the intermediary level of analysis of capitalist societies four major classes can be identified in relation to the control of capital over production and over labour power. Clement illustrates this as follows

Command Labour Power of Others

		Yes	No
Command Means of Production	Yes	CAPITALIST/EXECUTIVE	OLD MIDDLE CLASS
	No	NEW MIDDLE CLASS	WORKING CLASS

The capitalist/executive class includes executive or senior managers, outside and within the state, who make binding decisions (command) about the production process or the services to be delivered. These decisions include: what goods or services are to be produced and how much; the methods of production and distribution; and the number of employees required. The new middle class does not have binding decision-making power over the production process but does have sanctioning authority, or control and surveillance over other employees (Carchedi 1977). Included here are lower level management and supervisors, outside and within the state, who can impose sanctions on other employees or have some policy-setting authority. The old middle class is composed of the self-employed who may have one or two employees, while the working class exercises no control over production or the labour of others (Clement 1990:468).

Focusing entirely on class places rather than the people who fill these places can lead to an analysis that is devoid of agency and history. Patriarchy and racism may play an important role in assigning individuals to class locations yet in certain analyses attributes of gender, ethnicity and race have little to do with the constitution and reproduction of the structure itself (Acker

1989:16). It is as if agents are formed separately and apart from class structures that operate independently of human history, action and struggle. If we insist that it is human agency that makes history, albeit within the limits placed on strategies and practices by structures formed as a result of past conflicts, then it is necessary to bring abstracted class structures down to the level of historical social formations and analyze them together with the agencies responsible for their formation. When we do this, it becomes clearer that in capitalist society the dominance of exploitative relations, between sellers and buyers of labour power, is modified by other classes existing alongside, and by class fractions within, the two dominant classes (Clement & Myles 1994; Wright 1989).

What is more significant for our purposes, however, is that all classes are shot through with gender relations, and frequently other sets of relations too, which can be more salient for certain groups at certain moments than class and therefore can dramatically affect class agency and strategy. When reflecting on class formation and its relation to gender relations, there is a need to examine the ways in which gender relations (as well as race and ethnic relations), and the political and discursive conflicts flowing from them, are present in the conflicts that take place both between and within classes (Storey 1991). Generally, men and women are differently located in the workplace, in the household, in politics and society and this fact has a significant impact on experience and learning. In general women and men have different class

experiences and how this difference is constructed in terms of discourse and strategic action is extremely important to the intrinsic strength of a class, especially the working class since its strength and capacity to act rests on its collectivity and solidarity.

In this dissertation, this means exploring how class and gender relations are formed together and how they contribute to the formation of the working class and the new union movement. I contend that women, both as a part of the paid labour force and as part of Canadian unions, have contributed significantly to the transformation of the Canadian working class and the Canadian union movement over the last twenty years. The capacity of the Canadian labour movement to act on behalf of all members of the working class has been strengthened as the result of the feminisation of unions. Its solidarity is now constructed to include a wider range of the working class than was the case in the immediate postwar, fordist period.

Gender relations constitute and, in turn, are constituted by class relations or are doubly constituted by class and gender politics (Maroney 1988:27). While this means that class relations are always gendered and gender relations vary according to class, the matter goes deeper than that. Constitute and constituted by does not mean intersecting, intertwining, moving together etc. These terms imply that class relations and gender relations can be separated out both theoretically and historically - that they can be theorized as separate or dual sets of relations and can be empirically distinguished. My point is that to

study them separately is to, in effect, separate out production from reproduction and reduce class relations to a set of production relations rather than an all encompassing set of socio-economic, political and cultural relations. Separating class out from gender politics, in effect reinforces the separate systems of production and reproduction set in motion with the rise of industrial capitalism. The imposition of the factory system on the English working class had the effect of separating production from reproduction, economy from politics and cultural life (Wood 1995:40-44), resulting in the separation of economic and political struggles. Conflicts over surplus production became limited to the terms and conditions of employment. Craft unions reflected the realities of the rise of capitalism in nineteenth century Canada by creating a strong male-dominated union culture from which women and children were excluded and named as dilutees if they were drawn into the division of labour and undercut craftsmen's jobs. This was also the case for unskilled male labourers who later formed the more egalitarian industrial unions. Demands for men to be paid a family wage fed into the separation of the spheres of reproduction and production and reinforced the dominance of the productive sphere.

As pointed out earlier working class capacity and its intrinsic strength depends on collectivity and solidarity; it is the capacity to act collectively and therefore to put aside divisions and internal conflicts over policy and strategy. The present wave of feminism has had a dramatic impact on the collectivity and

solidarity of working class institutions in Canada. The union movement, the parties of the Left -- both the social-democratic New Democratic Party and the small socialist and communist parties -- have all felt the impact of feminisation. This has produced divisions and conflict but also greater solidarity and therefore increased working-class capacity.

Feminisation of the labour movement is not simply a matter of increased numbers of women in unions or leadership positions, although greater numbers of women do provide the possibility or potential for feminisation to occur. Feminisation is the process of bringing the politics of gender into the main business of unions and challenging and changing relations of domination and subordination between men and women. Feminisation in this study is treated as a process and set of practices that challenge women's subordinate and unequal position in unions. The issues around which such challenges have been joined include union priorities at the bargaining table, women's limited participation in leadership positions, the separation of workplace issues from community and family concerns, and the relationship between leaders and led. One of the main arguments of the study is that women have transformed the union movement by organizing, strategizing and acting within their unions. Feminist activity has produced divisions and conflict within unions but also the development of a greater collectivity and solidarity than was possible within the old industrial or craft forms of unionism. The potential of feminism lies in its pursuit of democracy and equality for all. Public sector unions have played a

key role in the process of feminisation and the case of the PSAC demonstrates how that particular union was changed by the challenges and strategic action of its women members.

Hegemony, Counter-hegemony and Unions

...hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limits of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure (Williams 1980:37).

Through the development of the concept of hegemony, Gramsci played a crucial part in putting the base/superstructure metaphor into question. The 'rediscovery' in the 1960s of Gramsci's often cryptic yet illuminating reflections was important in the development of neo-marxist theories of the state and counter-hegemonic social movements. Gramsci's conception of hegemony is a key concept for this study and its complexity and dynamism stands in contrast to the static and mechanistic notion of base and superstructure. This is because the notion of hegemony conceives of a social totality with a dominant system of practices, meanings and values. This means that the production process is not only about economic relations but is also a set of politics which results in relations of consent and coercion at the very point of production (Burawoy 1985). Production politics, however, are buttressed and given force by the dominant hegemony at the level of state, civil society and culture. The

interpretation of the relations within the production system appear to be common sense precisely because of the notion of hegemony "as deeply saturating the consciousness of society (Ibid.)".

Gramsci was very critical of the economistic view that the logic of capitalist economic development will inevitably bring about the downfall of the system through its own internal contradictions, and the corollary that there is nothing that the working class can do until that moment of economic crisis arrives. His attack on economism was not, therefore, an attack on the primacy of economic structures but rather a rejection of the assumption that what happens at the level of production automatically determines what happens at the levels of state and culture. His view of a social formation emphasizes the complexity of the social forces which make up any moment of history. It is a complexity which cannot be reduced to a simple cause and effect relationship between the economy and the state, the base and superstructure.

Gramsci's rejection of economism develops from the concept of hegemony and the role the liberal-democratic state undertakes in guaranteeing and reproducing the hegemony of the "dominant group". Hegemony is defined as

...The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Gramsci 1971:12).

It is a process whereby popular consent is continually reproduced and mobilized. It involves the general, common sense acceptance by the subordinate of the rule of the dominant classes. Throughout his writings Gramsci points out that the reproduction of hegemony is never unproblematic. In fact, it is exceedingly problematic. The continuation and reproduction of the dominant hegemony is always fragile and depends on the construction within the state of a "compromise equilibrium" between the ruling class, its allies and the subordinate classes. The hegemony of the "ruling class" permeates the whole of political and civil society. It is reproduced, given legitimacy, and finds its dialectical opposite in the coercive authority of the law. Together the coercion of the state and the continual search by state institutions to reproduce popular consent are a response to popular struggles that challenge the dominant hegemony. Consent of the subordinate is the "willingness" to accept the initiatives and power of the dominant given their relative lack of power. These power relations arise because of the coercion of specific historical circumstances (Gramsci 1971).

The "spontaneous consent" of the subordinate flows not only from the economic sacrifices of the dominant classes but also from the overall conception of society as expressive of the core interests of the lead group. The core interests of those that dominate are conceived as the interests of the entire nation. During the immediate post-war period what was 'good for General Motors' was perceived to be good for both the United States and Canada; an

'unstable' harmony of interest between workers and employers was created. In the present period 'government deficit reduction' is the new unifying discourse. Through the work and teaching of new 'organic intellectuals', cutbacks in social programmes and reduction of state spending are reinterpreted to be a 'common sense revolution' for all groups in society, even those on welfare. It is through the work and teaching of 'organic intellectuals' that ruling class hegemony and discourses permeate and 'make common sense' of the relations between the dominant and the subordinate.

The importance of Gramsci's work to this study relates to unions in general, and 'civil service' unions in particular and their role in both the reproduction of the dominant hegemony and in forming a counter-hegemonic movement. It should be noted at this point that not all unions of wage earners are working class. As pointed out in the previous section, both those performing the function of capital and those who have real control over their own labour process also form or have the potential to form unions. All kinds of unions are, however, implicated in class formation in the sense of developing or limiting the intrinsic strength of the labour movement as a working-class, counter-hegemonic movement.

Unions in Canada, unlike other class-based organisations such as political parties, are formed in response to employers' organization of production. This means that as class organizations they are organized in opposition to the employer while at the same time reflecting the employer's

organization. In other words, unions are formed on the basis of the subordinate class locations occupied by their members, whether they are located in the working or new middle class. No matter the class location of organized workers, the basic thrust of unionism is to take wages and benefits out of market competition and institute a system of collective rather than individual bargaining. Unions, therefore, are a reaction to the social relations of production within capitalist societies and, as such, are moulded by their relationship to the employer whether in the private or public sector. This means that unions are formed in opposition to capitalist production relations while at the same time they are an essential element of them (Hyman 1989:245).

Some have argued that this means that unions cannot challenge the class divisions within capitalist society; they can only reflect them (Anderson 1967:264-5). Unions are such an integral part of the social relations of production that their relationship to capital is symbiotic. This view of unions goes back to Lenin and his assumption that unions can only develop trade union consciousness (rather than revolutionary class consciousness) which leads them to pressure employers for limited economic gains. Workers, therefore, will only adopt a revolutionary stance when organized by a political party that has a socialist program. This was a radical departure from the Communist Manifesto in which Marx and Engels declared that the development of trade unionism was a significant step in the development of the working classes opposition to capital. Although both Marx and Engels were later to

point out the reformist nature of certain British craft unions who formed an aristocracy of labour (e.g. Marx's letter to Liebknecht, see Lapidés 1987).

The dualism of trade unions in terms of consciousness and practices is a recurring theme in the marxist literature of the twentieth century. Various writers in the marxist tradition have taken up one side or the other of the union problematic. Few observers have been successful at capturing and embodying the contradictory nature of unions in their theorizing. Gramsci's distinction between legal trade unionism and the factory councils is instructive in this regard. The trade union, he points out "is the form which labour as a commodity is bound to assume in a capitalist system, when it organizes itself in order to control the market (1977:265)". He goes on to say that industrial legality is a great victory for the working class because it improves standards of living, strengthens the movement and changes the power relations between employers and workers. Union legality is a process that is part of the reproduction of the dominant hegemony and involves unionized workers in consenting, yet at the same time exacting compromises from, those who dominate in the employment relationship. Legality brings with it bureaucracy, technicians, specialists "in the art of concentrating and guiding the workers' forces in such a way as to establish a favourable balance between the working class and the power of capital (1971:265)". Legality also results in the ability to negotiate agreements, take on responsibilities, compromise and act within the context of the norms and values embedded in labour relations law. At times,

union leaders act monologically to achieve the best possible agreements over the terms and conditions of work.

Factory councils, in their ideal form, are the dialectical opposite of union legality and bureaucracy. They project an alternative vision, a counter-hegemony, at all times striving "to break with industrial legality" and establish a different consciousness and common sense based in the experience of the factory workers' day-to-day exploitation and dehumanization. Initially, Gramsci perceived the councils as rising above the sectional and defensive economic vision and actions of legal unionism, producing a counter coercion of their own and acting as a "counter-educator" against the state and dominant hegemony. He perceived them as providing the conditions under which workers could conceive themselves as "producers" rather than merely "wage earners", as part of an entire productive system which could replace capital and management (1977:266). Later on in the prison notebooks, Gramsci recognized the limitations of the Councils in their restriction to the productive sphere and hence their inability to develop a counter-hegemony for society as a whole (1971:201-202).

What is important is how Gramsci conceived the relationship between the Councils, wherein spontaneity, popular experience, expression and learning remain, and the trade unions, which embody and represent the gains of industrial legality. He points out that,

The relations between the two institutions should be such that a capricious impulse on the part of the Councils could not result in a set-back or defeat for the working class; in other words, the Council should accept and assimilate the discipline of the union. They should also be such that the revolutionary character of the Council exercises an influence over the trade union, and functions as a reagent dissolving the union's bureaucracy and bureaucratism (1977:266).

The emphasis here is on accepting and strategizing on the basis of the contradictory duality of unions, of recognising that the dominant hegemony through the legality of unionism seeks to compromise with and absorb the opposition of union action. On the one hand, this builds and strengthens the working-class, labour movement but, on the other, it has the effect of rendering the oppositional character of unions as illegitimate and ineffective.

Hyman, who was very influenced by Gramsci's discussion of factory councils, focuses on a similar dualism when writing of the shop steward movement in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s (1971). Claus Offe's dialogical and monological collective action (1985) is an attempt to capture the two aspects of union strategizing that may operate in a contradictory fashion. More recently Patricia Baker (1991) and Linda Briskin (1993) have pointed to separate attempts to organize women in unions by feminist groupings that produce dilemmas for both the mainstream and the radicals.

In this study the focus is on women's organization and strategizing within the Canadian Labour Movement in general and the Alliance in particular. In what way have union women contributed to working-class formation and the intrinsic strength of labour through the development of collectivity and

solidarity? Furthermore, within the labour movement has there been a broadening of the issues of production, that act to break down the division between the workplace, society and politics? In examining the limits and possibilities of the women's movement within the union movement the focus is also on the way in which economic and state structures limit the strategies and action available to those opposing the dominant hegemony. The emphasis is on the agency and learning of unionists, but also on the limitations imposed by structures "given and transmitted from the past".

The working class in late twentieth century has changed radically since the end of the 1950s, but this does not mean that it no longer exists as a counter-hegemonic movement. The deformation and reformation of the Canadian working class is linked to changes at the level of the economy, politics and culture and the consequent transformations in labour processes and gender relations. As a consequence new forms of working-class organization have developed to respond to these changes. In the following chapter the feminisation of work is examined in the context of the Canadian industrial relations system and the Canadian labour movement. The case study of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, developed in chapters five to eight, is about one of the new organizational forms of the Canadian working class and examines how this union developed conjuncturally with the feminisation of the Canadian labour movement.

In this chapter it was argued that class formation or deformation does

not automatically occur because of changes in the class location of workers. Working class location and the existence of trade unionism does not mean class formation will automatically occur. Unions of employees located in working-class positions are historically constructed and depend to a large extent on the culture of unionism generally operating within the society and way this is constructed by the union members themselves. As Gramsci points out

The trade union is not a predetermined phenomenon. It *becomes* a determinate institution, i.e. it takes on a definite historical form to the extent that the strength and will of the workers who are its members impress a policy and propose an aim that define it (1977:265).

In the case study of the Alliance, I examine how working-class formation and feminisation was constructed on the strategic terrain of the federal administrative state and how the changing class and gender composition of its membership provided a basis for those changes. In the historical construction of the Alliance, the influence of the mainstream Canadian labour movement and the development of the women's groups affiliated to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) were important influences on the PSAC's union culture. In the following chapter the focus is on the development of the Canadian labour movement and the way in which the conjuncture between feminism and unionism has produced a new formation of the Canadian working-class.

Chapter Four

The Canadian Labour Movement, Feminisation and the Labour Relations System, 1960-1996

As our movement has grown we have been challenged to meet the demands of women, visible minority, lesbian, gay and disabled union members. The labour movement has responded with a range of initiatives: policy statements and resolutions; women's and human rights committees and departments; affirmative action positions on executive bodies; and, hundreds of education seminars. Workers from these communities have sparked a high level of activism on women's issues, on employment equity initiatives and in anti-discrimination campaigns. Equality-seeking caucuses and working groups continue to press forward within the labour movement encouraging more action, more quickly. The increased participation of unionists from groups which experience discrimination has increased our movement's profile and ability to work in coalitions on a host of issues (CLC 1996)

Times have changed for Canadian unions in the last two decades as they have for labour movements in other countries. Economic restructuring has wrought fundamental transformations in workplaces, labour processes, job categories and hence unions. In Canada, the union movement is now largely made up of domestically based rather than American/international unions. The feminisation of the labour supply and the labour market over the last twenty years has resulted in changes both to the membership of unions and their organization. This chapter explores the challenges posed by these developments and the crucial part union women have played within organized labour in Canada over the last two decades in reconstructing the intrinsic strength of the labour movement.

The opening quote of this chapter is taken from the Canadian Labour Congress's policy statement at its 21st Constitutional Convention. It recognizes the profound changes that have occurred within the Congress as a result of the challenges of women and other groups, traditionally subordinated within the union movement. There are, however, important ways in which the union movement, as a whole, has not responded, or revealed its inability to respond, to these challenges. The fragmented structure of the Canadian labour movement remains and, as a consequence, the structural weakness of the Congress, a voice without a membership base, is unchanged (Smith 1992). CLC convention policies regarding women and minority groups (as with other policies) cannot be imposed on affiliated unions, and for the most part they remain marginal to the main business of unions -- collective bargaining. Marginalization also occurs because of the emphasis by liberal and union feminists on legislative strategies. These strategies, designed to achieve pay and employment equity with men, have benefitted some women in the public sector, but the restructuring of the economy and cutbacks in the public sector have limited their effectiveness.

The division of the working class into public and private sector unions produced divisions and conflict within the Canadian labour movement in the postwar period. While these divisions remain to a certain extent, there has been a lessening of the ideological differentiation between public and private sector unions in recent times. Part of the reason for this is the increased militancy of

public sector unions and the greater identification of these unions with the Canadian labour movement. For workers in the Canadian federal administration this identification is the other side of the 'cracking' of the social category of 'civil servants'.

Despite the restructuring of the economy, union density is only slightly down from its peak in the mid-1980s and unionization of women workers continues to rise (See Tables 1 and 2). By the mid-1980s 36.4 percent of all unions members were women, as opposed to only 17 percent twenty years earlier (White 1993). Struggles of women unionists had an impact on Canadian unions and labour centrals relatively early on in the present wave of feminism. Women's representation in leadership positions had improved and their demands for changes, both internally and at the bargaining table, had met with some success. Yet despite these early successes, women still earn substantially less than men; job segregation has lessened only marginally; the majority of workers in precarious forms of work are women; and quality childcare provision is neither accessible nor affordable for most working people.

The focus in this chapter is on the structural constraints of the Canadian labour relations system despite the vigorous activity of union women and men to bring about changes. The structure/agency approach explored in the first two chapters is developed in the context of the feminisation of the Canadian labour movement.

TABLE 1
Union Membership and Density in Canada, 1978-90

Year	Union Membership (000s)	Union Density^a
1978	3,278	38.4
1979	N/A ^b	N/A ^b
1980	3,397	38.5
1981	3,487	36.7
1982	3,617	37.0
1983	3,563	37.9
1984	3,651	37.9
1985	3,666	38.1
1986	3,730	37.7
1987	3,782	37.0
1988	3,841	36.5
1989	3,944	36.2
1990	4,031	36.2

^a Union membership as a percentage of paid (non-agricultural) workers.

^b Data not available (NA) for 1979.

Source: Canada, Department of Labour (1990: Appendix II, Table 1).

TABLE 2
Unionized Workers, 1983-92

	Women		Men		Women as % of Total Union Members^a
	000s	% of Paid Female Workers Unionized	000s	% of Paid Male Workers Unionized	
1983	1,175	28.5	2,160	39.9	35.2
1984	1,210	28.4	2,169	39.7	35.8
1985	1,253	28.2	2,181	38.7	36.4
1986	1,301	28.4	2,250	39.0	36.6
1987	1,353	28.1	2,261	38.0	37.4
1988	1,406	28.3	2,311	38.1	37.8
1989	1,511	29.4	2,314	38.0	39.5
1990	1,552	30.3	2,288	38.6	40.4
1991	1,575	30.8	2,254	38.8	41.1
1992	1,596	31.2	2,270	38.2	41.3

Gender and Class Biases Embedded in the Canadian Collective Bargaining System

Radical changes occurred to Canadian labour processes, employment relations and patterns of unionization in the late 1930s, gathered speed during the wartime period and continued through the 1950s. As in the United States and in West European countries, both capital and labour responded to the devastating effects of the depression and the insecurities of war, although in doing so they sought different forms of intervention from the state. They were driven in large part by their contradictory class positions and perspectives as producers and non-producers. Their responses were formed in the context of Canada as a "rich dependency" of the United States (Panitch 1981) and produced a specifically Canadian version of Fordism (Jenson 1989) and the postwar settlement.

Canadian Fordism¹ placed emphasis on increased economic integration with the United States through the exploitation of Canada's natural resources and the import of American capital. Tariff barriers provided some protection for Canadian capital, although they also contributed to the development of American branch plants behind the tariff walls. Several industries, such as auto production, agricultural machinery and defence production, were given

¹ Jane Jenson (1989) refers to the particular kind of political economy that developed on Canadian soil as "permeable fordism". By this she means that the Canadian economy and labour relations system was moulded by its relation with the United States, both in terms of the infusion of American capital and the development of the collective bargaining system.

competitive advantage as a result of special bilateral agreements that guaranteed access to American markets (Jenson & Mahon 1993b). It was the development of large industrial plants and resource exploitation in the 1940s and 1950s that provided the main impetus for changes both to the patterns of Canadian employment and unionization.

Changes in technology accompanied the growth of mass production industries transforming production by speeding up work processes and increasing the division of labour. New semi-automatic machines replaced manual techniques in most resource industries including forestry, mining and fishing (Heron & Storey 1986). This was also the case in farming. In Canada, unlike many West European countries, the family farm remained a significant part of the country's employment profile right up to the World War II. Changing culture, economic development and technology had a dramatic impact on the agriculture sector as a new generation of country people became town dwellers (Heron & Storey 1986:20). By 1951, 45.8 percent of all labour force participants were engaged in resource extraction, manufacturing and transportation as compared to 32.8 percent a decade earlier, while those employed in agriculture continued to decline steadily -- from 25.8 percent in 1941, to only 6.3 percent of the labour force in 1971 (Smucker 1980:76-77).

World War II also brought significant changes to women's participation in the paid labour market. Married women entered the labour force in increasing numbers and that trend continued after the war was over. Only 4.5 percent of

married women were labour force participants in 1941, but this figure increased to 14.9 percent in 1951 and steadily climbed through the next three decades. By 1991 it stood at 61.4 percent (White 1993:46). The overall participation of women parallels this dramatic change for married women. In the pre-war and postwar period the dominant trend was for young working-class and middle-class women to participate in the paid labour force until their mid-twenties and to leave on marriage or child bearing. Men were expected to earn a 'family wage' and be the breadwinners for their dependent wives and children.

Of course, we can question to what extent this model reflected the real situation of significant numbers of women and men. Even in the early period of industrialization, widowed and unmarried women always had to fend for themselves through paid employment, albeit earning a lower rate of pay than men performing the same or comparable work. This is clear from the early participation of women in clerical work. By 1921 women comprised 41.8 percent of clerical workers in Canada.² Although the majority of those clerks left their jobs on marriage, a significant unmarried minority remained clerical workers until retirement. Many organizations, both public and private, barred married women from permanent posts, forcing them to resign and "reapply as temporary workers at reduced salaries (Lowe 1987:72-73)". As a consequence,

² Feminisation occurred earlier and more rapidly in the United States than in either Canada or Britain. In the United States by 1930, 52 percent of clerks were women; in Canada and Britain women came to hold a majority of clerical jobs in 1941 and 1951 respectively (Lowe 1987:60-62).

the norm of a wife dependent on a husband earning a family wage was reinforced. It was a model most Canadian unions sought to uphold at the negotiating table through collective agreements (White 1993).

Despite women's lower pay and status, like men they benefitted economically from the spread of Canadian industrial unionism in the late 1930s and 1940s. While the discourse of the family wage continued to hold sway, industrial unionism brought with it a push for democracy and equality. This translated into a philosophy of equal pay for equal work, and women working in jobs traditionally performed by men received increased pay during the war as a result of negotiations by unions such as the United Auto Workers of America. After the war, however, women who stayed in industrial workplaces were occupationally segregated into "feminized" jobs and paid a "women's wage" (Sugiman 1993).

The Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) was brought to Canada by union activists who frequently were members of the Canadian Communist Party and were prepared to work tirelessly to achieve unionization of the mass industries (Abella 1973). They found responsive adherents. By 1948, 30.3 percent of the non-agricultural workforce was unionized, up from 17.3 percent in 1940 (Canada, Department of Labour 1976). It made sense to Canadian workers to be part of the industrial union movement that was sweeping through American factories and mines. The CIO unions were perceived as bringing muscle to the bargaining table and capable of achieving the wage patterns set

by industrial unionists in the United States. It was a pragmatic response by Canadian workers to their experiences on the shopfloor, even though it was their own militancy that was largely responsible for the gains they won. By 1950, 70 percent of all Canadian union members belonged to unions affiliated to American Internationals. These unions were male dominated, both in their membership and leadership, and their discourse was a tough, militant paternalism.

Expulsion of communists and communist-led unions paved the way for the merger of the CIO with the American Federation of Labour (AFL) both in the United States and Canada. In 1955 the Canadian wings of the international unions merged to form the CLC. One of the immediate initiatives of the new Congress was to cement the relationship of the mainstream union movement with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a social democratic party with its roots in agrarian socialism, and contribute to the formation of a political arm of labour. This was achieved in 1961 with the creation of the New Democratic Party (NDP), a distinctly Canadian version of a social-democratic party. Never a labour party in the British sense, the NDP remains ambivalent about its labour connection, vacillating between presenting itself as a party of all classes and recognizing a special relationship with labour. Although CLC locals could affiliate to the NDP, generally it was, and is, the union leadership who joined the party, while the rank-and-file remained politically unaligned. In Quebec, the history of labour and politics is yet again different and distinct. The

NDP has never achieved any significant support from labour and all three labour centrals, leaders and members alike, give significant support to the Parti Québécois (PQ), the separatist party. Both labour relations systems in Quebec and Canada, therefore, developed apart from social democratic politics and "...differed from the pattern set in certain Western European countries where national wage setting through bi- or tri-partite mechanisms became the norm (Jenson & Mahon 1993b:74)".

As noted earlier, the collective bargaining system that developed during the war and the immediate postwar period brought greater workplace benefits to mainly male workers and their families in the core manufacturing and resource sectors. Workers in these sectors experienced the benefits of the virtuous cycle between production and consumption and of unionization. Union strategies focused on taking wages out of competition by organizing on an industry-by-industry basis. The system, however, could only fulfill the dream of a small portion of the working class since collective bargaining worked in hierarchical fashion. It was a trickle-down system with factory and resource workers, who had the most bargaining clout, setting the wage and benefit patterns that others aspired to (Forest 1986). It was also hierarchical in terms of the relations between men and women. In this sense, the gendered division of labour was reinforced by the certification process, consisting of the male core worker earning, in theory, a wage to support a wife and children. Certification reinforced this division in further ways as is discussed below.

Labour relations in Canada as a whole, including Quebec, developed into a highly juridified system from 1944 onwards, both in a coercive and consensual sense. Legal restrictions on the right to strike were married to legal requirements by employers to recognize and to bargain with unions. The introduction of the certification system was a continuation of the Liberal Party's policy of creating peace in the relations between labour and capital. William Lyon Mackenzie King had doggedly pursued this goal since the turn of the century, first as Minister of Labour (Craven 1980) and then as Prime Minister.

The certification approach to unionization³ is the basis of Canada's collective bargaining system. It is this system that is also the basis of the present structure of the Canadian labour movement. Both were set firmly on course with the introduction of Privy Council Order 1003 in 1944 and then with greater restrictions on the use of the strike weapon enacted in the Industrial Relations Disputes Investigation Act (IRDIA) in 1948. This system has its roots in the United States' Wagner Act, introduced in response to the unprecedented waves of labour unrest in the mid-thirties (Klare 1978). Certification, protection against unfair labour practices, and third-party arbitration of grievances were all introduced in Canada a decade later in return for the union's agreement to limit the use of the strike weapon to specified moments of the collective bargaining process. This compromise on labour's part followed a period of heightened

³ The union is certified by the appropriate Labour Relations Board, and granted exclusive bargaining agent status, if it can demonstrate support from over 50 per cent of the employees in the bargaining unit.

collective action by the union movement during the 1940s that culminated in the growth of large industrial unions such as the United Auto Workers of America (UAW) and the United Steel Workers of America (USWA).⁴

Like the American system of labour relations the Canadian version is set within the context of private law, supposedly limiting state intervention to a minimum. Yet as Karl Klare (1982) points out the distinction between private and public labour law is repeatedly blurred in decision making by politicians and the courts. For example when striking workers in the 'private' sector threaten the 'public' interest, governments of the day have not hesitated to pass special back-to-work legislation with criminal law sanctions (Panitch & Swartz 1993). During the 1980s several labour leaders were found criminally guilty and jailed for refusing to abide by 'public' law provisions.

Codification of collective bargaining in 1948 in the form of the IRDIA transferred decision making regarding the definition of the bargaining unit, and as a consequence bargaining structure, from a negotiated settlement between the employer and the union to the labour relations board.⁵ The determination

⁴ The UAW in Canada separated from its American affiliate in 1985 and formed the Canadian Autoworkers Union (CAW). Driving the separation was the issue of concession bargaining and the Canadian workers determination to prevent the erosion of their collective bargaining strength. Bob White, the leader at the time (now the President of the Canadian Labour Congress), took the position that workers did not join unions to walk backwards. For detailed accounts of the breakup and the politics of the UAW and CAW see Gindin (1989) and Yates (1990).

⁵ Since the 1950s legal regulation of collective bargaining has been divided up between numerous jurisdictions, adding to the fragmentation of the system. Not only is there a Labour Relations Act for every province but also special Acts for certain

of the bargaining unit's appropriateness -- its size; the number of occupational groups to be included; the number of work sites to be covered, etc. -- became the purview of the board, and, in this sense, part of the public law system. Formation of the unit, and therefore of the union itself, is not based on the ability of the union to continually include new sets of workers. Legal certification, in effect, gels the bargaining unit into a certain form and this can only be changed by a decision of the board (Warskett 1988; Fudge 1993).

Labour boards developed policies to determine what an appropriate bargaining unit might be. The most important criteria used is "community of interest". Community of interest as it is understood by labour boards, however, generally reflects how the employer has organized the various labour processes in an establishment.⁶ In other words bargaining unit structure "replicates the employer's initial decision about how to organize production, rather than the employees' choices about who to associate and bargain with (Fudge 1993:234-235)". How the labour movement is structured in terms of its basic units of bargaining, was and continues to be determined by state officials rather than the union movement itself. The single employer, in a single location, is the cornerstone of board policy. What this yields is a highly fragmented bargaining system that pits single union locals (bargaining units) against the employer, no

kinds of public employees.

⁶ The tests for 'community of interest' include the nature of work performed, conditions of employment, skills of employees, administration, geography, functional coherence and interdependence. See Fudge (1993).

matter how large the corporation is and no matter how many locations it may have.

Fragmentation of the labour movement into separate bargaining units with exclusive bargaining agents had, and continues to have, profound implications in terms of class power and other kinds of inequality stemming from gender, race and ethnic differences. In a general sense bargaining unit fragmentation feeds directly into the separation of the economic sphere from the political that permeates the market system in capitalist societies (Wood 1995). Isolated bargaining units reinforced the fragmentation of class power and the development of a collective bargaining system and union movement centred almost exclusively on the local workplace and workplace issues. Furthermore, since the bargaining agent has exclusive right to bargain on behalf of employees in the unit, intense competition between unions often takes place during the initial organizing drive, feeding fragmentation and division within the labour movement. Collective bargaining is the exclusive domain of affiliate unions of a labour central and therefore the CLC cannot intervene directly into collective bargaining. Members of the CLC Executive Council are leaders of the affiliate unions, but for the most part the Council's role is one of attempting to settle jurisdictional disputes between affiliates and urging the CLC executive to lobby the federal government. When meeting with government officials, leaders of the CLC cannot present themselves as representing even the sum of collective bargaining power resources within the Congress, let alone

represent the Congress as greater than this sum.

Bargaining unit fragmentation weakens labour's class power, but it also reinforces gender division and gender bias. As Fudge observes, "Standard occupational units reflect and reinforce the gendered occupational structure of the labour market (1993:236)". Women do different work from men and exercise different skills in performing their job tasks. Occupational segregation of women and men in the workforce is therefore reinforced in the determination of bargaining units and structures. In the manufacturing and resource sectors men, in general, worked on the line while women worked in the office, in the cafeteria, as cleaners, etc. In general these groups were separated into different bargaining units. Part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, have often been excluded from the bargaining unit all together or have been accorded separate units. Thus, segregated into different bargaining units, men and women generally do not bargain together, and the perception that they have a different community of interest is reinforced, adding to gender divisions and the fracturing of solidarity.

The rise of industrial unionism brought with it the attempt by unions such as Auto and Steel to organize the entire shop floor into one bargaining unit and standardize rates of pay across the plant, thus bringing an end to competition between workers (Heron & Storey 1986). They were successful for blue-collar men working in relatively large factories and mines but not for other kinds of workers, including women. Many of the postwar strikes were over union

security and equity issues. Where women worked in the same job classifications as men they received the same pay, but this was rarely the case. Women employed on the shopfloor after the war were generally occupationally segregated from men. For example, small numbers of women were found in auto production, but they were segregated into "feminised" jobs, such as the cutting and sewing of seat covers, and paid lower rates of pay (Sugiman 1993:172). Women were in a majority in the clothing industry, but even there males dominated in the higher paid cutting and tailoring jobs and occupied the leadership positions of the International Lady Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) (Gannage 1986). Even though women working in the clothing industry were full-time workers, and employment of women well beyond the point of marriage was accepted, they were socially constructed as mothers and wives rather than workers and, as such, remained "the junior partners of the needle-trade community (Steedman 1986)", subordinated in terms of pay and occupation in the factory, in the home and in the union.

While women employed in manufacturing were part of the industrial unions' organizing drives of the 1940s this was not the case for retail and clerical workers working in the companies' offices. There were attempts to organize women in stores such as Eatons in Toronto (Sufrin 1982), and in the financial sector, but these had generally failed by the early 1950s. As of 1962 only 16.4 percent of all union members were women and 40 percent of these were in the manufacturing sector (White 1993). The low levels of union

organization among women sparked a debate in the 1970s. One of the important criticisms levelled at the union leadership by feminists at the time was that they had no interest in unionizing women. When there were attempts, the industrial male worker was adopted as the exemplar and organizing campaigns were geared to address the needs of 'blue-collar' men rather than 'pink-collar' women (Marckak 1973; McFarland 1979). In turn, union organizers charged that women had no commitment to the workplace, were fearful of militant action, unwilling to confront management and hence reluctant to undertake strike action.⁷ Certainly the fact that women clerical workers tended to leave paid employment in their mid-twenties led to difficulties in organizing because of constant turnover (Lowe 1987; White 1993). Moreover, many clerks working in the office likely did perceive themselves as "white or pink collared" and hence in a different class and gender position from those working on the shop floor (Lowe 1987). Yet this different identity did not prevent women and men 'white collar' workers in the public sector from unionizing in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s. Factors other than gender and class identities were operating to prevent unionization in other sectors.

While attachment to certain limiting conceptions of identity among unionists and women alike contributed to low levels of unionization for women in the retail and financial sectors, structural factors played an important role and

⁷ Personal contacts with CLC Representatives assigned to the Bankworkers Organizing Committee in the late 1970s. I myself had been assigned to the campaign by my own union the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC).

continue to do so. Legal certification of a bargaining unit by an exclusive bargaining agent can work in favour of union power resources under certain conditions. The large factory plant of the Fordist period allowed the auto and steelworkers to forge powerful unions within the context of the legal bargaining system. Certification provided the vehicle to form large bargaining units and forge master agreements between the employer and the union. This was also the case for the public sector where, for the most part, large bargaining units also predominate. Large numbers of women doing clerical work are part of these units, although women and men, because of occupational segregation, are normally found in separate bargaining units.

Public sector unions, and especially those within the administrative state at the federal and provincial levels, also have the added difficulty of more restrictive legislation than regular labour relations statutes. Greater restrictions operate on the use of the strike capacity and on what can be negotiated. These special labour relations regimes produce even greater class biases than found with private sector labour relations legislation. In the following chapter this point will be examined in greater detail in the context of the federal administrative state, as well as the ways that the civil service practices operate to reproduce unity across the social category and mask class and gender differences.

Feminisation of Canadian Labour and The Transformation of the Fordist Economy

Feminisation of the labour supply has been one of the most significant changes in the Canadian economy over the last thirty years. As in other advanced industrial societies, participation of Canadian women in the paid labour force increased remarkably and steadily from the 1960s onwards. Now in the 1990s the rate is fast approaching that of men, which decreased during the recent period. In 1961 the participation rate of women in the paid labour force was 29.5 percent, and by 1991 it was 52.8 percent. This change accelerated from the mid-1970s onwards as more and more women were both drawn into and sought employment. Whereas in 1976 women composed 36.9 percent of total employment, by 1994 this figure had changed to 45.2 percent. In the same period the proportion of men employed fell from 73 to 65 percent (Statistics Canada 1995:64 & 75; See Table 3 below).

The model of the core male worker with a dependent wife and children, which strongly conditioned the supply of labour right up to the 1960s, was strongly contested by feminists beginning in the early 1970s. Women have always been workers, whether unpaid in the home or underpaid in the labour force, but the assumption that they will always be dependent or partially dependent on a male wage has been severely undermined in the course of the last two decades. Both the rising participation of women in the paid labour market and the feminist challenge to the dependency of women in the domestic

TABLE 3
Total Employment, 1976-94

	Women		Men		Women as % of Total Employment
	Total Employment 000s	% of Women Employed	Total Employment 000s	% of Men Employed	
1976	3,610	41.7	6,166	72.8	36.9
1977	3,740	42.3	6,238	72.1	37.4
1978	3,952	43.8	6,368	72.3	38.3
1979	4,174	45.3	6,587	73.4	38.8
1980	4,389	46.7	6,693	73.1	39.6
1981	4,595	48.0	6,803	73.1	40.3
1982	4,544	46.7	6,491	68.7	41.2
1983	4,635	47.0	6,471	67.6	41.7
1984	4,787	47.9	6,615	68.3	42.0
1985	4,978	49.2	6,764	69.0	42.4
1986	5,162	50.3	6,933	69.8	42.7
1987	5,347	51.5	7,075	70.4	43.0
1988	5,572	52.9	7,247	71.3	43.4
1989	5,730	53.7	7,356	71.4	43.8
1990	5,845	54.0	7,320	70.1	44.4
1991	5,812	52.8	7,104	66.9	45.0
1992	5,811	52.0	7,031	65.1	45.2
1993	5,889	51.7	7,126	64.9	45.2
1994	6,002	51.9	7,290	65.4	45.2

Source: Statistics Canada (1995). Catalogues 71-201 and 71-529.

TABLE 4
Distribution of Employment, by Industry, 1976-94

	Women		Men		Women as % of Total Employment	
	Service	Goods Producing	Service	Goods Producing	Service	Goods Producing
1976	80.6	19.4	55.0	45.0	46.2	20.2
1977	81.6	18.4	56.0	44.0	46.6	20.1
1978	81.6	18.4	55.8	44.2	47.6	20.4
1979	81.0	19.0	55.8	44.2	47.9	21.4
1980	81.2	18.8	56.2	43.8	48.7	22.0
1981	81.5	18.5	56.1	43.9	49.5	22.2
1982	82.6	17.4	58.2	41.8	49.8	22.6
1983	82.6	17.4	59.3	40.7	49.9	23.5
1984	82.7	17.3	58.8	41.2	50.4	23.3
1985	83.3	16.8	59.4	40.6	50.8	23.3
1986	83.2	16.8	59.9	40.1	50.8	23.8
1987	83.8	16.3	59.6	40.4	51.5	23.3
1988	83.6	16.4	59.2	40.8	52.1	23.6
1989	83.9	16.1	59.1	40.9	52.5	23.4
1990	84.6	15.4	60.2	39.8	52.9	23.6
1991	85.3	14.7	61.6	38.4	53.1	23.9
1992	85.7	14.3	62.7	37.3	53.1	24.1
1993	86.1	13.9	63.1	36.9	53.0	23.8
1994	86.1	13.9	62.8	37.2	53.0	23.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (1995).

sphere, in the paid labour force and in unions, as well as other institutions, has meant that the dominant discourse operating in the social construction of women's work has undergone significant change.

Equal pay for work of equal value was one of the key concepts that played a role in this social reconstruction. Both liberal and socialist feminists argued that because women did different work from men that the legal requirement for equal pay for equal work could not address women's lower pay. What was needed was a revaluation of the skills women typically exercised, skills which had traditionally been constructed as less valuable than those of men.⁸ Pressure exerted on the federal government of the day by liberal feminists resulted in changes to the proposed Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) in 1976 and the inclusion of the concept of equal value (Warskett 1990). By the mid-1980s several provinces, including the largest, Ontario, had instituted pay equity acts, requiring employers to revise their compensation practices and pay women equally for work that was of equal value to that performed by men.

Links were made by feminist theorists to women's servicing and caring role in the home and their low pay and service role in the paid economy (Armstrong & Armstrong 1984). Challenges to employers, unions and the state to change the dependent and unequal conditions of women's status took a

⁸ The debate over what constitutes skill and whether women's work is less skilled rather than less valued than work traditionally performed by men is taken up in Jenson (1989) and Warskett (1990).

number of different forms. Demands for quality, affordable childcare were linked to women's inability to pursue a career without such arrangements, since they were the primary caregivers in the home. Women's low pay and part-time status, it was argued, perpetuated their role as primary caregivers and meant that it was unlikely that men would share in the care of children. Issues of sexual harassment in the workplace and violence against women in society generally were also linked to women's dependency, both financially and socially, on men.

Paradoxically, while both the practices and the discourse of a family wage and women's dependency are in disrepute, in certain important ways the collective bargaining system itself has not changed to reflect the current reality. Structurally the system continues to reinforce the gendered division of labour as was discussed earlier.

Global competitiveness became the slogan of business and neo-liberal governments during the 1980s. Along with trade harmonization (the North American Free Trade Agreement), the requirements of international competition translated into a policy of deregulating labour and labour markets. At the level of the manufacturing firm, global competition means increasing production by employing fewer workers together with the introduction of new technologies and flexibility into the production process. Management in the goods producing sector has also tried to reduce labour costs by contracting-out and increasing part-time employment on the one hand, while intensifying work and extending

hours of work for core workers on the other (Albo 1993). In general, then, the transformation of the immediate postwar Canadian economy to the post-Fordist economy of the 1980s and 1990s was a shift from the use of labour-intensive to capital-intensive forms of production. The relative weakness of Canadian manufacturing was reinforced by global competition and the restructuring of capital, leading to an increase in different kinds of service employment relative to manufacturing and resource industries. Between 1976 and 1992 employment in the service sector increased from 68 to 76 percent (Statistics Canada 1995). Men's employment in the goods producing sector declined from 45 percent in 1976 to 37.2 percent in 1994. At the same time women's already high participation in the service sector rose from 80.6 percent to 86.1 percent (see Table 4). Many of these service sector jobs for women are precarious in the sense of being part-time, low paid with few benefits and temporary (See Table 5 below).

In Canada, as in many advanced industrial societies, it appears that a dual process of feminisation has occurred: At approximately the same time that the supply of labour was feminised, structural changes in the economy led to a feminisation of the labour market itself. In general, in advanced industrial societies a set of contradictions became evident by the 1980s. There was "...on the one hand, an enormous growth in female labour force activity and, on the other hand, an intensified segregation of women into secondary, low-wage jobs (Bakker 1988:30-31)". In other words, whereas women have traditionally been

assigned the more subordinate and marginal forms of work, it now appears that their increased labour market participation is linked, in part, to the spread of this type of employment in the economy as a whole. In this sense the feminisation of the labour supply and the labour market fits with the economic restructuring that has occurred in Canada over the last 15 years. Women's low pay and subordinate job status is now the exemplar of the collective worker (Statistics Canada 1996).

The severe loss of blue-collar manufacturing and industrial jobs and the rapid expansion of marginal kinds of employment is resulting in even greater polarization between 'core' and 'periphery' workers. Workers in the full-time, permanent, pensionable 'core' are, for the most part, male and white, while those on the 'periphery' include not only large numbers of women and youth, but also members of various ethnic and racial minorities. In 1994, 26 percent of all women in paid employment worked part-time. In comparison, just 9 percent of employed men held part-time jobs, while 69 percent of all part-time workers were women (see Table 5). Several researchers indicate that the part-time nature of employment means working poverty for single women, especially those with dependent children (Gunderson, Muszynski & Keck 1990).

TABLE 5
Part-time employment, 1976-94

	Women Employed Part-time (000s)	% of Women Employed Part-time*	% of Men Employed Part-time*	Women as % of Total Part-time Employment
1976	752	20.8	5.1	70.5
1977	815	21.8	5.4	70.7
1978	881	22.3	5.5	71.5
1979	954	22.9	5.7	71.7
1980	1,029	23.4	5.9	72.3
1981	1,095	23.8	6.3	71.9
1982	1,125	24.7	6.9	71.4
1983	1,199	25.9	7.7	70.8
1984	1,221	25.5	7.7	70.4
1985	1,293	26.0	7.6	71.4
1986	1,319	25.6	7.9	70.8
1987	1,334	25.0	7.6	71.4
1988	1,398	25.1	7.6	71.8
1989	1,402	24.4	7.6	71.4
1990	1,421	24.3	8.0	70.7
1991	1,481	25.4	8.8	70.3
1992	1,497	25.8	9.3	69.7
1993	1,546	26.3	9.8	68.9
1994	1,564	26.1	9.4	69.4

* Expressed as a percentage of total employed.

Source: Statistics Canada (1995). Catalogues 71-201 and 71-529.

TABLE 6
Canadian Union Membership by Industry, 1968-88

	Union Membership			Union Membership as % of Paid Workers		
	1968	1978	1988	1968	1978	1988
Agriculture	1,239	165	2,524	1.13	0.01	1.9
Forestry	44,391	28,536	29,355	63.4	40.2	47.3
Fishing and trapping	3,213	5,385	5,066	-	53.9	39.0
Mining	59,024	57,279	52,080	50.9	37.4	28.6
Manufacturing	748,552	857,845	762,673	43.7	43.0	36.8
Construction	214,435	272,505	308,106	55.0	53.3	52.8
Transportation communications*	364,462	419,850	480,936	57.0	50.5	56.6
Trade	115,953	121,981	205,887	11.0	7.6	10.4
Finance, insurance, real estate	7913	12,687	22,010	2.6	2.3	3.4
Community, business, and personal services ^b	305,833	608,066	1,237,522	18.7	23.5	33.4
Public administration ^c	281,417	490,620	610,735	61.4	73.8	76.4

* includes transportation, storage, communications and other utilities.

^b includes both public and private sector industries (e.g. education, health and welfare, personal services and accommodation services).

^c includes federal, provincial, and local administration.

Source: Statistics Canada (1994). *The Annual Report of the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology Under the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act. Part II — Labour Unions*. Catalogue 71-202. (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services). Various years.

With the deepening of the economic crisis, in the late 1980s, governments, both federal and provincial, adopted more restrictive labour policies in an attempt to aid the faltering economy and make labour more productive and competitive. In the early 1990s the federal and certain provincial governments returned to the use of wage controls in order to lower wages. Wage controls constitute an explicit attack on unionized workers and governments did not attempt to hide the fact that public sector workers were being singled out for wage restraint. Because of the large numbers of women in the highly unionized public sector, wage controls had a disproportionate effect on women unionists. Furthermore, since women are found in larger numbers at the bottom of the wage scale, the experience of pay cuts affected them more adversely than it did male workers.⁹ Alberta's Conservative government has gone further than this. They laid off public sector workers and demanded rollbacks in compensation from those remaining. The election of a Conservative government in Ontario in 1995 resulted in similar treatment for public sector workers in that province.

⁹ The federal government imposed a zero pay increase (a euphemistic renaming of no increase) on their unionized employees, approximately 50 percent of whom were women earning on average \$26,500. 1991 saw controls applied to government employees in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba and British Columbia. In 1993, Ontario's "social-democratic" NDP government limited pay increases to 1 percent on provincial government employees. In some provincial jurisdictions wage controls were also imposed on pay equity settlements. This was the case in Newfoundland where a major study was completed in March 1991 to be met by a freeze on both the retroactive and current equity payments. Nova Scotia attempted a similar freeze but reversed its decision in the face of public and union protests.

By the early to mid 1990s neo-conservative attempts to solve the public debt crisis had had a severe impact on jobs in the federal as well as other provincial public services. As pointed out earlier, this sector is the primary source of unionized jobs, and hence better pay, for women. Privatization, contracting out and precarious forms of work are on the increase.¹⁰ In the spring budget of 1995 the federal government announced that it intended to cut 45,000 jobs over the next two years. In the process it has reneged on the job security settlement it negotiated with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) after the 1991 general strike. The federal government simply legislated the agreement away, thus clearing the path for the lay off of thousands of workers.

While, overall, union density remains steady, declining employment in primary and secondary sectors has dramatically affected unionization in those sectors. In the immediate postwar period these were among the most highly unionized sectors. Between 1976 and 1986 union membership in mining and manufacturing declined from 83.2 to 66.4 percent (Statistics Canada 1994). In the 1950s and 1960s, however, expansion of the state paved the way for the wide spread unionization at all three levels of the Canadian state -- federal,

¹⁰ The federal government announced in November 1994 that it would be extending the use of telework amongst its employees. Telework is the use of electronic technology in the home. The PSAC, the dominant union in the Federal public sector, fears that the teleworkers' status will be changed from a contract of service to a contract for service; in other words employees could become self-employed. Certainly if telework/homework increases the union will have difficulties in contacting and organizing these workers into union locals.

wide spread unionization at all three levels of the Canadian state -- federal, provincial and municipal. By the mid-1970s the public sector was said to be saturated in terms of unionization. By comparison, the private service sector was virtually non-unionized, with organization in finance and trade 2.3 and 7.6 percent respectively (see table 6).

New attempts to organize in finance began in the early 1970s and intensified with the bankworkers' campaigns in the mid- to late 1970s (Warskett 1988). It was then that traditional union organizers started to realize that if women workers in these sectors were to be unionized, their concerns and issues needed to be addressed. This was also the case amongst women clerical workers in the manufacturing and resource sectors where earlier, women had not been targeted as potential members. By the late 1980s the unions' approach to organizing women in the traditionally non-union sectors had changed considerably. A study of union leaders perspectives showed organizing the unorganized to be a foremost concern, together with addressing the concerns of women and minority groups (Kumar & Ryan 1988:7). Given that employment was declining in the traditional union bastions of goods production and resource extraction, unions were heightening their efforts in the traditional non-unionized sectors with some modest success. By 1989 24 percent of the finance sector and 11.5 percent of the personal/business sectors were organized.

Feminisation of the Canadian Labour Movement:

It is now over twenty-five years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSOW 1970) issued its report to the federal government on Canadian women's unequal status. The report was an important moment in the development of the 'second wave' of feminism that began in the 1960s. Well-educated women within the Liberal Party were responsible in 1966 for pressuring the Liberal government of the day to set up the enquiry into women's inequality. Its terms of reference were framed in the language of liberalism, instructing that women should be ensured "equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian Society (RCSOW 1970:vii)". Over the next twenty five years feminist consciousness and practice developed and was moulded in the context of the discourse outlined in the commissioners' report, which reflected the structural reality of Canada as a liberal-democratic, capitalist society (Findlay 1987:34-35). This discourse has permeated all institutions in Canadian society to a greater or lesser extent, bringing about changes of both a limited and far-reaching nature.

One of the most significant changes has been in the Canadian labour movement with the development of union feminism. This particular brand of working-class feminism flourished and developed from the mid-seventies onwards, together with the increased participation of women in the labour force and in unions. It is important to note, however, that although the expanded ranks of female unionists played a necessary role in the development of

feminism within the union movement, the mere existence of more women is not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of fundamental changes in union culture (White 1990). Changes depended on the way in which the increased numbers of women confronted and challenged the existing structures and discourse. The changes that have occurred over the last fifteen years are attributable in large part to the specific way in which union feminists struggled to change their subordinate position in the workplace, the union and the home. The history of both the Quebec and Canadian labour movements indicate that improvements for women in factories, in the service and public sectors, and in unions themselves resulted largely from the actions undertaken by union women (Saint-Pierre 1993:278).

Federal government equal opportunity initiatives, recommended by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, began to be put in place at the beginning of the 1970s.¹¹ The equality of opportunity approach found its way into CLC policy when, in 1976, delegates to the CLC eleventh constitutional conference voted in favour of a statement on "Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Women Workers". In that statement it was acknowledged that women experienced discrimination in the workplace and on average were paid less than men. As a remedy it was recommended that women's skills should be upgraded to allow them to compete with men for jobs and that women should

¹¹ These included the federal government ratifying the International Labour Organization's convention 100, that included the principle that women should be paid equal pay for work of equal value. See Findlay (1987).

be paid equally when they have the same or similar skill level as men. The policy offered no criticism of the undervaluation of women's skills or the need for women workers to earn a 'living' wage. Like the Royal Commission report, its discourse was one of achieving equal opportunity with men rather than fundamental change. Union feminism had yet to make its mark.

Union feminism seemed to catch fire in Ontario -- the most populated province in Canada -- in the mid- to late 1970s. A series of struggles and strikes undertaken mainly by women attempting to gain a first contract were the first signs of a new militancy. One of the most significant of these took place in 1978 at Fleck Manufacturing, an auto-parts factory near Exeter, Ontario (Darcy & Lauzon 1983:176).¹² Standing their ground against the onslaught of provincial police, the women on the Fleck line became the symbol of a new breed of working-class feminists (Maroney 1983:60-1). Leaders in the United Auto Workers (UAW), the parent union, were impressed by their courage and tenacity. This particular strike was an important landmark in changing the UAW's policies towards women.

In their fight for a first contract the Fleck workers were joined by others, predominantly women, working at Blue Cross, at Radio Shack and at Mini-Skools (Briskin 1983:259). These strikes had a number of important effects

¹² The strike became a 'cause célèbre' as each night the entire country turned on its television sets to watch the spectacle of determined women, on the picket line, confronting police wearing riot gear, who used force and violence to keep the factory open (Darcy & Lauzon 1983:176).

on union culture and solidarity. Very importantly they challenged and undermined the view, held by many traditional unionists, that women do not have a strong attachment to the workplace and are unwilling or too frightened to organize.¹³ Action by workers at Fleck, and by other female dominated bargaining groups, punched holes in the view

that women are a docile part of the work force, working for pin money, and afraid to stand up for their rights, It was similarly shaken during strikes at Radio Shack, Puretex, Sandra Coffee and Irwin Toys (Darcy & Lauzon 1983:176-177).

All these strikes occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s and were followed by other significant struggles -- notably the 1980 Federal Clerks strike (a bargaining unit of the PSAC with women comprising 76 percent of its members) and the 1981 Canadian Union of Postal Workers' (CUPW) fight for paid maternity leave. Among traditional unionists there was a perception that women had won their union stripes through these struggles. It became impossible, or at least more difficult than it had been before, to evoke conceptions of female weakness as an excuse for lack of action in favour of organizing women or for mobilizing in support of their demands.

On the external union front, these predominantly 'women's strikes' were an important element in the development of the connection between feminists and women unionists. It was a connection that was achieved in very practical

¹³ Even at this date, when this stereotype has been challenged by the growing numbers of unionized women, it is frequently argued that women are unwilling to undertake the tough militant action needed to win a good contract.

ways. For example, feminists in the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) in Toronto organized a women's solidarity picket in support of the Fleck workers together with the union feminist group, Organized Working Women (OWW). During the 1981 Canadian Union of Postal Workers' (CUPW) strike, where paid maternity leave was a key demand, the IWDC called for united action by the women's and the union movement. They had an important influence within the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada (NAC) -- the umbrella group for progressive feminist organizations -- in persuading other women to support the strike (Egan & Yanz 1983:369-371).

Although the development of union feminism was occurring also in Quebec, it was constructed in a distinctive form. Unlike its Canadian counterpart, the Quebec labour movement was radicalized during the "Quiet Revolution" in the 1950s and 1960s, and the unions' construction of nationalism took the form of syndicalism (Lipsig-Mummé 1993:410-11). In turn, union feminism in Quebec initially benefitted from this radical development. In 1972 the three labour centrals formed a Common Front to bargain for public sector workers. More than two-thirds of these workers were women who worked in hospitals, educational, governmental and social affairs institutions. Early on in the Common Front negotiations with the provincial governments, the influence of the Quebec women's movement began to be felt. It was recognized that women workers should not be penalized for their childbearing and child caring responsibilities (Maroney 1992; Saint-Pierre 1993; White 1980). During the

1970s the development of union feminism within the Confederation des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN) resulted in strong demands for fully paid maternity leave and for safety in the workplace during pregnancy. These issues were brought to the central bargaining table in 1978 and a breakthrough was achieved with the agreement of twenty weeks paid maternity leave. No doubt part of this achievement was due to the support for the liberal feminist Federation des Femmes du Quebec within the Parti Québécois (PQ), the government of the day. The Federation had defected "from the electoral block headed by the Liberal Party after the War Measures Act of 1970...(Maroney 1992:22)" and had contributed to the electoral success of the PQ in 1976. But the strong stand taken by feminists (whose leaders were also members of the Federation des Femmes) within the Common Front was critical. The "PQ's relation with feminism" Maroney points out "cooled considerably after its 1980 sovereignty-association referendum loss" and was quickly followed by a twenty percent rollback in public sector wages in 1981 (1992:22-23).

While women in Ontario and Quebec were acting to change their workplaces and unions, a serious attempt to organize a separate union for women took place in British Columbia, the most westerly province of Canada. In June 1977, a small independent union in British Columbia -- the Service, Office and Retail Workers of Canada (SORWUC) -- broke through the defence set up by the chartered banks and gained certification of several bank branches. The union was unaffiliated with the CLC and had developed a

militant, feminist separatist discourse. Western bankworkers, primarily women, were attracted to the new approach to unionism that SORWUC offered, but the organizing drive was stamped out by a concerted campaign organized at the highest levels of the banks' management. The anti-union strategy used both fear of dismissal and the legal provisions of the Canada Labour Code to defeat the union (Warskett 1988). In its struggle against the banks, SORWUC was hindered by its separatism; they rebuffed the CLC's attempt to gain its affiliation and in reaction, the CLC developed a dual organizing campaign that also failed in the face of the powerful chartered banks. Despite these failures the low pay and subordinate position of women in the financial sector was well publicized and fed into union women's developing consciousness, acting to modify the traditional union approaches to women. In Quebec in the late 1970s and early 1980s similar actions to organize bankworkers took place under the auspices of the CSN, together with dual organizing attempts by the FTQ, the CLC affiliate within the province.

All these 'women's strikes' and actions were important in raising the consciousness of non-union feminists with regard to the importance of unions for women and their potential for effecting change in the workplace and society generally. In this sense, feminists "were given a deeper understanding of class conflict...(Maroney 1983)" and this helped to fracture the view that unions are necessarily, or primarily, organizations of blue-collar men whose interests are often opposed to those of women workers. In turn the support of NAC for

union struggles positively influenced the union movement, reinforcing the power of working-class feminists within the unions, and opening space for the consideration of issues such as abortion and childcare.

Another important development in linking feminism and unionism at this time was the formation of a wives' committee in support of the Steelworkers' strike at Inco in Sudbury. Wives Supporting the Strike (WSS) was formed to mobilize women around a programme of action designed to keep the community together both physically and spiritually. The importance of the WSS lay in its "class-conscious feminism, ...promoting solidarity between the union and the community...(Maroney 1983:61)". Through the efforts of WSS the private realm of the home was merged with the realm of work, creating a community of defence and action. Yet the struggle by the Wives¹⁴ raised questions regarding the link between the home and the workplace and the relationship between working-class communities and unions. It not only provided an inspiration for similar groups of women (Luxton 1983:343) but had the effect of broadening the debate within the labour movement over who should be able to contribute to, and make decisions affecting the entire community. Should representatives of those working at the point of production and those working to reproduce this labour power both be included? In this sense the WSS raised fundamental questions regarding the solidarity of the

¹⁴ This was admirably illustrated in the film "A Wives' Tale" (Canada, 1980, Sophie Bissonnette, Joyce Rock and Martin Duckworth. 73 min., colour, 16 mm. Dec Films.).

working class community as a whole.

At the same time that the union movement's conception of solidarity was undergoing challenges from 'outside' the movement, it was also experiencing criticism from feminists within. It was criticism which gathered steam and depth throughout the 1980s. Union feminism, in general, demanded a broader approach to bargaining demands, union policy and participation by the membership, criticizing the limitations of the process and policies traditionally found within the movement (Briskin 1990). Initially it was Organized Working Women (OWW), an informal group devoted to bringing together union feminists across union lines, who took up this role. As a non-constitutional body within the CLC, OWW represented union feminists' determination to build their strength within the movement and, although the organization involved small numbers of women, its influence was felt in the form of resolutions to union conventions. Its very presence, therefore, raised questions about who has power to assert demands and make decisions.

But the most important aspect of OWW was the 'home base' it provided for union feminists to discuss, across union lines, problems experienced both within their own unions and within the federations of labour. In this sense OWW overcame some of the limitations of the fragmented structure of the labour movement. As such, OWW developed energy, ideas and strategies, with which its members could effectively work to change both the policies and the processes of their own particular parts of the union movement. By the end of

the 1970s union feminists were actively working to change the policies in their own unions. In response to these challenges, in 1983 the OFL became the first provincial labour federation to implement an affirmative action programme directed at increasing the numbers of women in leadership positions. This was followed in 1984 by the CLC's policy on affirmative action.

Union feminists targeted policies as a point where they could begin to change the subordination of women within the unions, in the workplace and in the home. This involved addressing women's 'triple day' as union activists, and devising policies that would relieve women of their duties in the home, for example, through the provision of paid childcare during union events. This emphasis on the relationship between home, the workplace and the subordination of women in both spheres, also had the effect of placing in question the traditional goals of unionism. Should unions be concerned only with work place problems or also with more general social issues? By the earlier 1980s union feminism thus had the effect of challenging industrial unionism and widening the vision of the labour movement to include issues such as abortion, childcare, affirmative action, pay equity and sexual harassment (Briskin 1990). It is now well established among most unions that contract demands can address the concerns of women and other groups; and more generally, that unions can move beyond bread and butter issues of the workplace into social concerns which reflect the relationship between the workplace and the community as a whole. Challenging the idea of work as a

sphere separate from that of the community has a very positive effect on the concept of solidarity and on the cultural radicalization of workers generally. Debating the implications of sexism, therefore, had wider implications for the unions' vision of the relationship between work and society.

The wider feminist struggle against sexism, sexual harassment, and violence against women, and for the right of women to control their own bodies also had far-reaching implications for the labour movement (Maroney 1981). During the 1980s, sexual harassment was uncovered as a major problem within the union movement. Sexist language, sexist activities and the absence of women in positions of authority and power were scrutinized and criticized. This, in turn, led to an examination not only of sexism but also of other forms of worker oppression including racism and homophobia. As a result many unions instituted procedures for dealing with sexual and other kinds of harassment between members. Such policies challenged the way in which traditional forms of union solidarity had condoned discrimination and harassment of some union members by others. A revitalized concept of solidarity was thus proposed, which requires that all forms of oppression and subordination within the union movement, including sexism, racism, homophobia, etc., be rooted out and replaced by democratic participation and processes.

As a result of actions in the 1970s, by the beginning of the 1980s union women had developed a heightened consciousness of their subordinate labour market, household and union experiences that acted to push policy making

within the CLC in a new direction. The 1984 CLC constitutional conference accepted a policy paper on "Women and Affirmative Action" (1984a). In this paper a direct attack was made on the practice and ideology of the family wage and "the myth that men are the breadwinners". A wide number of measures were proposed to bring up women's lower wages. These included bargaining for higher base rates and for across-the-board wage settlements; revaluing women's present skills through strategies of equal pay for work of equal value (comparable worth); and demanding opportunities to train for new skills in non-traditional jobs. Essentially, the policy combined an emphasis on women's need to earn a "living" wage by paying more for women's traditional skills and breaking down occupational segregation. The policy also provided for six affirmative action positions for women on the CLC's Executive Council in an attempt to increase leadership representation by women. A new definition of woman as worker seemed to be in the making, together with a more radicalized labour movement.

While recognizing the ways in which union feminism has challenged and changed the union movements construction of the 'working woman' the discourse of liberal-feminism and equal opportunity, that dominated NAC in the 1970s and 1980s, also limited this reconstruction. In particular, the debate regarding the unequal pay of women was framed in terms of the liberal-state's discourse about equality. If anything the current concept of pay and employment equity has tended to endorse the liberal ideology of "fair" pay and

equality of opportunity (Warskett 1990; Brenner 1987). It fails to illuminate the process in which both women and men are involved in selling their labour power within a system where the dominating goal is the accumulation of capital.

The direction taken by union feminists in their struggle for equal pay and better jobs was strongly influenced by the liberal-feminist movement and its emphasis on legislated pay and employment equity. Equal pay for work of equal value (comparable worth), the principle enshrined in pay equity legislation is, in effect, a demand by women to redefine the notion of wage "fairness". It is the demand "for a fair wage that recognizes as valuable the caring, supporting, and nurturing aspects of many women-predominant jobs (Acker 1991:252)". Certainly the union movement's support for equal pay for work of equal value and legislated pay equity has in many cases led to success in raising union women's pay particularly in the public sector where legislation has played a leading role in initiating equal pay studies and settlements. There are limitations, however, to this new concept of 'fairness' and adding women into a wage setting practice based on the evaluation of job content and skills. In chapter seven these limitations are examined in the context of the PSAC's demand for equal pay for work of equal value. Despite the limitations of this legal structure, creative learning and strategizing did take place not only for women but for the Alliance members in general.

Women within public sector unions were the main actors in strategizing to change the Canadian labour movement and open it up to the demands of its

women members. The Alliance, which in the earlier 1970s was a conservative, male-dominated union, was one of the unions that was radically changed in the process of becoming feminised. In the case study that follows the interweaving of class formation and feminization is examined in the context of the transformation of the Alliance from a conservative, male dominated set of staff associations to a union recognized for its militant policies in support of women's equality.

The current state of the economy and politics is, however, increasing the difficulties confronting women in their struggles for better pay and other benefits. No matter how diligently unions may work for equal pay and the end of occupational segregation, they are facing economic and political circumstances that work against women's equality.

Unlike other labour movements, the Canadian union movement has not as yet experienced a dramatic loss of membership, but if it is to prevent a decline in its current position and continue to build a new revitalized presence for itself in Canadian society it needs to go further than its current response. An examination of the very roots of the collective bargaining system and the fragmentation and divisions emanating from it is necessary. Canadian unionists are at a crossroads. They are caught in a fight with the weapons that were devised in the 1940s to forge the large industrial unions that brought gains for the working class by increasing the benefits directly paid to men as breadwinners. The gains were made at the expense of political engagement

and labour's direct participation in building social and political institutions.

While the collective bargaining weapons devised in the 1940s were applied in a restricted sense in the public sector, they did result in wide spread unionization and collective bargaining benefits for employees, including large numbers of women in lower level administrative and support positions. The gains in both the private and public sectors have now largely dissipated. The large majority of workers, women and men alike, are now faced with insecurity in the workplace. Therefore there is a pressing need to forge new weapons for organizing, bargaining and acting politically since the legislative structure of certification stands in the way of building the strength of workers in the new casualized economy.

The next chapter begins the case study of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the significant changes that occurred within that union from 1966 to 1990. We start the study by focusing on the construction of the early staff unions on the strategic terrain of the state and how employer/employee relations were fashioned and structured to reproduce the social category of 'civil servants'. These structures changed, to some extent, in 1966 with the introduction of labour relations legislation. While the Public Service Staff Relations Act was modelled on the certification approach established in the 1940s, nevertheless, it was fashioned, together with the Public Service Employment Act, to construct a regime appropriate for the employees of the administrative state. The focus in this next chapter is on the kind of unionism

that was constructed within the federal administrative state and why contradictions within the social category of civil servants started to become apparent.

Chapter Five

From Collective Begging to Collective Bargaining:

Transformation of Federal Civil Servant Associations into the Public Service Alliance of Canada

If the Alliance had been human, it would have been committed long ago because of a severe and crippling form of schizophrenia. Its continually warring personalities, the Centre and the Components, have made it the most ineffective union of its size in Canada. An unkind and harsh assessment? Yes, but not mine alone (Doherty 1978).

These were the opening words of Bill Doherty's submission to the 1978 PSAC structure committee. As the first Vice-president of the Alliance, Doherty¹ had personally experienced the union's schizophrenia. While Doherty was referring to the Alliance's dual structure, as a collection of staff associations and as a central bargaining agent for different categories of workers, the union's schizophrenia operated at other levels as well.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) is the largest union within the federal government's administrative system and therefore the largest union of 'civil servants' in Canada. The union has members in all provinces and

¹ Bill Doherty was originally a radio operator and strongly identified with that occupational group. He had been a member of the Civil Service Association of Canada and strongly favoured changing the Alliance's component system that was based on the structure of the Civil Service Federation of Canada. His first recommendation to the structure committee was to change the name of the union to Canadian Union of Public Service Employees.

territories of Canada. Although it does have members in crown corporations, and even in government organizations outside of the federal system, the large majority of its members work in government departments where the Treasury Board of Canada is the formal and legal employer.

The objective of this chapter is to examine the birth and formation of the PSAC. The formation of the union, the result of an alliance of various staff associations, was an important step towards the transformation of civil servants into public sector employees. In this sense, the objective is to examine the learning they undertook in this transformation from members of consultative staff associations to public sector unionists with different objectives from those of the employer, Treasury Board. While the Alliance leaders were adapting and learning to be unionists, they nevertheless continued to engage in practices that cemented the unity of the social category of civil servants. In particular these were practices associated with a component structure based on the employer's departmental system, and appointments made by closed competition according to the principle of relative merit. In the last sections of this chapter these practices are examined.

The Formation of the PSAC: Collective Bargaining if Necessary, but Not Necessarily Strike.

Federal civil servants formed employee associations as early as the last decade of the nineteenth century. Organizing began in the Post Office among

letter carriers, who took the radical move in 1891 of affiliating with the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (Hodgetts 1973: 322). This early identification with the mainstream labour movement was a factor in postal workers' militant construction of their identity. Other state employees chose a more 'moderate' course of action and organized staff associations. In 1907 the Civil Service Association of Ottawa set out to organize all headquarters staff in Ottawa across departmental lines. This was followed in 1909 by the establishment of the Civil Service Federation of Canada (CSFC), a loose collection of staff associations organized along departmental lines. These two organizations were the forerunners of the PSAC.

With the enactment of the Industrial Relations Disputes Investigation Act (IRDIA) in 1948, a new era of industrial relations and collective bargaining was formally set in place. As noted in the previous chapter, the 1948 legislation was the culmination of industrial strife which was most pronounced in the resource extracting and manufacturing industries situated across the country (Panitch & Swartz 1993:10-11). Workers in the public sector, however, were not immune or blind to the industrial relations strife taking place in key industries across the country. Civil servants working within the federal, and most provincial, administrative bureaucracies were without legal collective bargaining rights and were not covered by the IRDIA.²

² Until 1925 labour relations between employers and the small numbers of unionized workers within provincial jurisdiction had been regulated by the federal Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (IDIA) set in place in 1907. The Judicial

During World War II, in response to unprecedented waves of labour unrest, the federal government initiated reform of the industrial relations system by introducing Privy Council Order 1003 in 1942. This wartime measure required employers to bargain with unions organized in the workplace. While there was no overt labour unrest within the Federal Civil Service, the postal unions and the civil servants' associations pressured for joint management-employee councils similar to the Whitley Councils established in Britain in 1919 (Hodgetts 1973:329). The 1942 reform of the industrial relations system in the private sector put pressure on the Federal government to reform the unilateral system of determining the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants. The result was the establishment of the National Joint Council (NJC) in 1944. The NJC was designed to provide a vehicle for consultation with the associations over a wide range of matters common to all parts of the public service. It also instituted a mechanism for dealing with individual grievances, although there was no binding arbitration of any dispute between the employer

Committee of the Privy Council decided that labour relations was a provincial responsibility. Most provinces, however, simply adopted the provisions of the IDIA in enacting labour relations legislation. After the enactment of the IRDIA in 1948 this began to change. Many more workers unionized and provincial legislation, although adhering to the same certification model of the federal legislation, began to diverge in certain important respects. This was the case with workers in the public sector. Some provinces enacted legislation with the right to strike; others, such as Ontario, completely banned strikes for anyone working within the administrative state and public services generally. This was changed by the NDP government elected in 1985 but in 1997 the conservative government introduced a bill proposing to ban the right to strike for public sector workers including those working in the administrative state. Faced with increased labour conflict over this and other neo-conservative policies, the government removed the bill from the order paper.

and its employees (Edwards 1970; Hodgetts 1973:330; Lemelin 1978:14-22).

The Council was an advisory body made up of representatives from the staff associations and management representatives from the departments. It was without any power of compulsion and simply made recommendations to Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission.

The advisory nature of the NJC left the staff associations profoundly dissatisfied. Their lack of direct input into matters concerning their terms and conditions of employment was a constant source of frustration. Decisions and recommendations were made only to be rejected or not acted upon by the executive management. During and after the war changes were occurring at a rapid pace, and the old civil service was in a state of transformation as discussed earlier. Cracks were starting to appear in the unity of the civil service as a social category.

Many of the leaders of the associations were veterans returning from World War II, who were less acquiescent than lower level civil servants of the 1930s. They were well aware of the collective bargaining rights militantly fought for by industrial workers, and they began to demand more than the limited consultation rights that were set in place with the NJC. Del Hewitt-White, secretary of the research committee of the Civil Service Federation of Canada, deplored the collective bargaining process of the NJC, comparing it negatively to the position of civil servants who negotiated under the Saskatchewan Trade Union Act, 1944.

From the employees' point of view the present system smacks too much of the humble servant coming hat in hand to beg for scraps from the great man's table (Civil Service Review 1952:453).

He then floated the idea of third party arbitration of disputes noting that if the

Canadian Federal Government were to extend to its own employees the right of negotiation with their employer on such vital matters, at least, as pay and working conditions, and were to provide some machinery for arbitration, as is provided in the United Kingdom, the associations representing the Canadian Government employees would be perfectly willing to write into any agreement an undertaking not to employ the strike as a weapon in collective bargaining (Civil Service Review 1952:453).

It is interesting that Saul Frankel writing in 1962 refers to this as a militant attitude. It was only militant in the sense that it espoused a form of legally binding collective bargaining. The leadership of the Civil Service Federation drew the line at binding arbitration of disputes, rejecting the option of strike action.³

This was not a stance shared by all associations within the federal civil service.⁴ Division over how labour relations should be regulated became

³ Employer/employee relations in the immediate postwar period reflected conflict within the federal government between Treasury Board and departmental management, and between the Treasury Board and Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Statutes that they administered. The power of the PSC had been waning since the early thirties. "In practice, however, Treasury Board has exercised authority over all staff expenditures since 1932 by its Staff Control Regulations formulated pursuant to special authority granted by Governor in Council, P.C. 144/1367, June 14, 1932 (Hodgetts 1973:273)". Furthermore, it was in the period of the 1930s that a "strong pro-commission attitude developed amongst the staff associations (Civil Service Review 1935:March)".

⁴ The federal civil service did not include state agencies or crown corporations that were independent of the government of the day, for example Canadian National

apparent in 1950, when the Canadian Postal Employees Association (CPEA) adopted a policy that called for the application of the provisions of the IRDIA. This would establish their right to collectively bargain and strike and was, thus, a clear indication that they preferred to be treated like industrial workers in the private sector (White 1990:38). At that time, the postal employees were part of the Civil Service Federation of Canada and, like other members of the federation, were employed within a federal government department. As noted in chapter one, however, they did not have the same upward mobility as general male clerks.

At the 1953 CSF convention, divisions over the issue of collective bargaining and the right to strike came to the fore. A majority of the convention voted in favour of collective bargaining. In the event of a dispute with the employer, however, the convention voted to accept binding arbitration. It was clear from this resolution that the Federation rejected the right to strike, preferring instead the imposed decision of a third party. The leaders of the postal employees argued that collective bargaining could not exist without the final option of striking since it was the threat of removing labour power that formed the basis of workers' bargaining power (White 1990:38). As a result of the disagreement over the demand for strike power, the postal employees

Railways or Atomic Energy of Canada. Labour relations in these federal undertakings were regulated under the IRDIA or the Canada Labour Code, as it was renamed in 1971 following the recommendations of the Report, Prime Minister's Task Force on Labour Relations (Canada, Sessional Papers 1968).

formally withdrew from the Federation in 1962.

In the meantime the federal government, in an attempt to respond to the growing dissent within civil service ranks, created the Pay Research Bureau in September 1957. The bureau was modelled on a similar bureau for the British civil service with the principle of providing fair comparisons with the current remuneration of employees in the private sector. The bureau was to collect and provide objective data on wages and working conditions to the Public Service Commission which could then use them to set wages and conditions within the service (Lemelin 1978:14-22). The bureau was founded on the philosophy that the private sector and the market should determine wages and that the civil service should follow rather than lead wage setting. On the whole, the staff associations were in favour of the establishment of the Pay Research Bureau and were willing to use its data as a basis of discussion within the NJC. During the 1950s the practice was that, once agreement was reached between the employer and staff sides over the level of wage increase, a recommendation was then forwarded to the Cabinet of the day (Civil Service Review March & Sept. 1957).

This began to change at the beginning of 1960s. In 1961 the Civil Service Act was amended to provide for formal and legally recognised consultation with the staff side and Treasury Board formally became the major player in the process. The discussions at the level of the NJC remained, together with consultation with the Public Service Commission (PSC). Treasury Board,

however, had the power "to implement, reject or amend the PSC's recommendations (Edwards in Civil Service Review June 1970)". Claude Edwards points out that the consultative process became an exercise in frustration as Treasury Board consistently lowered the recommendations of the PSC and the NJC. Under the Diefenbaker government, from 1957 to 1963, economic growth declined, unemployment increased and the Conservatives acted to limit the benefits enjoyed by civil servants; thus, the federal civil service, established by Mackenzie King and the liberals in the 1930s and 1940s, underwent a radicalizing change.

Increasingly the staff associations were dissatisfied with the consultative method of settling pay disputes and grievances. As noted above, the Canadian Postal Employees Association began demanding collective bargaining rights with the right to strike and eventually left the CSF over the issue of the right to strike. But other workers within the staff associations, particularly blue-collar workers, were similarly dissatisfied (Hodgetts 1973:332). Prior to the federal election of 1963, the Civil Service Federation requested the views of party leaders on collective bargaining rights for civil servants. All parties responded positively. Immediately after the election defeat of the Diefenbaker government, the successful Liberals led by Prime Minister Pearson appointed a committee to report on Collective Bargaining in the Public Service chaired by A.D. Heeney.⁵

⁵ A.D. Heeney was a career civil servant during the Mackenzie-King era. He had served as Chair of the Civil Service Commission and therefore knew the service well.

One of the main areas of debate within the committee was over compulsory arbitration as opposed to the right to strike. It took two years for a report to be issued, but finally the Heeney Committee (1965) recommended collective bargaining rights in the form of certification of unions, together with compulsory arbitration as the sole method of resolving disputes. The right to strike was not recommended.

The report was well received by the leaders of the Civil Service Federation and Civil Service Association. Claude Edwards, President of the Civil Service Federation, in particular supported its recommendations. Edwards stood out as a leader who wanted to build a strong alliance of civil servants capable of consulting and negotiating with management as equals. He perceived himself and the other association leaders as closer to the management of the bureaucracy and the politicians they served, than to the leaders of the mainstream labour movement. This was underscored by the fact that the Canadian Labour Congress took a different position from the associations with respect to the proposed labour-relations law (Bauer 1970). The CLC argued that public employees should come under the same labour-relations regime as workers in the private sector, in other words, that the IRDIA should be applied in the federal civil service. This was the same position as that of the postal unions.

Although many of the staff associations within the Federation were affiliated with the CLC at that time, the Federation itself was not, and Claude

Edwards was very careful to maintain a distinct and separate position on collective bargaining. In their submission to the Heeney Committee it is clear that the leaders of the Federation did not want to be treated or even compared to industrial workers. They perceived themselves quite differently, as part of a social category that was not part of the class system of workers and managers. The main thrust of the two staff association submissions to the committee was for a recognized form of consultation, with compulsory arbitration of issues where agreement could not be reached. They definitely did not want the right to strike (Bauer 1970). For these reasons the Report of the committee on Collective Bargaining in the Public Service (Heeney 1965) was welcomed by the two civil service organizations.

Postal employees had a very different reaction as their action a few weeks later revealed. Approximately 17,000 postal operation employees went out on strike when Treasury Board announced a pay increase of approximately half that demanded by the CPEA. The strike, however, had a far greater influence on collective bargaining rights than all the consultative approaches undertaken by the associations over the years. No other event played such a significant role in altering rights for public servants and radically changing labour relations within the Federal Public Service. The Liberal government's intention to restrict the right of strike had to be modified. Fritz Bauer, a research officer with the Civil Service Federation and later educational director for the Alliance, writing from the perspective of the 1970s, stated that,

The Postal employees' action, more than any other single act, by any other organization, led to the incorporation of the right to strike in the Public Service Staff Relations Act. It is a matter for speculation how the provisions of the PSSR Act might have differed had the Civil Service Federation, with its 80,000 members, and the Civil Service Association of Canada, with its 30,000 members, also attempted to change their posture (Civil Service Review 1970:56)

Bauer strongly believed that if civil servants, like the postal workers, had adopted a union identity and made demands on that basis, they could have brought pressure on the government to treat them like other workers, bringing them under the IRDIA, or the Canada Labour Code as it became in 1965.

The fact of the matter was that the leaders of the Federation and the Association did not want to be regarded like other workers within the Canadian Labour Congress or postal workers within the civil service system. They wanted to be treated as a breed apart, to continue to have the respect and benefits accorded civil servants. For example, the view that civil servants should maintain political neutrality was strongly entrenched. Thus, they would not support the CLC's affiliation with the New Democratic Party. In a speech delivered in April 7, 1970 Claude Edwards expressed the problem as follows

...Federal employee organizations have scrupulously avoided political identification. Their approach to reform is normally exercised through pressure on the Government itself and if they tend to seek support from political parties, they seek it from all political parties rather than identifying with one (Civil Service Review June 1970:6).

Political neutrality was in keeping with the conception that indeed civil servants were not like other workers. They were distinctive in terms of being part of a

politically neutral state administration that was free of patronage and governed by the doctrine of sovereignty. Not only did the Federation leaders reject the right to strike and scrupulously adhere to political neutrality, they also strongly supported the merit principle. Unlike the leaders of the postal associations, they did not agree that seniority should be the overriding principle in appointments and promotions. The Civil Service Federation's submission to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism had warned against any interference with the merit principle

... the recommendations should not be such as to lead to an undue deterrence on the service careers of present federal government employees nor should they cause any weakening of the merit principle governing appointments, transfers and promotions in the Federal Service (reprinted in Civil Service Review March 1965:5).

In the aftermath of the postal strikes of 1965, the federal government and Treasury Board had to backtrack on their position that there would be one, sole route for resolving collective bargaining disputes -- binding arbitration. It was clear that no matter what the law, postal workers were determined to exercise the right to strike. To enact a labour relations act without provision for strike would heighten the conflict and possibly mobilize other blue collar workers to the cause. In the face of these difficulties the federal government introduced Bill C-170 in April of 1966, offering an innovative solution to the dilemma. The draft legislation contained provisions for two possible routes in the event of a dispute during collective bargaining: conciliation/strike or binding arbitration. A compromise was enshrined in the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA).

Employees could chose which dispute settlement route they wished to take before commencing bargaining.

The Bill also proposed a compromise over how the federal administration of collective bargaining was to be structured. In 1951 Treasury Board was established as the body to oversee budgetary expenditures and personnel management across all government departments, but certain agencies were identified as outside the central administration and therefore became separate employers. At the same time the Public Service Commission retained overall responsibility for staffing and for administration of the merit principle. In 1967 the new legal regime recognized the Treasury Board of Canada as the employer for all the central administration, and gave the Public Service Staff Relations Board (PSSRB) the responsibility of administering the PSSRA. One of the important roles of the PSSRB was to determine appropriate bargaining units. This is the role usually played by a labour relations board when administrating such an act.⁶ The crucial difference, however, was that the PSSRB was mandated by the PSSRA to base bargaining units on the five occupational categories already established within the federal administration.⁷

⁶ See Warskett (1987) for a discussion of problems connected with labour boards and the determination of bargaining units. In chapter three I point out the gender and class biases implicit in this process.

⁷ The categories were Scientific and Professional, Administrative and Foreign Service, Technical, Administrative Support, and Operational. The Executive category was excluded from collective bargaining as the members of this category were deemed to be management. Within each category occupational groups were already established, for example the General Labour and Trades group were part of the

In other words, the PSSRA contained a strong directive to the Board to maintain the occupational category and group system already established within the federal administration. The employer's own classification system was to be the only basis for forming certified bargaining units within the federal administrative state.

What this meant in practice was that bargaining units were constructed across departmental lines. For example, all employees in the Clerical and Regulatory (CR) occupational group, which was part of the Administrative Support category, were placed in the same bargaining group. CRs were, and still are, found in every department of the federal government. While this meant that Treasury Board was the legal employer for collective bargaining purposes, departments were delegated managerial responsibility to administer the collective agreements that were to result from the collective bargaining process. Not only did the PSSRA specify that bargaining units would be constructed on the basis of occupations within the five categories, section 7 of the PSSRA stated that classification of occupations was the exclusive jurisdiction of Treasury Board and therefore was non-negotiable. This was a severe restriction on the bargaining activity of unions, and did not even allow for third party arbitration of classification grievances.

The scope of bargaining was restricted in other important ways as

Operational category whereas the Clerical and Regulatory group was established within the category of Administrative Support.

compared to private sector legislation. Unlike private sector unions, which can bring a wide range of issues to the bargaining table, there were many different kinds of provisions that prevented negotiation over certain matters. Unions with the federal administration were unable to raise any matter with the employer that would require Parliament to legislate or amend legislation. This included superannuation, which was regulated by the Public Service Superannuation Act, contracting-out, covered under the provisions of section 7 of the PSSRA, and anything to do with appointments, promotions, transfers, lay-off, recall, demotions, probation, selection standards, or release -- all matters governed by the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA). All the personnel practices specified in the PSEA were to be based on merit or reverse order of merit. This meant that seniority, a traditional tool used by unions in settling disputes, could not be a part of labour-relations practice in the civil service. The principle of merit, therefore, was not only very important for retaining the unity of the social category, but the exclusion of the principle and practice of seniority from collective bargaining effectively prevented an alternative discourse when matters such as promotion and layoff were on the employer's agenda. The definition of merit itself was not open to negotiation. The employer's definition would operate, as long as this was formed in good faith. This was confirmed by the Federal decision, K.Q. Ahmad V. Appeal Board Established by the PSC (FCC,

A-110-74).⁸

Bargaining was restricted not only in terms of the issues that could be negotiated but also in terms of the process itself. At the outset of bargaining the legislation specified that it was necessary for the bargaining agent (union) to declare the route the bargaining group would take if a dispute developed with the employer, ie. whether the group would resort to binding arbitration or conciliation/strike as a means of settling the dispute. This meant that the union was compelled to limit its power of bargaining from the outset by, in effect, declaring the seriousness of its intentions. As time went on and the Alliance learned from its negotiating experience with Treasury Board, this restriction became a source of frustration. By the mid-1980s when a more radical leadership decided to place all its units on the conciliation/strike route, the problem had been effectively eliminated as far as the Alliance was concerned.

Both the PSSRA and the PSEA contained restrictions intended to uphold the political neutrality of civil servants. In s.32 of the PSEA all appointees were prevented from running for political office, and from working for or on behalf of a candidate. This section, however, also contained a provision allowing civil

⁸ This case was an appeal of a s.31 PSEA appeal board decision. Mr. Ahmad was proposed for release from the federal government on the basis of incompetency. He appealed this decision to an appeal board established by the Public Service Commission which rejected his appeal. He then appealed to the Federal court, which, in turn, rejected his appeal on the basis that the determination of merit was entirely the prerogative of the employer. "Whether or not a person is competent or incompetent for a post is a matter of opinion, and, in the absence of any special legal direction, all that the law can imply with regard thereto is that it must be honestly formed...(FCC, A-110-74)".

servants to apply for leave from their positions in order to run for political office. Higher level mandarins, therefore, were not prevented from becoming elected politicians. In terms of the PSSRA the restrictions regarding political action were placed on the union, rather than individual members. The Act specified that no union could contribute funds to a political party. This provision had the effect of distinguishing unions under the jurisdiction of the PSSRA from unions in the private sector.

Once the PSSRA was passed into law in 1967, unionization among federal civil servants proceeded quickly. In 1966 the PSAC was formed and by 1970 nearly all eligible federal government workers were covered by a collective agreement. With the beginning of collective bargaining, however, the internal unity of the social category of civil servants began to be placed under considerable strain.

The Reluctant Union 1966-1980

The PSAC was formed in 1966 and was legally certified as a bargaining agent (legal union status) in 1967, appearing for the first time in official government statistics as a union (Statistics Canada, CALURA). Many of its leaders and members, however, had been active in staff associations. In other words, for the most part the leadership of the new union were the leaders of the now defunct staff associations.

The new union, as noted earlier, was formed out of the amalgamation of

the Civil Service Federation of Canada and the Civil Service Association of Canada. These staff associations were dominated by men who were civil servants first and foremost. They strongly supported the notion of a professional civil service, free of patronage, and staffed by personnel appointed on the basis of merit. Although many of them had entered the Canadian federal administration as a result of the preference given to veterans after World War II, they perceived this as justified under the merit system, since, in their view, they had proved their loyalty and dedication by fighting for their country. The main difference between the two organizations was their structures. While the Federation was two tier, an organization of departmental associations, the Association was based on direct membership.

The leaders of the newly formed Alliance were, in the main, anglophone men who had risen through the ranks to middle-level administrative positions. Claude Edwards, who became the first President of the Alliance, was a case in point. There was some representation of blue-collar men: Joe Power, for example, who was president of the Union of National Defence Employees component. Francophones made up approximately 15 percent of the total union membership.⁹ It was a tradition that one francophone should be elected to the executive committee, and on the first executive of the Alliance, Vice-President Jodoin fulfilled that role followed later in the 1970s by Guy Jacob,

⁹ This figure is an estimate based on figures from the Public Service Commission annual reports and reports by the Public Service Staff Relations Board.

who had been President of the Union of Canadian Transport Employees (UCTE). From the union's inception most formal communication was in both official languages, although there were complaints during the 1970s that this needed to be improved (see the next chapter). The Alliance took its policy towards francophones directly from the federal government. During the 1970s, the Trudeau government's policy of establishing a bilingual service led to greater francophone representation in upper levels of the administration and this policy reinforced the Alliance' commitment to bilingualism. In 1967, however, francophones and members of the Operational category were minimally represented within the Alliance, revealing their marginalization within the category of civil servants. Women, while forming over 30 percent of the Alliance membership by 1970, had no representation in the upper levels of the union leadership. The union at its inception was, for the most, part led by white, Anglosaxon men from the lower, middle levels of the federal government administration.

The PSAC was formed near the end of the 'new era' of collective bargaining. Some have argued that it was the new, labour-relations law, the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA) that was the main impetus for the PSAC formation (Panitch & Swartz 1993:20). While the PSSRA did have a very influential effect on the formation of the union, the staff associations themselves, as noted earlier, had influenced the form the legislation took. On the other hand, it was undoubtedly the case that the Alliance was formed on the basis of

that legislation. Staff associations, as agents of change, pressured for the form that the PSSRA and PSEA eventually took. The union they then formed was moulded by the legislation that was set in place.

The name Public Service Alliance of Canada is instructive in this regard. It conjures up a civil service body rather than a union.¹⁰ The intention of the founders of the PSAC was not to create a trade union, an industrial union, or even a white collar union but, rather, an "organic unity among all staff associations (Proceedings of the CSFC, Resolution 353 as amended 1965)". As Claude Edwards saw it the PSAC was a compromise between the many staff associations that came together to form the Alliance. In his view without

...the catalyst of collective bargaining, with the need to join forces in order to obtain certification for the various bargaining units, I doubt whether unity would have been achieved for several more years (Edwards 1968:635).

It was in this sense that the PSAC was the creation of the PSSRA. The requirement that bargaining units be formed on occupational and category lines meant that units would cover workers from different staff associations. Using the example of clerical workers again, these employees were and still are found in every department of the federal government administrative system. Under the PSSRA a bargaining unit of clerks would cross departmental lines and as a consequence staff association lines. Given the legal requirement for appropriate bargaining units, the staff associations had no choice but to merge if they

¹⁰ When I worked for the PSAC, people in all walks of life assumed that the name indicated that it was part of the government system.

wished to survive. Without the merger and affiliation with the Canadian Labour Congress the possibility of being raided by other unions was also highly likely. At that point the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) was already formed and growing vigorously. Claude Edwards knew he had to act by forming a union of the staff associations and affiliating with the Canadian Labour Congress, or CUPE would step in to organize within the federal administration.

The PSAC was structured in the form of a two-tier system that exactly mirrored the levels of Treasury Board and the departments within the federal government. The PSAC Executive Management Committee negotiated and made representation to the human resources management of Treasury Board of Canada. The components in general were organized along departmental lines and their executives dealt with personnel management at the departmental level, while local executive members made representation to personnel management at the regional or local level.

FIGURE 1

Structure of PSAC and Federal Personnel Management

PSAC Executive Management Committee ----- Treasury Board Management

Component Executive ----- Departmental Management

Component Local Executive ----- Departmental Regional Management

The Alliance centre was led by five elected, full-time union officials who composed the Executive Management Committee (EMC).¹¹ This body was seen as Treasury Board's equivalent within the union and its name reflects this role (See figure 1). Under the new constitution, the EMC administered the branches of the Alliance centre and was the official agent for collective bargaining purposes. The PSAC was therefore the certified bargaining agent recognized as such by the Public Service Staff Relations Board. It is important to point this out as many of the components in the second tier of the PSAC structure, although named as unions, were not recognized in law as such. For example the Union of National Defence Employees (UNDE) was not a bargaining agent within the jurisdiction of the PSSRA. This is because UNDE only represents employees within the Department of National Defence and the occupational bargaining structure of the Federal Government crossed departmental lines.

In figure 2 the seventeen components in the second tier of the PSAC structure were formed on the basis of employment in a particular department. The third tier shown in this diagram is the local level. Locals are component locals not PSAC locals. In the PSAC constitution no reference was made to locals. It is the component by-laws that regulates the activities of locals.

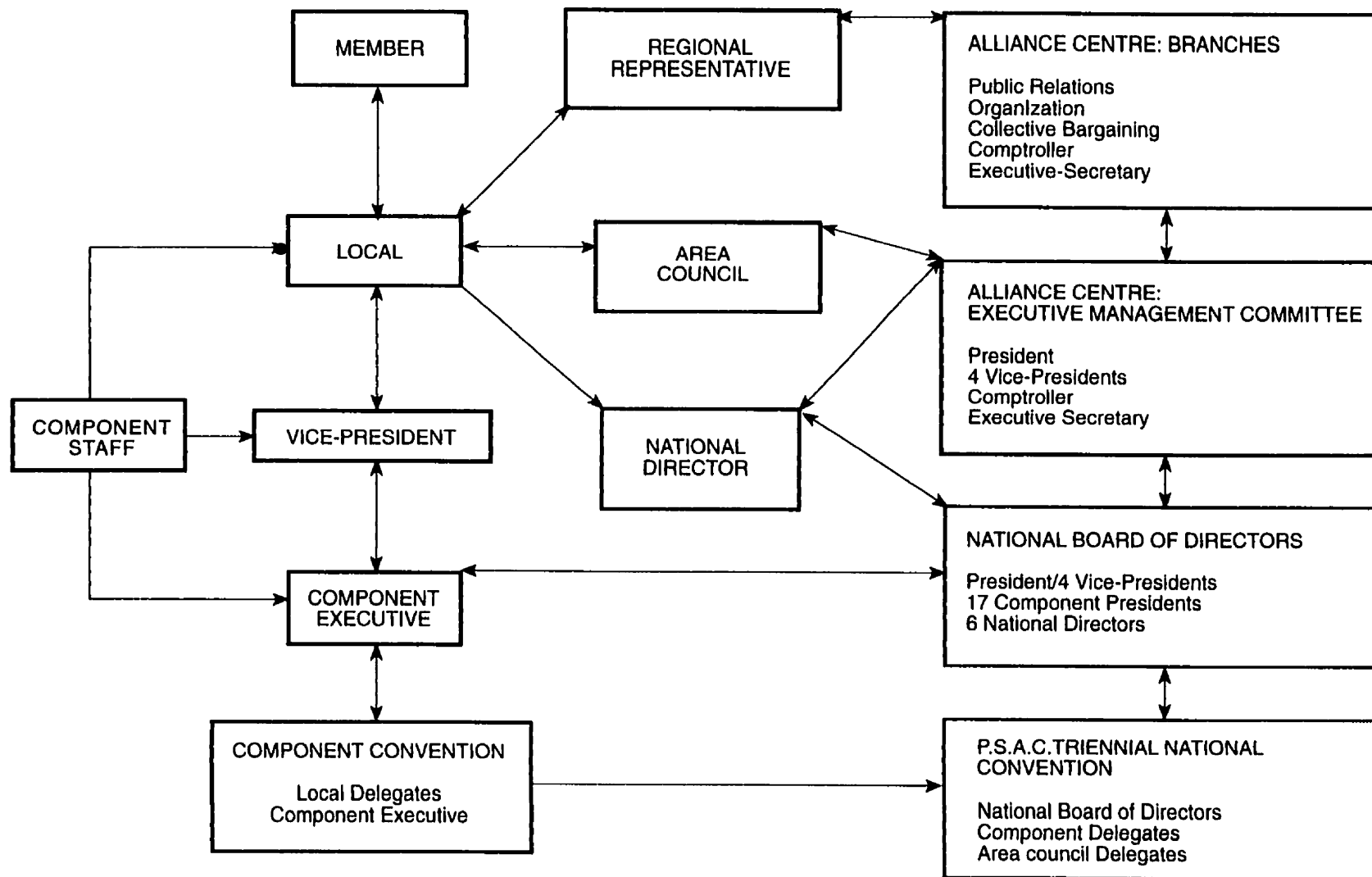
This structure was inherited from the Civil Service Federation, which

¹¹ The name was changed to the Alliance Executive Committee at the 1991 Triennial Convention.

brought 80,000 members to the new Alliance as compared to 25,000 Civil Service Association members. With the passage of the PSSRA, however, the two different kinds of structures continued. One was based on occupational groups and collective bargaining relating to the legal employment relation, while the other was based on the departmental system.

The seventeen components of the PSAC were therefore made up of 'bits' of occupational bargaining units structured on the basis of the old staff associations role of consultation, 'cosy chats' and collegiality between the staff associations and human resources personnel within the departments. Day-to-day operation of the union was situated within the components. This meant that consultative and collegial relations between local component leaders and the departments' staff relations people continued after the formation of the Alliance. It was as if the new collective structure had simply been placed over the component structure without disturbing the every-day practices of the staff associations. The strategy of the Civil Service Federation of Canada when faced with the prospect of collective bargaining under the PSSRA was to hold on to the structure and practices of traditional staff relations, while at the same time embracing the restrictive form of collective bargaining it offered. The duality of this structure had a profound impact on the union and helped fashion a form of unionism that encouraged consultation while opposing the development of a social and political union identity.

FIGURE 2
Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Component Structure



Cementing the Social Category of Civil Servants: Defending the Merit

Principle

While the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA) played an important role in how the new union would be structured, the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA), though seemingly less important, was nevertheless a crucial element in fashioning the new Alliance. As argued earlier, the merit principle was an important aspect of constructing the social category of civil servants. Since the early part of the century the Public Service Commission had a leading role in upholding the principle and applying it in the recruitment, appointment and promotion of civil servants. The legislative changes that occurred in 1967, with the introduction of collective bargaining rights in the form of the PSSRA, did not mean that the merit principle was in decline. Enacted along side collective bargaining, the Public Service Employment Act was designed primarily to uphold and defend the principle of merit.¹² Treasury Board remained the primary actor in terms of financial accountability and human resources management, emerging from the legislative process as the employer for all departments named in schedule 1 of the PSSRA. The Public Service Commission (PSC), however, retained the important role of overseeing the

¹² Section 10 of the Act stated that: "Appointments to or from within the Public Service shall be based on selection according to merit, as determined by the Commission, and shall be made by the Commission, at the request of the deputy head concerned, by competition or by such other process of personnel selection designed to establish the merit of candidates as the Commission considers is in the best interests of the Public Service (1966-67, c.71, s.10)."

construction of the service on the basis of merit for appointments along with other aspects of employment tenure, including probations, layoffs, incompetency and incapacity. The PSEA, as noted earlier, also contained provisions enforcing political neutrality among civil servants (PSEA 1966-67, c.71, s.32). All civil servants, at all levels of the hierarchy, who were appointed under the PSEA were therefore required to be politically neutral and their appointment on the basis of merit emphasized the non-partisan and non-patronage aspects of the service. The Public Service Employment Act was therefore a crucial aspect of the construction of the social category of civil servants and the fact that this legal regime continued in parallel with the Public Service Staff Relations Act indicates the limited and restrictive form of collective bargaining that was introduced in 1967.

The existence of these two legal regimes meant a division of labour between Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission. It was a division, however, that produced both tensions and contradictions regarding legal regulation of both the employment relationship and the meritocracy. Treasury Board was responsible for classification, evaluating positions and allocating or negotiating rates of pay. While the Public Service Commission was responsible for developing selection standards for these positions and statements of qualification to be used in competitions for appointments and promotion. For the newly formed Alliance of civil servants this meant a complex division of labour in terms of union activities and defending members under the terms of

both regimes.

In terms of collective bargaining and policing the collective agreement, the PSAC established a complicated structure for soliciting bargaining demands and representing the various components at the bargaining table with Treasury Board. The two-tier structure of the Alliance increased the complexity of the process and contributed to the formation of a union that was based on the expertise of its staff rather than the collective mobilization of its membership.¹³ Once a collective agreement was in force it was the responsibility of the components to enforce it and defend their members under the grievance procedures established at the departmental level. If the grievance, however, reached the level of third party arbitration then the parties responsible for the dispute became the PSAC and Treasury Board, with an arbitrator appointed by the PSSRB under the Public Service Staff Relations Act to resolve the matter.

The defence of the merit principle required a different structure and process. Under section 21 of the PSEA unsuccessful candidates had the right to appeal appointments made from within the service and the PSC had the authority to establish an appeal board in order to conduct an inquiry (1966-67, c.71, s21). This resulted in the union representing members who were unsuccessful in competitions at the Appeal boards. This responsibility was assigned to Alliance regional representatives and became the practice whereby

¹³ This point is returned to in chapter seven when examining the clerical workers strike.

the union defended the merit principle. The difficulty here was that successful candidates were frequently also Alliance members whose successful upward mobility came into contradiction with the representation of unsuccessful candidates by their union.

There were other complexities in the division between collective bargaining and the merit principle which caused federal sector unions even greater difficulties. Given the division of labour between Treasury Board as employer and the Public Service Commission as the upholder of the merit principle, a distinction was made in law between disciplinary action when an employee was insubordinate, and dismissal or demotion when an employee was deemed to be incompetent to perform the duties of a particular position. The distinction in essence was between an employee refusing to perform the duties of a position and an employee being incapable or incompetent, that is without merit, to perform the duties. The former circumstance required the employee to grieve disciplinary action while the latter required an appeal of the recommendation to dismiss or demote because of incompetence. This distinction was regulated by Section 31 of the PSEA and Section 91 of the PSSRA. While a grievance could be settled by third party arbitration this was not the case with an appeal under the PSEA.

Defence of the merit principle through appeal representation was part of the practical attempt by the leadership of the union to uphold the civil service as a profession free of patronage. Del Hewitt-White, executive secretary of the

PSAC from its inception until 1982, argued that the problem with the civil service was no longer political patronage but bureaucratic patronage. "In some instances," he wrote "it would seem that the Civil Service had been freed of political patronage only to fall into an equally bad situation -- bureaucratic patronage." By this he meant that the merit principle was not being properly upheld within the Public Service Commission and that a system of appointing friends and colleagues had developed within the departments. Hewitt-White goes on to point out that

The erosion of the merit principle which has taken place since the passage of the Public Service Employment Act in 1967 has one principle source: the same Act which stated unequivocally that appointments were to be according to merit as determined by the Commission also contained a section permitting the Commission to delegate all its authority and power (except those in relation to appeals under Sections 21 and 31 and enquiries under Section 32) to the Deputy Ministers of Departments (Civil Service Review December 1971:28).

The Alliance deplored the Public Service Commission's loss of power and the increase in Treasury Board's control over civil service employees with the introduction of labour relations. The delegation of staffing to the departments meant that Treasury Board as the controller of finance and personnel resources effectively increased its power in terms of appointment decision making. Del Hewitt-White pointed to the increase in acting appointments, open competitions and what he considered to be other abuses of the merit principle. These processes allowed the deputy head of a department to appoint 'favoured sons' rather than those deemed to be the most qualified as determined by a

competition process. In this criticism he was strongly supported by leaders of the components and the general membership. In general, the membership wanted the union to represent on section 21 appeals under the PSEA and the union offered representation to all members who launched an appeal despite the contradictory interests of members who were successful candidates.¹⁴

Strong support for the merit principle resulted in the Alliance leadership criticizing the appeal system and appeal boards appointed by the Public Service Commission. Early on they argued that the appeal boards lacked expertise since they were chaired "by persons with little knowledge or experience in jurisprudence, (they) come off second best in any comparison with grievance adjudication in the Public Service (Civil Service Review December 1971:32)". By the mid-eighties this criticism became stronger with the recommendation that appeals become part of the grievance process under the PSSRA (Submission by the PSAC to the D'Avignon Commission 1985). Throughout the eighties and into the nineties the Alliance set itself the task of defending the merit principle in the face of attempts by Treasury Board and the Departments to circumvent the competition process. With the election of the

¹⁴ Under the constitution of the PSAC, components were responsible for appeal and grievance representation of the membership. By the early 1970s, however, most components had opted to delegate this responsibility to the Alliance centre (to regional representatives). The components regarded the appeals as an Alliance function since they were heard by appeal boards appointed by the PSC and therefore representation was outside the department. Grievance hearings on the other hand were delegated by Treasury Board to the department level and only became the business of the PSAC and TB when third party arbitration took place.

Conservative Mulroney government in 1984, there were more concerted efforts by the departments to bypass the competitive appointment process in the name of efficiency and effectiveness (Pal 1995:281-283). During this period, support within the Alliance for protection of merit through collective bargaining became stronger; however, there was no lessening of adherence to the principle itself.

Because of the Alliance's strong adherence to merit appointments, the idea of seniority as a union principle remained undeveloped within the PSAC's discourse, both in its early stages and later on. No doubt the fact that the PSEA prevented the negotiation of seniority with respect to all matters covered within the act fed into the Alliance's relative silence on the issue. Employment matters such as promotion, demotion, layoff are all governed by relative merit or reverse order of relative merit. In practice this meant that the Alliance did not even attempt to negotiate seniority provisions for their membership with respect to these issues since they were not matters that could legally be raised at the bargaining table.

The comparison with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) in this respect is instructive. Seniority "has always been and remains a critical issue for the inside postal workers. This is because it regulates several vital aspects of working life (White 1990:89)". One of these aspects was appointment to preferred positions. In the 1960s CUPW fought vigorously to eliminate the lower classification levels of postal clerk (PO). In 1974 they negotiated a

reclassification for workers at level one which resulted in level four becoming the operating level for most postal clerks. As a result, the union negotiated that the principle of seniority would operate in determining assignments within this classification. Since this was a matter of reassignment within PO level four, the merit principle within the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) was not implicated. As White (1990) points out, the philosophy of the CUPW was to eliminate hierarchy within their union by reducing the number of PO levels. In following this philosophy they placed strong emphasis on negotiating equal benefits and treatment for all members through collective bargaining. As a consequence CUPW did not represent members who appealed their lack of success in competitions for promotion under s. 21 of the PSEA.¹⁵

At the negotiating table during the 1970s, the CUPW took a very different stance from the Alliance on seniority. Despite the 'reverse order of merit' provisions in the PSEA, the postal workers managed to negotiate a seniority provision for layoffs and recall from layoff. CUPW during this period continually pushed the limits of the law. They vigorously engaged in a campaign for Canada Post to become a crown corporation in order that collective bargaining could be regulated by the Canada Labour Code rather than the PSSRA. This occurred in 1982 and since then the postal workers have been able to

¹⁵ Although it was the policy of the union that it would not represent unsuccessful candidates in appealing appointments under the PSEA, there are cases where CUPW locals did represent members. Certainly the union represents members under s. 31 of the PSEA when it is a matter of dismissal for incompetence or incapacity (personal communication with G. Bickerton, Research Director CUPW).

negotiate seniority provisions in all relevant aspects of the collective agreement.

As pointed out earlier, the CUPW was constructed by postal clerks who were defined as part of the operational category and, hence, part of the blue-collar working-class. Despite their location within the federal administration, postal workers did not construct themselves as part of the social category civil servants. Unlike other male clerks, they could not be upwardly mobile within the service and therefore built their union as a defence and protection against the employer rather than in collaboration with management. The merit principle did not serve the interests of postal workers and, in fact, worked against their collective solidarity.

A number of consequences flowed from the Alliance's defence of the merit principle within the federal government administration. The result overall was a weakening of union-collective solidarity and a defence of the social category of civil servant, rather than a strengthening of union and working-class capacity. By defending the process of appointing the 'best' qualified candidate, the PSAC and its components defended competitiveness and individualism rather than promoting solidarity and collectivity. The competition process pitted individual member against member in their attempts to rise upwards within the hierarchy. Indeed the competition process directly implicated the union when it defended unsuccessful candidates who appealed the results of the competition under section 21 of the PSEA.

The launching of an appeal by an individual or group of individuals¹⁶ had the immediate effect of delaying the appointment of a successful candidate or candidates, who often were also members of the Alliance. If the appeal was successful, this could mean that the Public Service Commission through their departmental delegates would not make the appointment(s). All in all, this meant the union was often perceived by the membership as supporting the individual interests of some members rather than the interests of the collectivity as a whole.

The matter, however, goes deeper than this. Relative merit meant that the union placed emphasis on the skills and qualities of individual members rather than the collective value of the occupation/trade. This resulted in the union supporting and defending individuals' upward mobility in the hierarchy/civil service as a means of increasing individual welfare rather than placing the emphasis on collective bargaining and the improvement of benefits for all. Inevitably this diminished the sense of collectivity and solidarity among the membership. Defence of the merit principle promoted individual solutions to the problem of improving welfare and increasing pay, rather than collective action and collective bargaining.

For the staff members who represented individuals in the appeal process the emphasis on the merit principle meant and still means spending

¹⁶ Individuals must appeal. There is no such thing as a group appeal under the law.

considerable time gaining knowledge and experience in the quasi-judicial process and past decisions rather than organizing and mobilizing the union membership (Interview nos. 2 & 9). With the change of leaders in the mid-eighties, following the clerks strike, there was greater pressure for the regional representatives to devote their energies to collective organizing and union campaigns. The new leaders failed to obtain agreement from the National Board of Directors for withdrawing the union from section 21 appeals in the late 1980s, but nevertheless sought to free the regional representatives from this time-consuming activity. Instead members were trained to do the representation. This approach had mixed success. Because of the complicated nature of the process, few members had the time to become experts and handle the appeals adequately. Furthermore, they ran directly into the dilemma of having to represent member against member within their own locals. When staff members did the representation, members and component leaders could always point to another level of the union as being at fault. In part all these problems were alleviated by the decrease in appointments after the Mulroney government's election in 1984, which, in turn, led to a decrease in section 21 appeals by the membership (Interview no. 2).¹⁷

By the beginning of the 1990's the PSAC leadership's understanding of the need to develop a cadre of representatives for whom mobilizing and

¹⁷ During his election campaign Brian Mulroney promised he would hand out "pink slips and running shoes" to thousands of civil servants.

organizing were the principle roles, led them to adopt a tougher stance towards appeal representation, although it was not one that led to the union to drop responsibility for representation under section 21 of the PSEA completely. The executive adopted the position that representation of section 21 and 31 appeals was a component duty and if the components wanted to delegate this responsibility to the regional office staff then they would have to pay (Resolution, PSAC Triennial Convention 1993; Interview no. 2). In other words, the leadership came to the recognition that mobilizing and organizing work was being undermined by the appeals process because it took up too much of the representatives' time. They did not, however, take the stance that the process as a whole was damaging to union building and the collectivity as a whole.

Lived Experience of Appeal Representation Under the Public Service Employment Act

What follows is a personal account of section 21 appeals under the Public Service Employment Act in which I acted as employee representative. My own experience bears out the conclusion that the practice of representing individuals in the appeals process undermined the collectivity and solidarity of the union.

I was appointed as an Alliance regional representative in July 1976. The first task I was assigned on arriving in the Ottawa regional office was to represent PSAC members who had appealed their lack of success in a

competition. The senior representative at that time told me that representing on appeals was the most difficult and daunting task for a new representative and therefore it took priority over other duties of the job. This surprised me at the time, as I did not expect that a process that was not part of the labour relations system would dominate the representatives' duties.

Representing on appeals was regarded as the most important task for the regional representative because of the significance attached to them by the union leadership and the members. One needed to set aside union practices, principles and collective ways of thinking and become familiar with the thinking of bureaucrats appointed to protect the merit principle. For the next six months I immersed myself in the elements of the job competition system, reading past decisions and attending hearings. I learned how appeal board chairpersons thought and which allegations were the most likely to succeed.

I have selected the following appeal stories because these appeals were successfully upheld. Thus the candidates who had initially been successful were not appointed to the position in question or had their appointments overturned. Generally this meant that the successful candidates in the appealed competitions were annoyed and alienated from the Alliance. They perceived the appeal process as neglecting the interests of members who were successful and recommended for appointment.

Appeal Story 1.

There were two appellants in this particular appeal. On entering the hearing room I was struck by the number of people in the room. It was not the normal hearing room which could accommodate up to ten observers. This room was like a lecture theatre with seats for approximately fifty observers. Nearly all the seats were full. This was because the competition had resulted in an eligibility list of 35 people. Eligibility lists are used by departments to staff similar positions as they become available. They are established for a definite time period. In the case of this competition under appeal, the eligibility list was established for a year.

Shortly after the hearing started it became clear that the successful candidates were hostile to the appellants and myself as representative. They hissed when I asked questions, following with hoots and catcalls when I presented the allegations. At several points during the hearing the appeal board chairperson had to call for order. It was very clear to me during the hearing and after the appeal was allowed that many of the successful candidates, most of whom were also members of the PSAC, were profoundly dissatisfied that the union was representing appellants in a process that could and eventually did mean the elimination of the eligibility lists and their chances for promotion in the following year. In this particular case, as in many others, the department was able to rectify the matters that gave rise to the successful appeal and reinstate the lists. Nevertheless, the successful candidates felt that their interests had

been damaged by the union.

Appeal Story 2.

This second case involved three competitions for the position of correctional officer at Millhaven penitentiary. Although I was working in the Ottawa region, the case I was assigned to was in the Kingston region. It later became clear to me that a decision had been taken at a higher level of the Alliance and the Union of Solicitor General Employees, the component that included the correctional officers, to assign a representative from outside the region. Many correctional officers involved in the process were unhappy that the PSAC was representing the appellants.

In this instance the case was very clear cut and while doing the research I knew I would win the appeal. The problem was that there were three eligibility lists with three conflicting areas of competition. This meant that as a position became available there were three lists from which to appoint the successful candidate. I simply made the allegation that the first candidate on all three lists was eligible for appointment, rather than the candidate from the one list used by the department. This appeal resulted in all three lists being nullified and a new competition process with one area of competition. This meant that approximately seventy successful candidates had to reapply and take their chances yet again in the competition process. I was told by the Kingston representative that my name was mud amongst correctional officers in the that region and that there had been jokes about 'putting a contract out' on me.

Throughout the twelve years that I represented on section 21 appeals (at least 200 cases) there was only one case in which I was involved that contributed to the solidarity and collectivity of the union. The practice of defending the merit principle by representing PSAC members under s.21 of the Public Service Employment Act was the most visible manifestation of the duality of the Alliance's structure and practice as a union. Collective bargaining took place for the various occupational groups resulting in collective agreements. Grievances acted to police and defend the collective agreements of these groups. In these instances it was the bargaining agent, the Alliance, that took responsibility to represent the grievors before independently appointed arbitrators under the Public Service Staff Relations Act. Defence of the merit principle through the appeal system centred the dispute within the departments and between successful and unsuccessful candidates/members. Inevitably the union was involved in the defence of individual mobility and the hierarchical construction of the civil service as a social category.

The PSAC was therefore schizophrenic both in its structure and its practices. The Alliance centre as bargaining agent was responsible for negotiating with Treasury Board and for the practices that derived from the PSSRA. The components were responsible for staff relations and consultation with their governmental equivalents in the personnel sections of government departments. The components continued the consultative practices of the social category of civil servants and came into conflict with activists who wished to

transform the organization into a union.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada was and still is a union constructed on the strategic terrain of the Canadian administrative state. The Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Employment Act led to employment practices that, in turn, led to a form of unionism particular to the federal civil service. Furthermore, the discourse and traditions of the Alliance leadership in the late 1960s and 1970s served to reinforce the practices of the social category of civil servants. This meant that the form of unionism constructed within the federal administration by the PSAC was very different from that developed by industrial unions in the private sector or from the postal workers. The next chapter begins by examining the class and gender composition of the Alliance and the changes that took place in this structure in the 1970s and 1980s. This is followed by an analysis of the challenges to the 'civil service' mentality of the union by those in working class locations. Already by the mid-1970s cracks and strains in the social category of civil servants were starting to appear.

Chapter Six

Challenges from the New and Old Working Class, 1972-1980

The Alliance's attitude basically is one of peaceful coexistence. It is founded on the conviction that rank and file members can get more through working harmony than confrontation. Underlying this attitude is the belief that strikes would often bring more harm than good or that, in many circumstances, strikes would not increase union bargaining power. Also, perhaps, a natural inclination towards cooperation rather than confrontation prevails in most of the PSAC leaders. As a consequence, the Alliance is characterized by an absence of militant speeches or aggressive newspapers which might provide the impetus for militant action (Lemelin 1978:119).

This assessment of the PSAC and its leadership, as seeking harmonious relations with the employer, fits with the practice of cementing the social category of civil service. Certainly, at the beginning of the seventies, evidence indicates that this was the stance taken by the Alliance. By 1978, however, challenges to the PSAC discourse as a non-confrontational union were already underway. This chapter examines a number of challenges that came primarily from the working-class members of the PSAC or those supporting a working-class union orientation. The chapter starts with data on the changing gender and class location of the membership. Following this analysis of the material basis of the union, the focus shifts to the failed challenges to the Alliance's 'civil servant' orientation during the 1970s. Despite the failures, however, the changing gender and class structure of the Alliance provided a basis for experience and learning, preparing the way for changes in the 1980s.

Gender and Class Location of PSAC Members

In chapter two the argument was made that material class location, while not determinant of class formation, may provide the potential for such development. Furthermore, the intersection of class and gender in subordinated work locations offers the possibility of class formation and feminisation. To repeat, there is nothing determinant about such a development; simply put, the intersection of working class location and gender subordination opens the possibility for strategizing about how to overcome this double oppression. With this intersection of class and gender subordination in mind, the following data examines the material basis for such development.¹

In Figure 3 all PSAC members means those under the jurisdiction of the PSSRA, Part 1, with the Treasury Board of Canada as employer.² The rapid expansion of the federal public service in the early 1970s, related to the steep rise in employment in the federal civil service during the early years of the Trudeau Liberal government, is evident in Figure 3. By 1978 the Alliance was at

¹ In Appendix 1 the raw data from which these figures were compiled is listed, along with details of the three separate sources from which these emanate. The apparent gap in the data between 1979 and 1980 occurs because of an error found in the original data that made it impossible to compile accurate figures. This is further elaborated in Appendix 1.

² Some members of the Alliance are employees in Crown Corporations and the broader public sector and therefore are not included in these figures because they are covered by other legislation, e.g. the Canada Labour Code. The vast majority of Alliance members are under the jurisdiction of the PSSRA and are employees under Part I, with Treasury Board as their employer. These figures do not include those under Part II with a separate employer; for example the National Capital Commission of Canada is an employer recognized under Part II of the Act.

FIGURE 3
PSAC Membership, 1973-1990

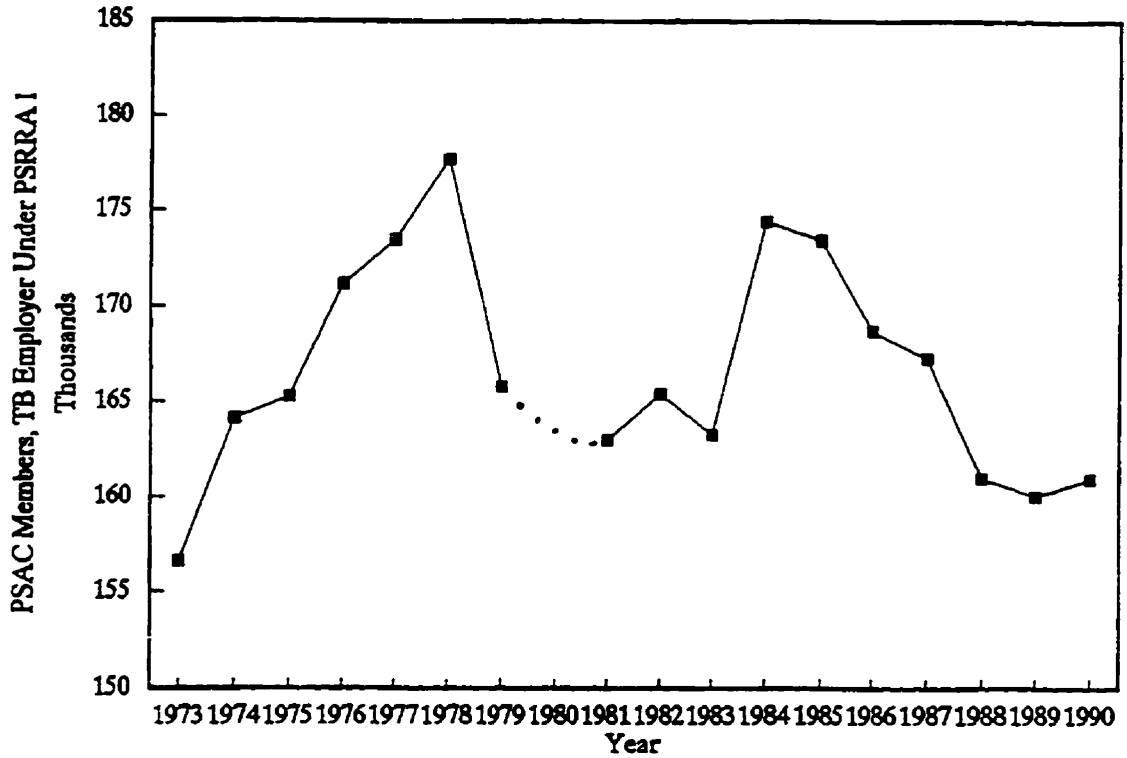
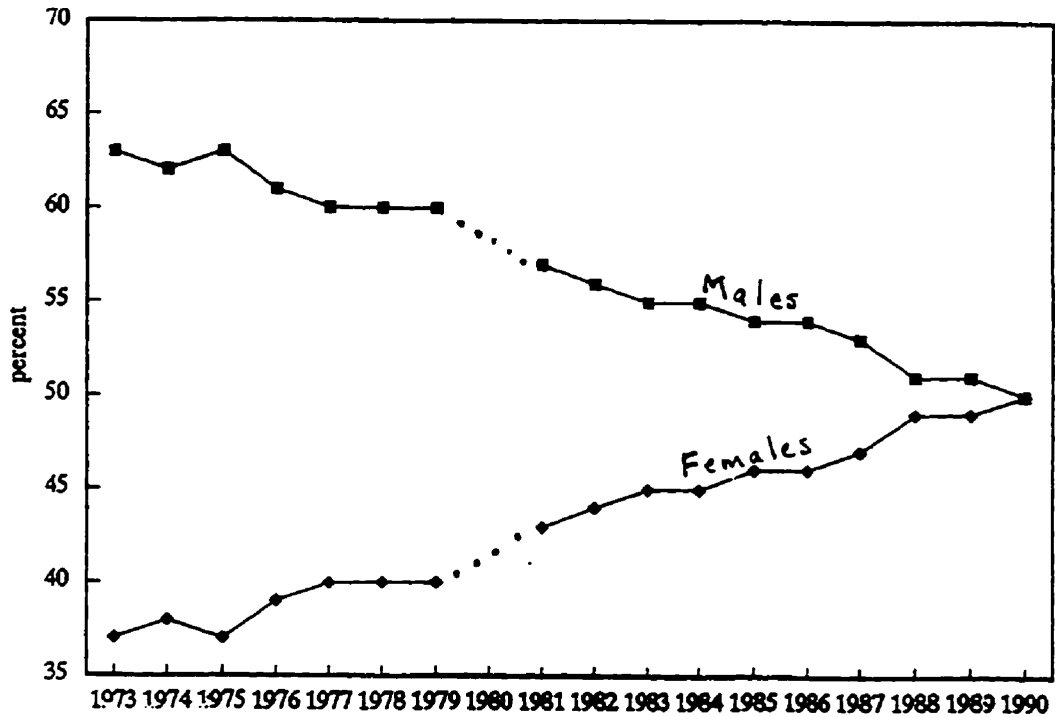


FIGURE 4
Gender Composition of PSAC Membership, 1973-1990



Sources: See Appendix 1

the peak of its membership, with approximately 178,000 members as official employees of Treasury Board. This number dropped to below 165,000 by 1981, followed again by an overall increase during the early to mid-1980s. The slight drop between 1982 and 1983 was likely due to the Post Office becoming a Crown Corporation during this period and the change in labour relations jurisdiction this entailed from the PSSRA to the Canada Labour Code.³ From the mid-1980s onwards the PSAC experienced a steady decline in numbers of members employed in the federal administration, as the Mulroney-led Conservative Government, followed by the Chrétien Liberals cut away at the administration bit by bit in the name of deficit reduction. Despite these cuts the numbers employed in the Federal Government Administration had not, by 1990, reached the lower levels of the early 1970s, when the PSAC represented approximately 155,000 members/employees.

Figure 4 shows the division of members under Part 1 jurisdiction of the PSSRA in terms of gender. It reveals a steady increase in the proportion of female member/employees from approximately 36 percent in 1973 to 50 percent in 1990, with the attendant steady decline in the proportion of male members from a high of 64 percent in 1973 to 50 percent in 1990. These

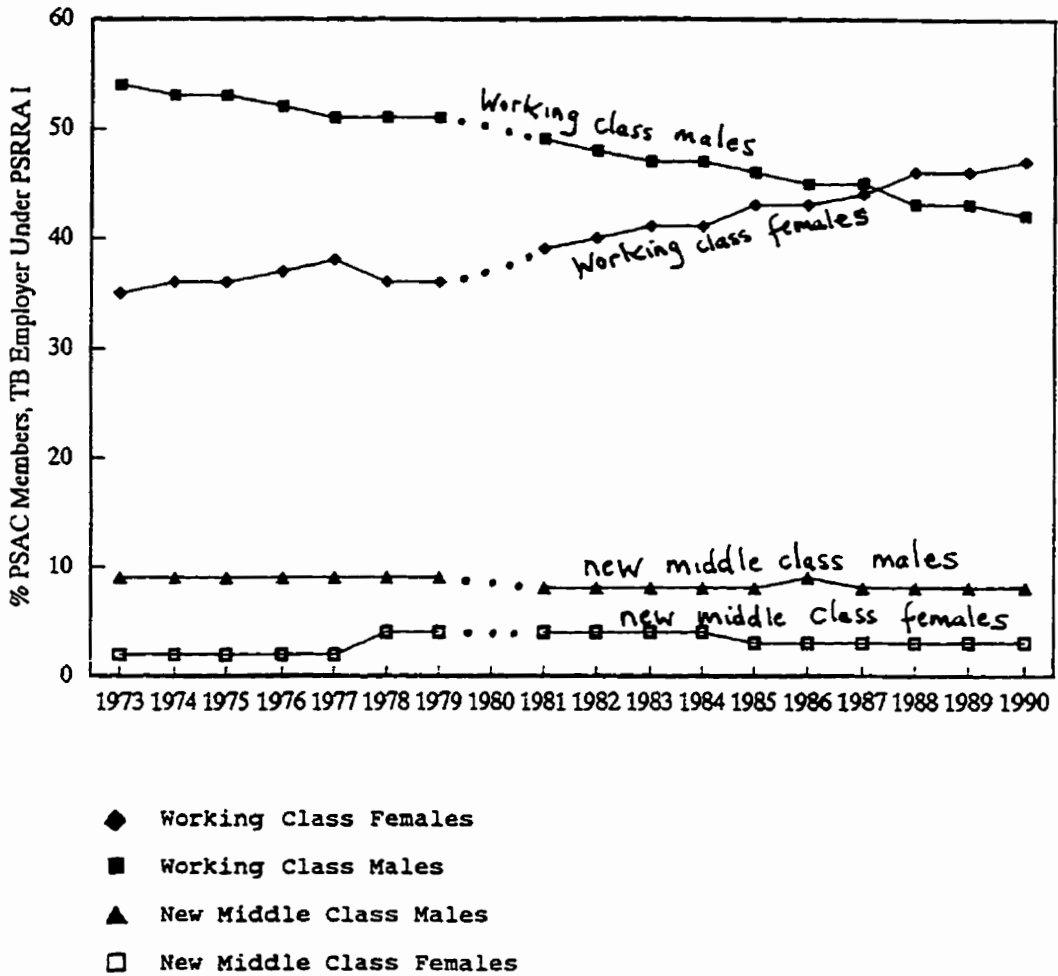
³ This change in jurisdiction was regarded as a victory for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers who had campaigned vigorously for it. Being covered by the Canada Labour Code meant that they would be able to negotiate issues of layoff and contracting out, as well as the removal of other restrictions on bargaining such as designations. They would no longer be covered under the Public Service Employment Act and could therefore 'legally' negotiate seniority provisions without reference to the merit principle.

percentages reflect the significant increase of women in the administrative category during the period of expansion in the 1970s. At the same time there was a slight decline in the number of positions in the operational category mainly held by blue-collar men. This decline accelerated during the 1980s with the Mulroney cutbacks, when many operational jobs were contracted out.

Figure 5 shows the proportions of PSAC members (i.e. those classed under the PSSRA, Part 1 jurisdiction) by class position and gender.⁴ While the proportion of new middle class positions occupied by men remained steady over time, there was a slight rise in the proportion of women occupying these positions from 1978-1984, followed by a slight decline during the cut-back period from 1985 through to 1990. This suggests that while affirmative action initiatives in favour of women had some effect, these were soon undermined by cutbacks in the federal administration. The picture is very different for working class locations. For men, there is a steady decline in the proportion occupying these locations. For women, the picture is almost the mirror opposite. While male-dominated operational positions could be contracted out, this was not the case for female-dominated administrative support positions. Clerks and secretaries remain integral to the administration of any liberal-democratic state and their work cannot easily be contracted out.

⁴ The way working class and new middle class locations were identified is explained in Appendix 1. This determination was based on the categories devised by Clement (1990), as discussed in chapter three.

FIGURE 5
Percentage of PSAC Members by Class and Gender



Sources: See Appendix 1

In Table 7 below three points in time are compared. Overall from 1967 to 1988 the Alliance increased the proportion of members in working-class locations from 83 percent to 89 percent. This increase in the Alliance's working-class membership occurred in two stages. In the ten years between 1967 and 1977 the overall numbers of new middle-class men declined by 5 percentage points, while the numbers of working-class women increased by the same amount. At the same time there was only a 1 percentage point increase in male working-class locations. Overall, the numbers of new middle class members declined from 17 to 11 percent, which, in general, meant that the Alliance increased its potential to become a working-class union.

Table 7: Percentage PSAC Members in PSSRA 1 Bargaining Units By Gender and Class

	1967	1977	1988
Male/WC	50	51	43
Female/WC	33	38	46
Male/NMC	14	9	8
Female/NMC	3	2	3
Total	100%	100%	100%

Sources: See Appendix One.

In the eleven years between 1977 and 1988 the most significant change was the increase of female members in working-class locations from 38 percent to 46 percent of the membership, while male members in these locations declined from 51 percent to 43 percent. By 1988 the Alliance overall had 6 percentage points more members in working-class locations than in 1967, resulting in 89 percent of the membership occupying these types of positions as compared to 83 percent in 1967. Significantly for the labour-relations conflict that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, a majority of these working-class members were women.

The potential for a substantial challenge to the social category of civil servants from men in working-class positions decreased over time, while it increased for women in these positions. These material changes provided the possibility for women in subordinate positions to take a stronger role than they had in the earlier period. Together with the development of union feminism these changes provided openings for a successful challenge to the PSAC consultative type unions by women in the 1980s. In what follows three challenges to the 'civil service' Alliance that developed during the 1970s are examined. All three were failed challenges in that they were not successful in making changes to the Alliance's structure, practices or discourse. They were, however, a beginning indication of the successful challenges to come in the 1980s and of the structural strains and cracks that were developing within the PSAC during the 1970s.

Secretaries, Rug Ranking and Contestation

By 1967 the position of women within the government administration and within the staff associations was one of invisibility. When women did have visibility in either the civil service or the union the role was one of subordination.

Within government administration women no longer had to leave the service upon marriage. They could remain in indeterminate positions. Women within the Federal administration, however, were occupationally segregated and comparatively low paid. Using Pay Research Bureau data Archibald revealed that women were "heavily bunched up at the lower end of the salary scale (1970:24)". Of all women working in the federal public service in 1967, 90 percent made less than \$6,000, compared to 59 percent of all men.⁵ The comparatively low pay of women was related to the positions they occupied. Almost 83 percent held office support or administrative support jobs. Archibald noted that the

... high degree of occupational segregation by sex is the most important variable examined. It probably explains many other differences in the distribution of men and women in the public service: differences across departments, across departmental functions, and across geographic regions. It also explains a large portion of the salary differences...(1970:24).

⁵ The figures refer to all employees appointed under the PSEA and therefore include some employees appointed to agencies with a separate employer from Treasury Board, for example the National Capital Commission. The number of employees in these agencies is comparatively small compared to the numbers in government administration where Treasury Board is the employer. These figures do not include employees in Crown Corporations who are not regulated by the PSEA or the PSSRA. Labour relations in Crown Corporations are regulated by Part V of the Canada Labour Code.

The study by Archibald had taken place in the same time period as that of The Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Both reports appeared in 1970 and were equally critical of the low status of women in the Federal government administration. Equality of opportunity was the solution focused on in both, with the Archibald report calling for the establishment of an equal opportunity program to improve access and advancement for women.

Within the staff associations things were not much different and, in fact, probably worse. In the Civil Service Review, the regularly featured pictures of the Civil Service Federation of Canada's (CSFC) leaders, meetings and conventions reveal they were completely male-dominated.⁶ Even in pictures of conventions, which show rows of delegates, one has difficulty spotting a women member. If women were visible in the Civil Service Review it was in their capacity as wives of convention delegates. In a report of a CSFC convention, women were mentioned in the entertainment program that was addressed to delegates, fraternal delegates and wives. The schedule indicated: "Thursday afternoon -- This has been left open for the ladies to have their hair done for the evening dinner dance." Further on it was reported that

⁶ The Civil Service Review was the main PSAC magazine and means of communicating with the membership at that time together with the paper, the Argos Journal. The editor of both was the President of the Alliance and editorials reflected the views of the PSAC executive management committee. In the 1970s they were publications that reflected the discourse of civil servants as a social category and helped to fashion it. By the mid-1980s the PSAC had changed sufficiently that the Civil Service Review and the Argos Journal were no longer published. In their place a newsletter and a union paper were published reflecting the new militancy that was developing within the Alliance.

The charming Mrs. Edwards, in a delightful little speech, expressed appreciation of the very enjoyable series of entertainments given to the wives of the delegates. They enjoyed particularly the visit to the Hiram Walker plant (Civil Service Review Sept. 1965:27)

Clearly, it was assumed that men would be at work at the conference while their wives would be entertained. If women were delegates they were likely single women or, if they were married, they did not bring their spouses. Seen from the photographs of the events at that time women were a very small minority of the delegates at convention, bargaining conferences or National Board of Directors' meetings.

Once the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA) was promulgated in April 1967 the Alliance began application for certification for the various bargaining units within the federal administration. By 1970 there were 158,263 employees in certified bargaining units for which the PSAC was the bargaining agent and Treasury Board was the employer. The first applications were granted certification on March 31, 1968. This included the male-dominated General Labour and Trades (GLT) group of approximately 20,000 and the larger female-dominated Clerical and Regulatory (CR) group of approximately 33,500. Many members from these groups had been members of the staff associations. Thus women, although not visibly active in the union at that time, nevertheless had voted to be represented by the new union. Members of the Secretarial group (ST) had not been members of the associations prior to the forming of the Alliance. The ST group was one of the last and proved to be the

most difficult to organize (Interview no. 1). In 1968 the Alliance hired the first woman regional representative, Cathy Rink, who was in the ST group in the department of External Affairs. The reason for hiring her was specifically to sign up the secretaries (Interview no. 1). In the Civil Service Review it is reported that she

...set up a schedule of after-hour coffee parties and lunch-hour meetings and recruited a small army of ST organizers in each government department and agency. The campaign led to a representation vote which ended with a 99.3% vote in favour of representation by the PSAC (Civil Service Review Sept. 1970).

It was not until March 1970 that the Secretarial, Stenographic and Typing (ST) group was certified as a bargaining unit with the PSAC as bargaining agent. The certification was granted in March 1970 (PSSRB Report). It was reported that 14,728 people were in the group and of these 10,274 became members of the PSAC. This left 4,454 in an excluded status, more than 30 percent of the total group. As compared to the Clerical and Regulatory (CR) group this was a very high rate of exclusion from union membership.⁷ The Clerks had been certified on March 31, 1968, with 6.6 percent of the total group excluded from union membership. The reason for the high exclusion rate amongst secretarial staff relates to the dependent relationship of higher-level secretaries on their 'boss', or 'rug ranking' as it was called at that time. This was also the reason for

⁷ Employees under the PSSRA could be excluded from a bargaining unit because of their duties as a manager or because they handled confidential managerial material. In the case of secretaries their high exclusion rate was because their close relationship with management meant they must be confidential exclusions.

the difficulty in organizing them into the union.

Rug ranking is the 'formal linking of the fate of secretaries to the fate of their bosses'. The secretary, writes Kathleen Archibald, that is the

...(woman) of the office (household) plays a supportive role, and her status in the department (community) is only peripherally related to her own achievement, instead it depends largely on the status of her boss (husband) (1970:110)

The pay status and classification of secretaries depended on that of their male supervisors. If a secretary was assigned to an administrative officer who had moved up quickly through the administrative hierarchy then she would too -- that is if her 'boss' agreed to keep her as his secretary. Often this had little to do with the secretary being the most meritorious, it was simply being in the right place at the right time. Of course this was also the case with her male 'boss'. Very competent secretaries could remain in the lower levels simply because they were never assigned to an officer who received promotion into management ranks.

In April 1972 secretaries, mainly from the department of External Affairs, launched a protest against rug-ranking. They demonstrated on Parliament Hill calling for an end to a practice that tied their careers to that of their male managers (Interview nos. 1 & 4). This demonstration and protest was organized by the secretaries themselves and took place entirely outside and apart from the activities of the Alliance. A regional representative was assigned to investigate the matter (Interview no. 4), but came to the conclusion that most of the women involved were excluded secretaries, not interested in having

union involvement in the issue. It appears that the Alliance did not regard rug ranking as an union issue at that time. It concerned secretaries who were excluded and the link was not made that it was the very dependency of secretaries on their higher-level bosses that resulted in the exclusion itself. It was not recognized by the PSAC leadership that the secretaries needed to be represented by a collective that would defend their interests as employees in their own right and in terms of the value of the work they did.

An editorial in the Civil Service Review, written by Claude Edwards and headlined "In Defence of the Public Service" (March 1973), described the role of the secretary (ST) within the civil service;

If asked what they do, they can only reply that, apart from typing letters and performing such other duties as are laid down in their job descriptions their principle occupations are closely related to those of a housekeeper -preparing coffee, watering plants, arranging lunches, acting as chauffeur and taking blame for anything that goes wrong.

While written in a sympathetic way towards secretaries, the editorial, nevertheless, embodies the very point that Archibald makes, that ST's were perceived as wives in the office, undertaking tasks that they would undertake for their spouses in the household. There is no suggestion in the editorial that this perception or the material reality should be changed. The rug-ranking incident had not changed the perception of the secretary's job in the eyes of the leadership of the Alliance.

Neither secretaries nor the PSAC leaders made the link between unions, women and equality. It would take almost another ten years before substantial

numbers of women members in both the administrative support and administrative categories started to make the link. This was only after the clerks strike of 1980.

Within the federal administration the demonstration against rug-ranking did make itself felt, together with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the report by Archibald. Two years later a reclassification of the secretaries was announced together with an end to rug-ranking. Today many secretaries maintain that the practice never was ended. Nevertheless, the demonstration served to highlight the nature of subordination they experienced.

By the mid-seventies women members of the PSAC constituted approximately 33 percent of the union as a whole. Yet the numbers of women in upper union positions were very few. The same held true for women staff in officer positions. Over the ten years since the founding of the PSAC very little had changed in this regard (White 1993:99-120). The rug-ranking incident, however, was the first significant sign that women were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their subordinate status within the social category of civil servants. This dissatisfaction fuelled by the federal government's discourse of equal opportunity led female Alliance members to turn the spotlight on their union and their subordinated status within that organization. In chapter six it is this story that is continued with the clerks strike of 1980.

Challenge of the Male-Dominated General Labour and Trade Workers

With the advent of collective bargaining under the PSSRA, the practice of paying operational category employees the rate prevailing in outside industry began to change. Prevailing rate employees were those appointed to a position under the PSEA in which he/she is paid at a rate other than an annual salary. These were employees usually paid at a hourly rate of pay that was determined by the prevailing rate for that trade in the region where the employee worked. Employees in the Operational Category were paid in this way, and the largest group in this category was the General Labour and Trades (GLT). The GLT included a wide range of trades as well as general labourers. There was wide spread dissatisfaction amongst the trade members when the new classification system came into being in 1966. It was felt that the pay of the tradesmen was pulled down by the inclusion of the general labourers in the same bargaining group as themselves (Interview no.8).

On August 13, 1969 the Superannuation Branch of Treasury Board made the announcement that there would no longer be a definition of a prevailing employee within the regulations pursuant to the Public Service Superannuation Act. Previously these employees had been excluded from the provisions of the Act until they completed six continuous months of service. Since many of the prevailing rate workers were term rather than indeterminate appointees it meant that many of them were unable to become contributors and benefit from the provisions of the Act.

This appeared to be a step forward for blue-collar workers since it meant that they acquired the pension benefits that other civil servants enjoyed. They no longer benefitted, however, from the outside pay comparison and this was a source of constant grievance. In the first round of collective bargaining negotiations, instead of obtaining the prevailing rate for their trade they were offered far less. Treasury Board made the argument that as they now had the security and benefits of other civil servants they should receive correspondingly less pay. Treasury Board took the position, as it did with other negotiating groups, that the Pay Research Bureau data should be applied at the top of the second quartile rather than at the 100 percent mark when making comparisons with outside industry.⁸

Employees in the operational category (blue-collar), as noted in the last chapter, were marginal to the social category of civil servants. They perceived themselves as part of a trade, be that carpenter, plumber, heating engineer etc. The loss of the prevailing rate comparison was a severe blow to their income, their status and to their identity. The very nature of the social category of civil servants - its hierarchy; its system of merit and its political neutrality towards

⁸ The Pay Research Bureau collected data from a wide range of private sector firms employing personnel in the same occupational groups as found in the federal civil service. Included in this data were firms of varying size, located around the country, many of which were non-unionized. Bargaining agents representing employees in the federal government administration made the argument that this data should only be collected from large unionized firms and the comparison should be made based on at least the top of the third quartile. I wrote a report for the Economists, Statisticians and Sociologists' Association (ESSA) in 1976 including these points.

civil society, meant that operational category workers would always remain separate in class terms from the administrative and professional categories. Also, they continued to be treated separately by Treasury Board in how they were paid. No longer prevailing rate employees, they continued, however, to be paid at an hourly rate and on a regional basis. In other words, although they no longer received the same rate as other trades in their region, their pay still varied across the country based on a lower level comparison with operational workers in their respective regions. This method of determining their pay was a continuing sore point and was still an issue in the 1991 general strike. In chapter seven I deal with the way pay equity was redefined by the PSAC leadership to include the issue of regional rates of pay.

Immediately the General Labour and Trades (GLT) was certified as a bargaining group in 1967, the PSAC gave notice to bargain as required by the PSSRA. Before this notice, however, the legislation required that the bargaining group declare which dispute settlement route they intended to take.⁹ In the first round the GLT group opted for binding arbitration and collective bargaining

⁹ This declaration of whether the union intended to go to binding arbitration or to conciliation/strike has been a continuing source of criticism by unions under the PSSRA. The PSAC in their submission to the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Employer-Employee Relations in the Public Service of Canada stated that "We are firm in our position that the employer holds all the key cards when the union must announce its dispute resolution process before negotiations commence. Revised legislation should provide for the announcement of the process at the time an impasse in negotiations is reached, not before (January 1975: 104)". In the PSAC's view, announcing that a bargaining group would go to arbitration before negotiations began was to give up any power or leverage the group might gain from the threat of strike action.

was uneventful in that the status quo was maintained. A pattern of delay was, however, established.¹⁰ The PSAC signed the GLT collective agreement on September 27, 1968 and it expired September 30, 1968. Notice for the second round was served immediately and the next round involved more delays and more difficulties.

It became clear in the second round of bargaining that Treasury Board had abandoned the prevailing rate tradition and wanted to enforce the concept of a regional rate comparison based on the top of the second quartile of Pay Research Bureau data. It was over this disputed issue that the PSAC applied for binding arbitration. The arbitral award of November 1972, however,

set aside the determination of individual pay rates by zones and sub-groups in favour of granting an award which provided only across-the board increases. The above award was granted notwithstanding the urging by the union that the Tribunal determine individual rates of pay increases by zones and sub-groups (Civil Service Review June 1973:12).

The arbitral award, while increasing the gap between outside and inside rates, had the effect of lowering the pay of the trades in comparison with the general

¹⁰ It was and continues to be the norm in private sector industrial unions that the contract is either settled by the expiry date or the union undertakes strike action. By 1970, Fritz Bauer had become concerned by the time delays. He noted that "The best method of bargaining, as commonly agreed by experts is 'in time'. This means that bargaining commences prior to the expiry date of the agreement, and is ideally concluded at the expiry of the prior agreement. It appears that in the Public Service a long time-lag has become established (Civil Service Review 1970:62)". The acceptance of the time delays by the PSAC was in keeping with its consultation history with the employer and its disregard of the link between negotiations and the strike power of the membership. I return to this point in the next chapter when analyzing the clerical workers strike of 1980.

labourers which added to the grievance of the more skilled members of the group. The dissatisfaction of the majority of the GLT group with the award, and the arbitration process in general, became clear when a majority of GLT members voted to change the dispute settlement route in 1972 to conciliation/strike (PSSRB report, 1972).

Regional rates of pay and sub-groups remained the main issues in the 1974 -1975 round of bargaining. The Alliance demanded an overall 42.5 percent increase in one year which would bring the group to approximately 90 percent of similar workers in the private sector. After a series of rotating strikes, conducted in February, 1975, the group won on average a 29.25 percent increase over 26 months, far short of the original demand and considerably lower than prevailing outside rates.

Although the PSAC had organized smaller strikes earlier, the strike by the GLT was the largest in the union's history to that point, involving all components and all regions. It was an important test for the Alliance and its structure -- a test that the Alliance failed miserably. The GLT strike showed the flaws and contradictions of a union structure that was organized on a departmental basis with collective bargaining groups crossing these departmental lines. As noted in the last chapter, component locals were organized across bargaining unit lines and union stewards worked in relation to departmental labour relations management rather than in terms of bargaining units. During the strike, this meant that the normal component structure of the

union had to be abandoned and a new system of strike and picket captains put in place. This was because the strike was conducted in locations that involved members of several departments and components and the members had to be organized across component lines (Interview no.9). This change in structural relations meant that the component executives had no control over the strike process and organization. Often this resulted in component leaders standing back and criticizing the decisions made by the Alliance bargaining team, blaming them for the difficulties during the negotiation process and for the settlement when it final was reached with the employer (Interview no. 9).

The lack of unity within the PSAC leadership during and after the GLT strike fed into the divisions within the group itself. After the strike there was an attempt by the various trades to decertify the bargaining unit and pull out of the PSAC. Not sufficient agreement was found within the group to achieve this (Interview no. 8). The division between the trades and the general labourers continued and no solidarity could be reached over the need to decertify. Divisions during and after the structure did result, however, in the Alliance as a whole investigating the difficulties inherent in the structure. A strike manual was written by senior representative Mike Gleeson, laying out the way in which the structure needed to be modified during the process. This was followed in 1978 with the formation of a structure committee mandated to investigate the problems within the Alliance. Leaders and members were invited to make submissions. Those who supported a single structure based on bargaining

units agreed with Vice-President Doherty that

... collective bargaining in the Alliance is sick. It has been sick for years and it now appears that the illness may be terminal. Our members are unhappy and dissatisfied, as much with the results of bargaining as the various procedures that guide the process.

Despite the talk of union solidarity and the need to work together, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding is usually only a signal for another round of political buck passing, more vitriolic attacks on the Alliance by a few components and a public Pontius Pilate-like washing of hands to eschew all possible guilt (Doherty 1978:74).

This was the minority view amongst the PSAC leadership, however, and little change resulted from the committee's deliberations. Collective bargaining continued to be plagued both by the dual structure and the divisions resulting from it.

The challenge by male trades workers had fizzled out by 1978. The GLT group was not successful in their strike of the mid-seventies and the division between the trades group and general labour meant that collective solidarity was not produced either within or between these groups and others. These workers were not capable of forging working-class solidarity between themselves and other bargaining units of members in working-class locations such as the clerks. As a set of workers the trades members of the GLT remained 'stuck' in an earlier time of craft worker contestation. Their issues, that were the source of dispute between themselves and the employer, were about returning to past 'glory' in terms of pay and status. As the main 'blue-collar' working-class group they were incapable of leading the PSAC into a different kind of unionism and solidarity.

Challenging the Political Class Neutrality of the PSAC

Well, we have difficulty with the part to play in regard to the political scene. My advice to our people is that they should be politically active, politically interested, politically involved, but not on the basis of partisanship. We have made petitions to political parties, to the Government and the Opposition, all at the same time. We did that at the time we sought collective bargaining rights for the Public Service. But we didn't take the course of suggesting that we support a political party to achieve that result (Interview Claude Edwards, Civil Service Review 1976).

The apolitical stance of the PSAC has its roots in the civil service associations and their adherence to being part of the social category of civil servants. As was noted in chapters one and four, political neutrality is an essential characteristic of the category and important for maintaining the concept of the state as a neutral arbitrating force standing over and settling disputes between various political interests.

For the first half of the century both the Civil Service Federation of Canada and the Civil Service Association of Canada kept their distance from the mainstream labour centrals. From 1902 to 1956 the Canadian labour movement was marked by dual unionism. On one side were the Gomerist American international unions with a philosophy of rewarding political friends and punishing enemies and, on the other, those that supported a social movement, social democratic tradition. While this is a simplification of the various divisions within the movement, one can say the American Federation of

Labour and its Canadian counterpart the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) took a Gompertist position, whereas the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) formed in 1940 supported the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF forerunner of the New Democratic Party) as the 'political arm of labour in Canada', adopting a resolution to that effect in 1944 (Abella 1973:75). By 1955 conditions were favourable for a merger between the two labour centrals. Divisions within the labour movement were healing, communist led unions had been purged from both the TLC and the CCL and there was a spirit of unity within both congresses. In April 1956 the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) was formed. By the 1958 CLC convention the CCF supporters within the executive council felt strong enough to place a resolution on the convention floor to initiate discussions with "the CCF, interested farm organizations and other like minded individuals and groups (convention resolution, CLC 1958)". The intention was to formulate a plan of action and a constitution for a new social-democratic party with roots strongly in the labour movement. In August 1961 the New Democratic Party (NDP) was born with a strong delegation from unions affiliated with the CLC. By 1964 "some 220,00 members of CLC unions were involved in a plan which provided regular financial contributions to the New Democratic Party (Williams 1975:222)".

Traditionally the TLC and the CCL were formed by predominately blue-collar, male-dominated unions that were part of the American international unions. For the most part they organized private sector workers although there

was significant participation of blue-collar workers in the public sector. Within the civil service associations certain unions were affiliates of one of the centrals, for example the Letter Carriers Union of Canada (LCUC) had been a member of the TLC from its beginning. The leaders of the two main civil service centrals, the Civil Service Federation of Canada (CSFC) and the Civil Service Association of Canada (CSAC), were concerned, however, to keep their distance from the labour centrals both in terms of collective bargaining and working-class politics.

Claude Edwards states the position of the traditional staff associations in an interview in 1976 at the point of his retirement from the PSAC

I think we have to be concerned, on the Government level, with the fact that our membership will continue to work for Canada and to represent them will go on, regardless of the party in power (Civil Service Review 1976).

In this statement it is clear that the traditional leadership of the Alliance was adamantly against aligning with any political party. By doing so it was perceived that their political neutrality would be threatened and their position in the social category of civil servants would be undermined. It was their political neutrality which in large part made them distinct from other workers and unions, in the sense also that they must do the duty of the government in power and be willing to administer policies from all ends of the political spectrum.

The matter went deeper, however. By remaining politically neutral the Alliance leadership rejected aligning themselves with the interests of working-class Canadians and the political parties that supported their interests. In effect, the union's non-alignment and political neutrality meant that the Alliance

leadership constructed their interests as resting with the Liberal Party and the dominant hegemonic bloc. In fact many of the PSAC leaders and component presidents during the 1970s were members of the Liberal Party (Interview no. 9). Some were actively and publicly so, including Marcel Longtin, component president of the Union of Energy, Mines and Resources Employees (UEMRE) and Aileen Manion, vice-president of the PSAC. As time and learning went on throughout the seventies and eighties the position of the Alliance leadership with respect to politics changed. It was already strained in 1966 when collective bargaining rights were sought by the Civil Service Federation of Canada (CSFC). While the leaders of the Alliance did not want their members to be treated like other workers, nevertheless, they realized that consultation with the federal government had not brought them the benefits they had hoped for. As we saw in chapter five, they were not willing to demand the right to strike, however, and adopt the position of the CLC.

Despite the desire to remain aloof from the mainstream labour movement both in terms of political neutrality and the right to strike, the CSFC had adopted a resolution to merge with the CLC at its 1965 convention (24th National Convention, August 1965). The reasons expressed for voting in favour of the resolution placed strong emphasis on concern about union raiding. Being part of the Congress meant that other CLC affiliates would not be able to legitimately raid the future Alliance. Since by 1965 it was clear that legal union status would be part of the labour relations reforms introduced by the liberal

government, the Federation leaders felt membership in the CLC was necessary to protect them as a union. Being an affiliate of the Congress meant that constitutionally other affiliates must respect the jurisdiction of the Alliance over federal government workers. There was also concern about collective bargaining and other union activities and the lack of expertise in carrying out these functions. The resolution moved

... that the Affiliates of the Civil Service Federation of Canada affiliate with the Canadian Labour Congress in order that the services provided by the Congress may complement those already provided and also those which will be needed in the conduct of collective bargaining....(24th National Convention, August 1965).

It was thought that by affiliating with the Congress the Alliance would gain from the expertise of other CLC affiliates especially the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Emphasis at the convention was placed on the need to affiliate with the CLC in order to protect the jurisdiction of the future union while at the same time increasing the expertise of the staff in collective bargaining. There was no discussion of joining for political or philosophical reasons; the emphasis was on the pragmatism of affiliating with other unions. There was no change in the federation's position on the right to strike or political neutrality.

The PSAC affiliated with the CLC immediately after the merger of the CSAC and the CSFC. It was a move that was not surprising given that the policies of the Federation dominated the first convention of the Alliance. With PSAC affiliation there was an increased influence of public sector unions on the direction and orientation of the CLC. By the end of the 1960's the Alliance and

the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) together constituted 18 percent of the CLC membership. Leaders in both unions were unhappy with the CLC's domination by international, industrial unions and there were discussions about building one big public sector union. Undoubtedly, on the industrial union side there was fear about the growing power of the nationally based public-sector unions (Lemieux 1978:140). It soon became clear, however, that the PSAC was not willing to join with CUPE to form the Canadian Federation of Government Employees. Within the Alliance there was concern about the militancy of CUPE and a unwillingness to become too involved in CLC politics. Claude Edwards took on the role of peace maker and attempted to play an mediating role between the CLC and CUPE. In his address to the 10th CUPE convention, in Montreal in 1973 he stated: "Let us instead work together to improve the Congress and make it really provide the full range of necessary central services which should be the principle objective (Civil Service Review 1973)."

Lemieux (1978) argues that the split between public and private sector unions was a conflict between progressive and conservative forces, public-sector union forces being the progressives. This is too simplistic an analysis. Although public-sector unions represented a desire by many union activists to build an independent labour movement, in terms of bargaining table politics and their political relationship to the federal government the PSAC could hardly be viewed as progressive. Indeed, the failure of those within the PSAC to

develop a more progressive political unionism revealed itself around the 1976 Day of Protest.

The protest was in response to the introduction of compulsory wage and price controls introduced by the Trudeau government in October 1975. The labour movement felt betrayed by this move as Pierre Trudeau had earlier promised that controls were not on his agenda. Furthermore, this was the first time such controls were put in place during peacetime. It became rapidly clear that the nature of the controls would be more effective at the bargaining table than on the market place. Prices were to be monitored but without an effective mechanism for ensuring compliance. This meant that the real target of controls were unionized workers in bargaining units of 500 or more.¹¹ Controls were to last three years and to be monitored by a new federal government agency called the Anti-inflation Board.

Many Canadian labour leaders, whose unions were affiliated with the CLC, perceived the program as an attack by the Trudeau government on the growing strength of the union movement. It took the leaders of the CLC affiliates some time to develop a united strategy to the controls. Some leaders announced they would bargain as if controls did not exist. "The autoworkers' union became adept at dodging the board's rulings (Heron 1989:123)". Private company's that did not want to restrict wages because of their position in the

¹¹ It is interesting to note that controls introduced during the 1980s made wages the sole target of government initiatives, removing any pretence that prices would be controlled.

market found ways to get around the regulations and the monitoring. It was the public sector that was the hardest hit in the end analysis.¹² The Day of Protest was organized to take place on the first anniversary of the government announcement and implementation of the program. It was to be a one day general strike together with a mass rally in Ottawa on Parliament Hill.

The PSAC initially supported the action then reversed its stand at a meeting of the National Board of Directors just before the Day of Protest. The discussion at the Board centred on the fact that it was a political protest not a union activity, and would be illegal. Thus members and the union could be subject to financial sanctions as well as criminal charges. Some Presidents of components did speak in favour of supporting the action including Joe Power of Union of National Defence Employees (UNDE) and Daryl Bean of Public Workers Component (Board of Directors Minutes, June 1976). Both had large blue-collar memberships in the GLT group and the Heating and Power bargaining group. As noted earlier the activists in these groups identified with general labour and strongly opposed the loss of the prevailing rate formula. They viewed the Alliance's reluctance to become involved in the protest as another example of the union's lack of support for blue-collar workers.

¹² During this period and before joining the PSAC in July 1976, I was a member of the Ottawa Committee for Labour Action. This group was formed by members of the Waffle who had been active in the Ottawa area. Members of the group worked together to produce a critique of Wage and Price Controls and the Anti-inflation Board. Much of the discussion here is based on notes and recollections of the discussions of this group.

I started work as a regional representative with the PSAC in July 1976 and was assigned to work with the leaders of locals in the UNDE component. These local leaders met on a monthly basis, every third Tuesday of the month, as a group called the Ottawa Group of UNDE Locals (OGUL). As the regional representative assigned to the component I was invited to attend. At the September 1976 meeting there was a discussion regarding the protest. Most of the local leaders followed Joe Power's lead in condemning the Alliance for reversing their stand over the Day of Protest. There was no discussion, however, about trying to change any other component's position. Given the structure of the PSAC (see chapter four) all that was needed was for fifteen component presidents to vote in favour of the action. The UNDE leaders were more interested in devising a strategy that would embarrass the PSAC leadership, casting them in a poor light before the labour movement.

I participated in the Day of Protest with the UNDE executive and local leaders and members.¹³ We marched from the UNDE headquarters on Macleod street to the PSAC building a few blocks away very early in the morning. UNDE leaders then chained shut the doors of the PSAC head office and picketed the building, preventing employees and elected PSAC and

¹³ This was a decision I had to think twice about. I was employed by the PSAC which had passed a resolution, withdrawing its support of the protest. Yet I was assigned to a component that did support it. This conundrum was typical of the practical difficulties resulting from the dual PSAC structure. In the end I made the decision to participate based on my own political views, although I was prepared to justify it, if challenged, on the basis of the assignment to UNDE.

component leaders from entering.¹⁴ Activists from other components and the Ottawa-Hull Area Council joined us. Trades workers from Public Works component and the National Capital Commission were also present. Some of these were also active in the Area Council (Interview nos. 2 & 8). Overall the number of women in the group was small. At that time women's participation in the Alliance remained limited, whether in leadership or activist ranks.

We marched together to the Supreme Court of Canada to join the thousands of other labour unionists who had come from across the country to protest that day. Our small delegation was overwhelmed by the thousands from other unions. Marching up to Parliament Hill behind Autoworkers and Steelworkers, PSAC Area Council activists vowed that they would change their union and force the PSAC to become a real union, both at the bargaining table and in the political arena (Interview no. 8). UNDE activists vowed that they would work to change the PSAC leadership rather than the government. Within the ranks of that small activist contingent there was division over what kind of politics the PSAC should pursue, but all agreed the Alliance must become more integrated within the 'House of Labour'.

More than a million members of the CLC "walked out in Canada's first national general strike, modestly called a 'Day of Protest' (Heron 1989:124)".

¹⁴ UNDE was one of a few components to have a separate location for its headquarters. Most component headquarters were located in the Alliance building on 233 Gilmour St. UNDE retained a separate identity and set of services, marking its distinction from the other components.

The day was an overwhelming success for the CLC both on the picket lines set up outside workplaces across the country and on Parliament Hill. As pointed out by several researchers, however, the 'Day' was the end of the protest rather than one step to more extensive union/political action; it was "the climax of real opposition by the CLC to the Anti-Inflation Program, rather than the onset of a campaign of sustained and effective struggle against it (Panitch & Swartz 1993:146)". While not disagreeing with this assessment, it is clear that affiliates such as the PSAC placed a 'drag' on the possibilities of an alternative political strategy for the labour movement as a whole. The PSAC was not even supportive of the social-democratic orientation of the Congress and certainly was far from considering a more radical alternative at that time. The activists within the PSAC, whether they favoured a more labourist orientation or political orientation, had failed to successfully challenge the PSAC's political-class neutrality, even though their protest outside the PSAC headquarters was a major embarrassment for the new President, Andy Stewart, who was also a member of the Executive Council of the CLC.

Disgraced within the labour movement by their stance on the Day of Protest, the new leadership of the PSAC had to contend with the ignominy into which the union had fallen. A new President and Executive Management Committee had been elected at the Winnipeg convention in May 1976. Claude Edwards, the chief architect of the PSAC's political-class neutrality, had retired opening up the possibility for a different set of politics and a new relationship

with the CLC. The embarrassment suffered by the PSAC leaders resulted in demands for a closer affiliation at all levels of the CLC. Accordingly regional offices were instructed to become involved with district labour councils and local inter-union events (Interview no. 4). Regional representatives were sent on CLC courses¹⁵ and other events where they could interact with CLC and the staff and members of other affiliates. As a consequence of the PSAC leadership's desire to rehabilitate itself with the CLC, I was assigned to the Bank Workers Organizing Campaign as principle organizer for the Ottawa region.¹⁶

An immediate consequence of PSAC's non-participation in the Day of Protest was an increased concern by the Quebec Federation of Labour (QFL) that the Quebec members of the PSAC would be open to raiding by the CSN. The colours of the Alliance were yellow and green. After the Day of Protest, the Alliance became known as *le syndicate jaune*, or the yellow union, and this was

¹⁵ As part of this program, in April 1978 I was sent to Port Elgin, the Autoworkers Labour Education centre, to attend a labour arbitration course with representatives from other CLC affiliates. Out of a class of approximately twenty-five representatives, I was the only woman on the course. At the time I was very conscious of the lack of women in the staff of both public and private sector unions.

¹⁶ This assignment was for a period of nine months in 1978-79, with my full salary paid by the PSAC. I had been active in the campaign before this assignment and was asked by CLC staff to undertake the role. Once they knew I was in agreement they pursued the matter through an executive member of the CLC who in turn made a formal request to Andy Stewart, President of the PSAC. The primary role of the position was to involve other unionists in organizing bank workers. This meant speaking at union locals and the district labour councils and building solidarity groups around the region. It was one way that the Alliance demonstrated that they were indeed a part of the 'house of labour' and were prepared to contribute to its development and growth.

used by the CSN in their attempt to sign up PSAC members and form a bargaining union based on provincial jurisdiction. In 1978 the QFL threatened to take action if the PSAC did not protect members from the CSN, signing them up into a provincial bargaining unit and applying for certification as bargaining agent themselves. Regional representatives were assigned to fight the raid by the CSN and to find ways to increase service to PSAC members (Report on CSN, PSAC 1978).

By the beginning of the 1980s, however, the PSAC was beginning to turn around its image as a 'yellow union'. It was the clerical workers' strike that brought new respect for the PSAC within the Canadian Labour Congress. In the next chapter the turmoil caused within the PSAC by that strike will be examined. The clerks' strike, PSAC women active in the CLC and activity around the waves of wage controls resulted in a change articulated by Daryl Bean.

We have always taken a position in this union, that we were going to take an apolitical stance. We would deal with issues, but we would not endorse a party. Well, we've stuck with that position up until this stage, but I expect that we're going to have to endorse candidates, which we have avoided in the past, if we are going to have any impact on any legislation (Bean 1988:123).

On the surface the Alliance appeared to be unchanged at the beginning of the 1980s. Despite the unruffled appearance of that surface, the 1970s had been a decade of contestation within the union. Furthermore the composition of the union had been undergoing changes in class location intersected with changes in gender composition. The number of male members in working-class locations had declined significantly, while at the same time the numbers of

women clerks and secretaries had increased. The traditional male-dominated working class had failed to transform the union of civil servants and now they were numerically in decline within the federal administration. New working-class agents were about to replace them in contesting the Alliance's structure and practices -- a union formed out of the social category of civil servants.

This chapter began with Maurice Lemelin's (1978) assessment that the PSAC rejected militant action in favour of cooperation with the employer. It was an assessment that was about to be severely tested. One year later the clerks were gearing up for strike and the Alliance was about to undergo a learning process that changed it in fundamental ways. The 1970s had been merely a 'dress rehearsal' for what was to happen in the 1980s.

Chapter Seven

Clerks Strike Their Own Union:

The Rising of the Women 1980-1991

For a brief moment in time there was a kind of collective spirit that we could do almost anything.

PSAC/CEIU member Tony McGrath
(CEIU Ontario 1980)¹

During the 1980 federal clerks strike a demonstration was organized to coincide with the end of its first week. As the federal government is the largest single employer of women, and the clerical and regulatory (CR) group is the largest bargaining unit in the country - fifty thousand strong - the demonstration was the largest ever held by Ottawa workers.

Union members and their supporters marched defiantly through downtown Ottawa calling up to windows of the office buildings for those inside to come and join them. The most frequent chant was "We do the work and the bosses get the pay". It was an important moment for federal government clerks, not only because they were protesting their low pay but because they were demanding recognition and respect for their work.

¹ The members of the Canadian Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU) of Ontario produced a video CRS on Strike: The National Clerks' Strike of 1980. Many of the quotes in this chapter are taken from the interviews that were conducted and shown in this video. Members of CEIU Ontario produced a magazine called Paranoia. A special edition of Paranoia was produced, called 50,000 Strong: The federal clerks' strike of 1980. Many of the interviews recorded in the video were reproduced in the special edition and this beginning quote is on the cover of the magazine.

The clerks' strike was as much about the subordination and resulting lack of respect women experienced in their own union, as it was about their low paid subordination in the work place. Clerks had decided it was time to stand up, both in their union and against their employer.²

This chapter examines the clerks' strike of September and October of 1980 and its importance as a catalyst in the development of working-class feminism within the Alliance during the 1980s. I argue that the strike was important in challenging and changing certain collective bargaining practices, the relationship between the central leadership and local activists, and certain parts of the structure and philosophy of the PSAC.

The Clerical and Regulatory group, commonly referred to as the CRs, is and has been the largest bargaining unit within the PSAC since certification in 1969. Though the clerks formed a numerically large part of Alliance membership during the 1970s, as discussed earlier, they asserted little influence on the union as a whole. This was partly because while clerks within the federal government are white-collar workers, they are located mainly in working-class positions. The clerks remained marginalized from the main activity of the union both because of their orientation to the PSAC and the PSAC's orientation to them. This marginalization stemmed in large part from the fact that the group

² After the demonstration I was approached by a union leader who congratulated us on the success of the demonstration and the strike in general. His lack of confidence in the militancy of women clerical workers and his lack of support for their struggle shone through, however, when he asked, almost expectantly - "Do you think the girls will be able to hold out for much longer?"

was female-dominated. Up to the beginning of the 1980s women were in a very subordinate role within the union. Despite constituting well over 40 percent of the membership by the mid-seventies, there were no women elected to the National Board of Directors or to the Alliance Executive Council until 1976. Furthermore, at the PSAC Triennial convention in 1979 only 20 percent of the delegates were women (Memorandum, PSAC 1994; White 1993; Giroux 1978). The subordination of clerks within the union was thus intimately related to the fact that this occupation was female-dominated.

Being a clerk within the federal government had not always meant low status and pay. As was the case with other sectors of the state and the economy, clerical work within the federal government progressively became a female job 'ghetto' throughout the course of this century. The expansion of corporate capitalism together with an activist Canadian state bureaucracy was "accompanied by a sweeping reorganization of the office (Lowe 1987:45)". Mechanization and rationalization went hand-in-hand with the shift from male to female office workers. Women did not displace the traditional male clerk of the nineteenth century; rather, the job of clerking became a fundamentally different kind of job during the twentieth century. As the administrative division of labour evolved into its modern form and the multitude of routine tasks proliferated, it was women who were allocated this work and paid the lowest wage. By 1967 approximately 52 percent of the clerical group within the federal government were women and of the 41,000 women working for the federal government

almost eighty three percent held office support or administrative support jobs (Archibald 1970:20). Most of these jobs were classified as CRs but there were also large numbers of women in the secretarial group.

Despite the large numbers of women in working-class locations it was the blue-collar groups, General Labour and Trades (GLT) and General Services (GS), that dominated working-class formation of the Alliance in the initial phases. As discussed in the last chapter, the GLT group was unsuccessful in challenging the PSAC leadership and divisions between the trades workers and general labourers meant that they were incapable of forging a new and different kind of leadership.

By 1979 the numbers of women in the federal government administration had increased significantly, while there had been some movement of women into the lower levels of the administrative category, their numbers in the administrative support category had grown, and had increased substantially in the clerical classification, where 76 percent of the group were female. This meant a significant change in the gender and class composition of the Alliance.

The Awakening of the Sleeping Giant³

At the beginning of the 1980s the Alliance remained frozen in the

³ The Ottawa/Hull Area Council used this term to describe the Alliance. They produced stickers and buttons with the slogan "The Sleeping Giant Awakes" as part of the clerks' mobilizing campaign. The slogan was used by union activists during the clerks' strike to conjure up the notion of the potential collective power of the clerks and the union as a whole.

structure and discourse created in the late 1960s. The dual structure of the union was a mirror image of the federal government administration rather than the mainstream union/local industrial relations system; collective bargaining itself continued to be dominated by staff experts with a legal rather than a collective mobilizing orientation; and at the component level staff and elected offices alike continued the tradition of consultation with their equivalents in the departments. There had been challenges from the General Labour and Trades Group and from activists who contested the political neutrality and lack of militancy of the leadership, as was outlined in the last chapter, but no significant changes had occurred. It was in this context that the union gave notice to bargain on behalf of the Clerical and Regulatory (CR) group on September 12 1979. The collective agreement was due to expire in November 1979.

Earlier that year the PSAC had conducted a vote among the clerks to determine the means for settling a dispute between the employer and the union, should one occur. CR members had chosen the conciliation strike route rather than binding arbitration, despite a status quo approach to the matter by the top leadership of the union.⁴ The vote in favour of conciliation/strike was a surprise for the leaders of the Alliance and components. Very few of them

⁴ An article published in the Civil Service Review (December 1972:14-22) laid out in a technical manner the advantages and disadvantages of both dispute routes. As regional representatives, we were instructed to adopt this approach in education courses with the membership. The emphasis in the article was on the technical aspects of the two processes rather than the benefits to be gained by developing the collective capacity of the union through mobilizing the membership in support of collective action through the conciliation/strike route.

expected that the clerks would follow the route through to a strike. In fact most of them still held the view that the 'little clerks' would be too frightened to undertake a strike (Interview no.9).⁵ The fact that a majority of the clerks had voted in favour of the conciliation/strike route was an indication of their growing dissatisfaction with their treatment by management and the difficulties they were experiencing in the face of high inflation, low pay and the continuing restraint on their wages.

The administration of a strike within the Alliance, how it is to be organized, is outlined in the PSAC's strike manual. The legalistic approach of the union is evident in the foreword to the 1979 manual:

The Public Service Staff Relations Act provides for two methods of dispute settlement; **ARBITRATION** with the award binding on both parties or **CONCILIATION WITH THE RIGHT TO STRIKE** in defined circumstances. The right to strike is an extension of the collective bargaining process. Before any strike can be called, four conditions should be fulfilled - the issues in dispute must be serious; all possible means to settle the issues must have been exhausted; there must be a reasonable chance of success; and the strike must be legal (PSAC Strike Manual 1980:1).

It is clear from these opening statements that, at the time, the leadership of the PSAC had an overriding concern with strike legality. References to seriousness and exhausting all other possible means of settlement indicate that strike action was not considered a normal part of the union's relationship with the employer.

⁵ The view that docility prevented women and white collar workers from becoming unionized and undertaking militant action was commonly held amongst academics and unionists alike. See Lowe (1987:172-3). Certainly this was the view of Aileen Manion, the PSAC vice-president in charge of strike organization.

Indeed, the PSAC's determination to avoid, if at all possible, a dispute that could lead to strike action is clear.

Situated in offices in all regions of the country, it was and still is the PSAC regional representatives that are charged with strike preparation and action. As Regional strike coordinators they are/were "solely responsible to the National Strike Coordinating Committee for the conduct of the strike in his(sic) region (PSAC Strike Manual 1979:6)". Because of the number of clerks in the National Capital Region (a third of the bargaining unit) three coordinators were appointed.⁶ The region was key to the success of the strike, both because of the numbers of clerks working there and because of the close proximity to management. Every management office employed clerical workers and a strike would be very visible at the highest levels of the federal administration. The region was also key because most of the leaders of the Alliance worked there. By early 1980 they too were becoming aware that clerical workers in the federal government were acting differently because of the numerous meetings, mobilizing events and demonstrations that were held around the region by activists and regional representatives.

The National Capital region or Ottawa/Hull was perceived to be one of the less militant areas of the country as far as clerical workers were concerned.

⁶ These were Debbie Learmount, Dave Doyle and myself. Much of the following analysis draws on the experience of leaders, staff and members situated in this region. Two regional coordinators were appointed initially, while I was appointed later on to organize the large demonstrations and rallies that were to take place as the strike date loomed closer.

Clerks in the capital worked in closer proximity to management, and thus tended to share their outlook. Furthermore, the capital had larger locals than other regions and as a consequence the membership tended to be less integrated within the locals and the union. Yet, despite the normal lack of militancy, even in this region it was the clerical membership itself that played the major role in pushing the Alliance into strike action.

Near the beginning of November 1979, Mike Gleeson, senior regional representative in the Ottawa/Hull region, sent out a routine notice to local presidents explaining that the CRs were on the conciliation route and requesting that they appoint strike captains for the clerks in their local (Letter to Presidents of Locals: Nov. 1979). Although the request to appoint local strike captains was not unusual for a group on the conciliation/strike route the response from the membership was. The regional office received a flood of telephone calls from local activists' asking when the CRs were going on strike. Whereas many local leaders were not in agreement with a clerks' strike, they showed an awareness that the clerks themselves were behaving differently than they had in any previous round of negotiations. Local leaders, who were reluctant or opposed to building a strike organization, nevertheless indicated that many clerks and members believed that a strike was a strong possibility, even though they were not convinced of the wisdom of such a move. Others, more enthusiastic about heightening the conflict between the PSAC and the employer, wanted to know what they should be doing, how to identify

appropriate strike captains at that early stage and what kinds of information to communicate to the clerks (Interviews no.3 & no.9).

Clerks in the federal government shared the general fear of other workers faced with double-digit inflation. In 1980 most federal government clerks earned between nine thousand and thirteen thousand dollars (Ottawa/Hull strike bulletin: Sept. 1980). The mean salary for CRs was \$12,815 "just \$200 above the poverty level for a family of three, as established by the Canadian Senate (CEIU Ontario 1980: 3)". For the last rounds of negotiations they had watched their already modest salaries decline in real income terms.

The issue of a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) clause was key in mobilizing the clerks. COLA seemed to offer a reasonable way of keeping up with inflation without a need to return to the bargaining table to renegotiate wages. A COLA clause was appealing to the clerks because it offered a solution to high inflation rates. Moreover, other workers had won such a clause, in particular the postal workers.

Apart from frustrations about low pay and rising inflation there were other important factors feeding into the mobilization of the clerical workers in the 1979-80 round of negotiations. Clerical activists made a connection between the militancy of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the passivity of the PSAC and the effect this had on the earnings and benefits of each group. Mario Allerio, a Toronto clerk wrote to PSAC president Andy Stewart, noting that in 1972 a CR4 made \$10.29 more a week than a postal clerk. By 1979 a CR4 was

earning \$56.58 less a week. "The message is loud and clear," wrote Allerio

A strong and militant union can and does obtain good settlements for its members. Where is PSAC? What can we expect from present negotiations? Where is the much needed leadership to educate the members that in order to obtain a fair and just wage we must become more militant? (CEIU Ontario 1980:4)

Very few of the activists within the Alliance thought of the clerks' strike as specifically a 'women's strike'. Interestingly a major exception to this was an older male staff member. In a letter to The Globe and Mail (Sept. 30, 1980) during the authorised strike he wrote:

If females are ever to obtain equality, the time to fight is now. No longer does anyone have to talk in abstract statistics. One need only look at the picket lines - females asking for a pittance.... Women have a date with destiny. They will now be able to determine their own destiny. The time is now.

Michael Gleeson
Public Service Alliance of Canada, Ottawa

Mike Gleeson, the Senior Representative of the Ottawa/Hull region, was an exception among both the union's leadership and activists. Most simply saw the clerks as low status, white-collar workers with rates of pay that matched their subordination.

There was a very limited consciousness at that stage among women clerks, themselves, about their position. Even activists like Susan Giampetri said later that she did not at the time recognize this as a women's strike. There were, however, indications that this awareness was growing. At that point in the union's development, women's issues were a low priority and the term 'feminist'

was used in a derogatory sense by many Alliance activists.⁷

Three days of negotiation meetings took place in November and December, with little progress being made. Then at meetings on January 24 and 25,

Treasury Board totally rejected our demands on COLA, shorter work week, vacation leave, sick leave, job security and overtime as well as the majority of the items outside the mandate.... PSAC presented a revised position retaining the mandate items and withdrawing or reducing many of the lesser demands.... Treasury Board then presented its position which differed very slightly from its previous position and which included a pay offer of 5 percent and 5 percent over a 2 year period. PSAC stated that there would be no advantage to continuing negotiations and that we would be applying for the assistance of a conciliation officer (PSAC, Manion Report 1981:4)

Malvina Pope, a clerk with Revenue Canada in Vancouver, said she almost cried when she heard about the 'five and five' offer: "With the low wages we're making, they offered us that? It's an insult! (CEIU Ontario 1980:5)".

Renaud Paquet, President of CEIU, reported that "this salary offer really upset the members and that's how we started to organize ourselves..". While CRs were starting to organize, the PSAC leadership and negotiating team responded to Treasury Board's position by scaling down their demands. On February 13, 1980 the CR bargaining committee was reconvened at the request of the negotiating team. At this meeting the negotiations mandate was completely revised,

⁷ I was accused by male regional representatives of being a 'single issue' person because I espoused developing women's committees and issues such as equal pay.

to include only a wage demand of 19 percent cumulative over 2 years. All other items which constituted the original mandate including 35 hour work week, COLA, job security, no contracting out, elimination of requirements for medical certificate for sick leave were removed from the mandate but identified as high priority items (PSAC, Manion Report 1981:5).

This meant that the only real issue left on the bargaining table was the wage demand. The decision to effectively remove all other issues from the dispute, was made by component representatives, on the strong recommendation of PSAC staff negotiators. The reduced mandate was not sent to the CRs for ratification. This was the normal practice. Wage increases were normally the sticking point between the Alliance and the employer. In past disputes over wage increases for the clerks, and most other Alliance bargaining groups, resolution was achieved by sending the matter to binding arbitration. Under such circumstances it was not deemed necessary to consult the collective membership about such a change. The thinking of the leaders of the consultative 'civil service' union was that there was no need to involve the general membership since arbitration was a matter of experts sitting down and examining the data from the Pay Research Bureau and arriving at a logical, technical decision. This approach was set out in Regulation 15 pursuant to the PSAC constitution.

What had escaped the formulators of this regulation and the CR bargaining committee was that this norm was no longer in operation. Clerks across the country were mobilizing around the issue of a COLA clause and the dispute settlement route had changed to conciliation/strike. It was a case of two

solitudes: on one side, the bargaining committee and the negotiating team setting a new mandate without the participation or indeed the knowledge of the rest of the union, and on the other, the activist clerks who continued to organize, mobilize and demonstrate in favour of a COLA provision that had been dropped by their leaders as a priority demand.

Mobilizing went on without much publicity about the revised demands. Even among the leaders in favour of mobilizing the members, there was not any foresight about the issue of COLA and the important resonance it had for the clerks. Yet the signs were visible for all to see. Demonstration after demonstration clerks turned up with picket signs with COLA as their principle demand. Even those leaders who were still sceptical about the possibility of mobilizing the clerks knew something different was happening even if they were blind to the messages the clerks were sending them.

One such occasion was in June 1980 at a demonstration outside the Treasury Board of Canada. Those organizing the event arrived early with picket signs, armbands, and loud hailers. As usual we had brought more than we thought we needed. It was noon hour and most PSAC members only had a thirty minute lunch break, consequently the expectation was that a few hundred workers from the immediate area would turn up. We had heard that some locals were renting buses and some clerks said they would take an extended lunch hour; but while we knew support was building, we did not anticipate what happened next.

I and other regional representatives were waiting in front of L'Esplanade Laurier, a downtown Ottawa building. The building filled a city block and Treasury Board's offices were located on the upper floors. As noon hour struck we started to see clerks marching down the road with their own signs. Every direction we looked they were coming, already with their own slogans, their own songs and their own organization. Buses full of chanting clerks began to arrive from West, East and South of the city, followed by those from Hull, Quebec. Within minutes the entire building was surrounded. The estimate was that it would take at least five thousand people to surround the building. The arm bands for marshalls ran out, yet there was no need for marshalling. As we learned over the next few months, time and again the clerks took over the street and we all stood back and watched. On the edges of the demonstration, I spotted component leaders, members of the bargaining committee and negotiating team staff, who later charged that the regional representatives were unnecessarily churning up the membership and building up false hope about a COLA clause.

On August 29, 1980 the conciliation board released its report. The majority report was signed by the Vic Scott the chairperson and the union's nominee, Stephen Lewis. Treasury Board's representative, Norman Maclean filed a minority report rejecting the majority position of a 36.5 hour week and the 10 percent and 9 percent increases backdated to November 1979. Andy Stewart, president of the PSAC and also head of the negotiating team advised

the clerks to accept the report, stating that the negotiating team

has reviewed all the recommendations contained in the majority report of the conciliation board and on the basis of the fact that the recommendations fall within the mandate established by the national bargaining committee, recommends acceptance by the membership (PSAC, News Release, August 1980).

This announcement created an immediate division between the leadership and the union activists, especially the strike captains who had been gearing up for strike action. The Alliance leadership, and the members who supported them, saw the conciliation board report as the end of the 'rebellion' against the employer. Activists, however, were particularly disappointed that there was no recommendation regarding a COLA clause. The fact that the national bargaining committee had dropped the achievement of COLA as a priority some months previously was little known, as pointed out earlier, and, therefore, the announcement that the majority recommendations of the conciliation board fell within its mandate created further resentment and anger against the negotiating team and the leadership.

Treasury Board waited for one week before replying to the report. This delay in responding added to the heightening of tension between the activists, the union leadership and Treasury Board. Finally they rejected the report and communicated this message directly to every clerk in the form of a letter dated September 5, 1980. Speaking to the clerks directly over the head of the union, Treasury Board officials hoped to defuse the conflict. Ironically the action had the opposite result.

Treasury Board alleged that the union leadership was asking the Clerks to vote on a 'package' that did not exist. Certainly this was the case in that there was no negotiated settlement to vote on. Under the union's Regulation 15, the only vote that could take place at that stage was on the conciliation board's recommendation. Because there was no settlement, Treasury Board charged that the union was deliberately misleading its members about negotiations. It was clear that Treasury Board officials hoped to increase the divisions between the members and the union leadership, weaken union solidarity, and win the clerks over to their point of view. Instead of drawing clerks into the camp of the employer, however, the letter heightened hostilities between the members and both the union leadership and Treasury Board.

As a result the strike captains and union activists wanted to push on to a strike as quickly as possible. How to do this became the main source of conflict and internal divisions within the union. This conflict was played out over the practices of the union's Regulation 15, which generally governed the process of collective bargaining in the Alliance and, in this specific situation, the taking of a strike vote. Under the regulation, a vote first had to be taken on the conciliation board report as a basis of settlement with the employer. Depending on the outcome of that vote, a strike vote could be taken. This entire process would take at least six weeks since the regulation specified that the ballots would be sent out and returned by mail. So, although the clerks in general were angry at the employer and the union, Regulation 15 became the focus of the clerks'

discontent and what they perceived to be a lack of union leadership and action over the question of a strike.

Andy Stewart, President of the Alliance, maintained that Regulation 15 left "no flexibility in the hands of the president or of the executive management". He continued,

I have often argued that we (have) too many regulations. Perhaps this situation will engender more support for that point of view..... While I cannot authorize strike action at this time, that does not mean that we do not share the frustrations and anger being vented by the membership in certain locations. We know the CRs will be ready if national strike action becomes necessary (September 9, 1980, telex to all Regional Offices).

The long voting period became the most contentious issue within the PSAC at that time. The activists wanted to vote and to vote quickly in favour of strike. To wait six weeks for the results of a mailed out ballot placed clerks in a difficult situation in the work place. Moreover, the activists feared a long delay would rob them of momentum and ultimately dissipate clerk support for collective action and the strike.

PSAC Regulation 15: A 'Civil Servant' Category Practice

Regulation 15 of the Public Service Alliance lays out the internal practices the union must follow in "the process of collective bargaining for all bargaining units for which the Alliance is the Bargaining Agent." In this section I explore how the procedures of Regulation 15, in force in September 1980 (at the point that the clerks were poised on the edge of taking strike action), were a

reflection of the union's approach to collective bargaining as it was established in 1966 and developed throughout the seventies. I argue that Regulation 15, as it was constructed and amended throughout the 1970s, was one of the outcomes of the integration of union leadership within the federal government administration as part of the social category of civil servants. As such the regulation specified a particular approach to collective bargaining that was in keeping with the desire to maintain harmonious relations with the employer, setting conditions of employment by consultation or, at worst, binding arbitration in the event of a dispute. This relationship developed during the 1960s and early 1970s as was discussed in chapter five.

As I pointed out earlier, Regulation 15 governed or regulated how collective bargaining was to proceed in the Alliance. It was first formalized and adopted by the PSAC Board of Directors in May, 1975, placing in regulation form practices that had developed since 1967. The manner in which the regulation was constructed mirrored the provisions of the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA) and laid out practices that corresponded to each of the requirements of that law. Collective bargaining within the Alliance meant first and foremost adherence to legality. In other words the impetus for collective bargaining came from the provisions of labour relations law, rather than from the collective organization and strength of the membership. This is hardly surprising given, as we saw in chapter five, that the union came into being and was structured as a result of the enactment of the PSSRA rather than out of the

collective mobilization of its members.

Putting legality before the mobilization of the membership resulted in the Alliance formulating their approach to collective bargaining strictly in legal terms. This can be seen from Figure 6. This chart was used in educational courses to explain to activists how bargaining proceeds under the PSSRA. As can be seen from the chart the objective was to specify every possible path that bargaining could take in legal terms. The result is a daunting complexity that generally convinced the membership that bargaining was a matter to be left in the hands of the experts rather than the activists or rank and file members. In keeping with this philosophy, the Alliance hired staff negotiators experienced in the legalities of collective bargaining rather than heading up the bargaining teams with union leaders who had the experience of the workplace developed through relations with the employer.

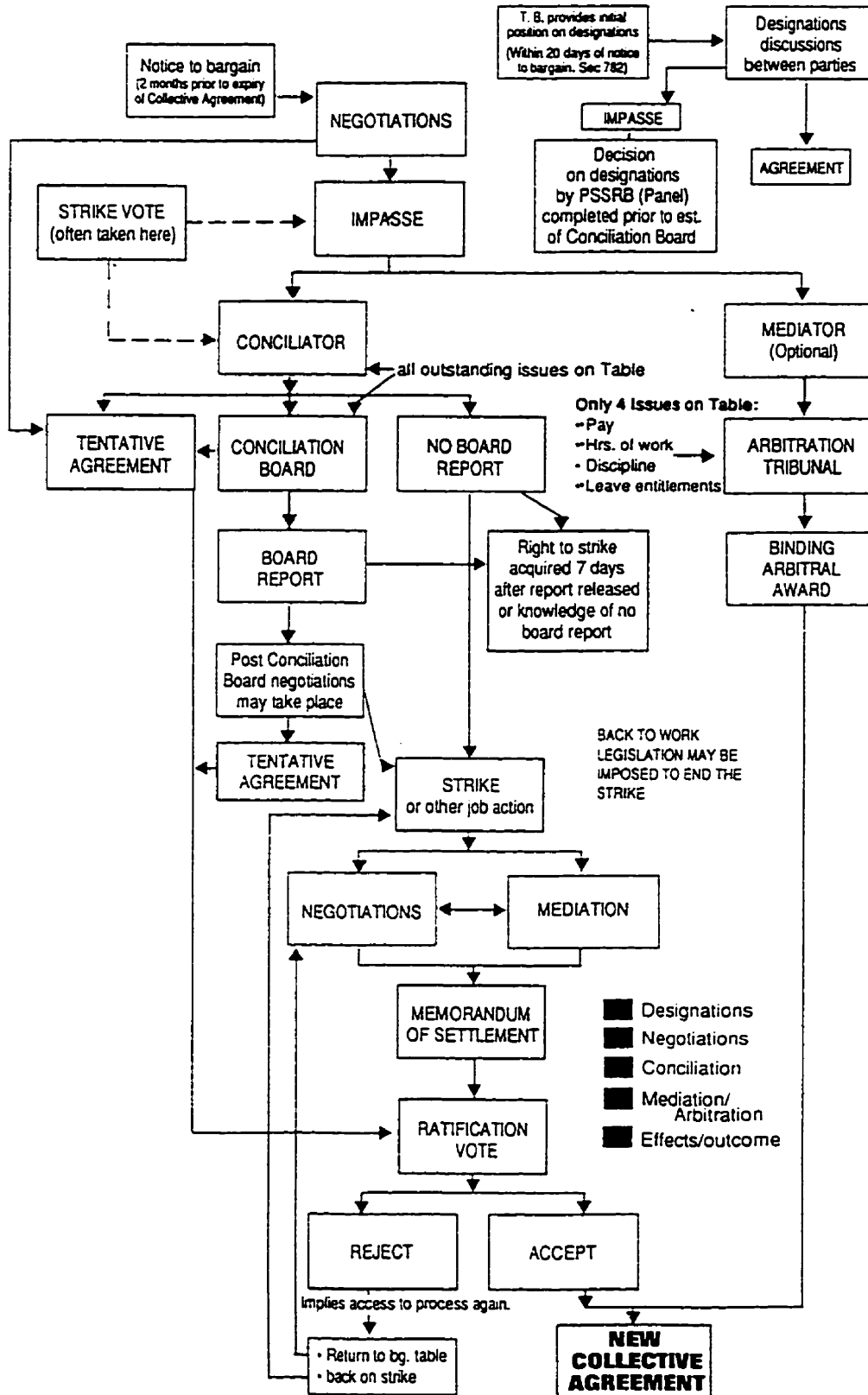
In section 1 of Regulation 15 the procedure for taking a dispute settlement vote was laid out. Under the provisions of the PSSRA all bargaining units must indicate before the bargaining process begins whether they wish to go to binding arbitration or opt for a conciliation board and possible strike action in the event of a dispute between the employer and the union. As discussed earlier, the Alliance leadership took a neutral stance towards the issue of arbitration as opposed to conciliation/strike. The procedure and practice of the National Board of Directors was simply to let the individual member decide whether they wanted the union to go to binding arbitration as

FIGURE 6

PSSRA Collective Bargaining and Dispute Settlement Mechanisms

External (legislative) provisions - PSSRA units.

The bargaining agent specifies dispute settlement mechanism prior to notice to bargain



Source: Public Service Alliance of Canada

opposed to the conciliation/strike route. There was not much effort on the part of the leadership to raise the debate about the importance of strike action as a means of building union solidarity. The only attempt came through courses conducted by regional representatives and education officers,⁸ where the differences between the arbitration and strike route were discussed. Most members, however, did not attend these courses and their only contact with the union on this matter was the written instructions sent out with the ballot on which they were to indicate their choice.

At the beginning of 1980s, the PSAC leadership was not officially in favour of bargaining units using either binding arbitration or strike to resolve a dispute with the employer. Regulation 15, however, was constructed in such a way that the practices it generated were more suited to the arbitration route. As such, Regulation 15 was constructed from a union philosophy and perspective that promoted harmonious relations and cooperation with the employer rather than encouraging union militancy and conflict through strike action. There were a number of practices that flowed from the regulation that operated against the development of collective solidarity and the promotion of working-class formation. One of the most important was the manner in which voting on collective bargaining matters was conducted. Votes were taken in a number of different circumstances. It is my intention here to go through the regulation and

⁸ Regional representatives taught the weekend collective bargaining course and the week long in-residence Local Officers Training course. Both these courses discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the two dispute settlement routes.

demonstrate how the voting practices in effect in September 1980 undermined rather than promoted collective solidarity and action and in this sense came into conflict with the clerical worker activists.

As stated earlier, the first decision members in any bargaining unit were required to make was the dispute settlement route to be followed. Voting kits, ballots, ballot envelopes, pre-addressed return envelopes and voting instructions were all drawn up by the staff at the Alliance centre and sent to the components. A voting period was established that allowed sufficient time for mailing to the locals, distribution of the ballots to the members and then mailing back to the Alliance centre. Voting could take place at local meetings where discussion about the dispute settlement route might occur, but this was not encouraged. Generally votes were sent to the local executive who distributed them to individual members. Members made their decision normally with little input from elected union officials. The union local simply returned any ballots it received back from the membership to the Alliance centre, so they were often unaware how their particular membership had voted.

This practice encouraged a lack of responsibility for building collective action on the part of the local leadership since all they were required to do was act as a conduit for the mailed-out vote. Furthermore, this method of voting did not require the local leadership to take a position either on the dispute settlement route or on a tentative agreement. As a consequence this had the effect of weakening the locals overall since there was no official role for local

leaders in the voting process. During the clerks' strike, however, one of the ways that local leadership developed was precisely through opposition to this voting process.

A similar voting procedure took place on conciliation board reports and collective bargaining settlements, with the same requirement that the locals forward the ballots unopened to the centre. Again this had the effect of discouraging local leaders from taking a position on the settlement and promoting it among the membership. Instead of developing collective solidarity and responsibility at the local level this practice left the individual member to grapple with the decision. The overall effect was to increase the distance of the individual from the union. Without active locals playing an effective role in the collective bargaining process, the membership had some vague understanding that they had a union that bargained on their behalf, and to whom they paid union dues, but otherwise there was little opportunity for input, and the union was seen as standing outside the action and volition of the membership.

This latter point can be clearly seen from the way that bargaining demands were drawn up under the provisions of Regulation 15. Figure 6 outlines the practice. Four to six months prior to the expiry of an existing collective agreement, the Alliance sent out an input call for bargaining demands to the components who then forwarded the call to the locals. The locals were meant to have a standing bargaining committee 'to review membership experience under Alliance collective agreements and to prepare demands for

future negotiations (PSAC, Regulation 15 1979:3)". At best, this meant that a few activists tried to draw up demands based on the problems they had experienced under the collective agreement and then forwarded these to their components. The components were then "responsible for developing a consensus or majority position for each collective bargaining demand submitted by locals within their jurisdiction that will indicate the official position of the component on that demand (PSAC, Regulation 15 1979:3)".

The two-tiered structure of the Alliance, together with the emphasis on each individual having the opportunity to submit a demand resulted in a system where most individuals were in practice excluded or simply did not know about the system. The emphasis was on individuals having an equal opportunity or access to the union process rather than attempting to organize individuals into a collectivity. As far as bargaining demands were concerned this meant that, although in procedural terms they were meant to be generated democratically from the local membership, by the time they had been sorted through and systematized at the component and then at the Alliance level most individual members would find it difficult to recognize their demands. As a result, the membership as a whole had little commitment to the demands that eventually appeared at the bargaining table.

Although procedurally it appeared that the membership as a whole had participated in drawing up demands, in actual practice this was far from the case. Regulation 15 did not require the union to seek a mandate from the

membership for the final set of bargaining demands drawn up by the Alliance bargaining committee. There was no provision to go back to the membership and seek support for the union's position at the bargaining table and, as a result, build collective solidarity and support for the demands. So in the end analysis, by the time bargaining began most of the membership was unaware of the key demands and therefore had little commitment to them. This meant that the union took its mandate from the decisions of a bargaining committee made up of component appointees many of whom were staff members. During the clerks' strike, confusion and divisions developed between the leadership and the clerks over the key demands of the strike. During demonstrations before and during the strike it was clear that a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) clause was one of the priority demands for the membership. In a large demonstration of approximately 20,000 clerks and supporters that took place in Ottawa at the end of the first week of the strike, signs calling for the COLA clause were very evident, including a large sign at the front. But the largest indication of support came from the repeated chants such as "We need the COLA and so do you, Oh fellow workers, we need you" or "Things go better with COLA" or "No COLA, No Contract, No Work." These kinds of slogans could also be seen on pictures of picket lines right across the country. Despite the glaring evidence of the clerks' commitment to a COLA clause even while the strike was taking place, the leadership continued to ignore it. Moreover, they took no action to deal with the fact that the demand had been dropped as a

priority by the national bargaining committee earlier in the year.

Regulation 15 was designed to seek out endorsement by individual members after a settlement had been reached. There was no provision for constructing a union strategy or position around the bargaining issues and then seeking support and a mandate from the membership. In the end analysis the practices of Regulation 15 adhered to a liberal form of democracy in that it gave equal opportunity to individuals to participate in deciding the dispute settlement route, submitting collective bargaining demands and voting on settlements made with the employer. These were all opportunities that could take place in the absence of collective solidarity and action. In other words, while giving all members an opportunity to participate, Regulation 15 did not provide the means for developing a dynamic relationship between union leaders and the rank and file involving discussion, debate and action at all levels of the Alliance. The clerks, by focusing on problems with the voting procedures, raised fundamental questions concerning not only collective bargaining procedures but the very nature of collective action within the Alliance itself.

Clerks Striking Against The 'Civil Service' Union

On August 29 1980 Aileen Manion PSAC executive Vice-President in charge of collective bargaining sent out a telex to all regional offices stating that,

The CR negotiating team has reviewed all of the recommendations contained in the majority report of the conciliation board and on the basis of the fact that the recommendations fall within the mandate established by the national bargaining committee, the negotiating team unanimously recommends acceptance by the membership (PSAC, Ottawa).

It was at this point that it became clear to the clerks that the COLA provision had been dropped from the mandate established by the national bargaining committee. An earlier telex, outlining the highlights of the majority report, revealed that "the board is not prepared to recommend the inclusion of a COLA provision during the term of this agreement".

Following the procedure outlined in Regulation 15, the PSAC announced that ratification kits for the vote on the conciliation board report were being prepared and would be distributed the following week. If the clerks rejected the report as a basis of settlement then the next step according to Regulation 15 would be a strike vote. To get to that stage, however, would take at least six weeks and, as noted earlier, the activists were not prepared to wait that long.

It is very apparent from this double voting procedure that there existed an assumption of a harmonious relationship between the employer and the union. There was an expectation built into the regulation that the employer would accept the conciliation board report (See Figure 6). After all Treasury Board is an important agent of the government in power and as such a part of the liberal-democratic state upholding the neutrality of labour relations law. Since the early twentieth century, a majority report from a conciliation board has been the traditional means of breaking an impasse between the employer and

the union in Canadian labour relations practice.⁹ It was assumed by the Alliance leaders that Treasury Board would go along with this tradition. What the Alliance leaders failed to appreciate was that history had moved on, times had changed, and the Treasury Board was in the business of putting wage controls and restraints into effect at the bargaining table. They were acting out the role of 'tough' rather than 'harmonious' employer.

In August 1980 the Alliance leadership still clung to the assumption that Treasury Board would accept the conciliation board's recommendations. They were satisfied with the majority report and felt that it was a very acceptable package. Aileen Manion in charge of collective bargaining felt the fight for the clerks was now over. In mid-August the Alliance Executive received unofficial news that there would be a majority conciliation board report signed by the chairperson and the union's representative.

I met with Aileen Manion shortly after she received this news. In my role as Regional strike coordinator I was assigned the task of organizing a rally to show support for the clerks' bargaining demands. The date of the rally was set for September 4, 1993. My meeting with her in the third week in August concerned preparations for this rally. I assumed it was to be an 'opposition' rally, where the membership would be asked to 'push on' in their conflict with

⁹ See Craven (1980), for the role of Mackenzie King in putting in place the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, together with the key part played by tri-partite conciliation boards in creating a system of harmony and industrial peace.

the employer -- a show of strength in order to get the best possible settlement. Manion was shocked by the leaflet I had prepared which called on the clerks to voice their opposition to Treasury Board. "What we need" she told me is a "wind-down rally" not a "wind-up rally". Shortly after this meeting I received the decision of the Executive Management Committee to cancel the event. Their expectation was that, with the publication of the report, the conflict would come to an end.

This was not the case. As I pointed out earlier Treasury Board officials did not accept the Conciliation Board report and the tradition of 'labour peace' and harmony that it embodied. It was a demonstration that as an employer Treasury Board was just as capable of taking an anti-labour approach as any private sector employer. Indeed they decided to take an unprecedented tough management approach towards PSAC members. In line with the provisions of the PSSRA, officials declared that seven days after the Conciliation Board report was issued that the contract was no longer in force and therefore its provisions could be overruled. As a consequence they proceeded to cancel vacation leave and sick leave and further inflamed the hostilities between themselves and the clerks. These efforts to intimidate the membership from 'pushing on' with militant action backfired. The result of Treasury Board's letter was to increase the anger of the activist clerks against the employer and the union leadership.

What happened over the next two weeks was an exercise in working-class formation and feminisation within the Alliance. The main actors/initiators of

both these formations were the regional and local strike coordinators and captains who had been active over the spring and summer, learning to organize information meetings, picket lines and demonstrations. Strike captains were key in leading their members out on strike. They had worked hard and long to activate the clerks and they had no intention of watching it all 'go down the drain' because of a bureaucratic regulation geared to harmonious relations rather than confrontation.

Regional Representatives of the Alliance, permanent staff members of the PSAC, had been instructed earlier in the year by the centre to develop the strike network laid out in the PSAC's strike manual. This involved giving courses on strike procedures and encouraging the development of communication networks through the appointment of strike and picket captains. The response by the clerks to training and setting up the strike system had been very positive. New activists clerks had come to the fore and been identified. Many of them were women (CEIU Ontario 1980). For example in the National Capital Region 62 percent of the area strike coordinators were women. It was these activists who now took the lead. In the Ottawa/Hull region a meeting of area coordinators and strike captains was called by the regional strike coordinators for September 2, 1980. The permanent staff members were in a very difficult situation. All three coordinators had built a strong relationship with the activists over the last six months. They identified more strongly with the activists than the Executive Management Committee of the PSAC. This was also the case in

many other regions. Anne Swarbrick, Toronto area strike coordinator, for example, felt that the first strikes were

....a very good thing that happened for the first week and while the decision was being made to change those voting procedures.... It caused the union to take action to be able to deal with where the clerks were at the time (CEIU Ontario 1980:15).

At the Ottawa/Hull meeting, after giving out information about the conciliation board report and the recommendation of the leadership, the regional representatives decided to stand back and let the activists' run the meeting. Many called for immediate strike action; others decided to draw up their own information sheet for the membership asking if they were prepared to strike. All this occurred even before Treasury Board's September 5th telex.

The week starting Monday, September 8, 1980 was one of unprecedented action by local clerk activists. Legally the clerks had the right to strike but they had received no union authorization to do so. Starting on this Monday, the clerks in effect went on strike against their union in an attempt both to force a quick official strike vote and to place the COLA clause and shorter work week back on the union's priority list of demands. There is no official count of how many clerks went on strike but, in more militant areas, like Hamilton all locals went on strike and this had a domino effect in other regions (Swarbrick in CEIU Ontario 1980). Cres Pascucci, later President of CEIU, related how the strike action spread.

You often talk about communication problems in the union, but it was almost like fire. Someone would be calling someone else and say: "Oh, the Kitchener people are out." The next thing you knew

the Simcoe people were out and the Brantford people, you know, it just spread by word of mouth in a way (CEIU Ontario 1980:9).

In the Ottawa/Hull region the action at first was not so militant. The information sheet was circulated throughout locals, asking the membership if they were willing to strike. But as news came in from other regions, pressure to take strike action grew. On Monday evening a meeting was held of the area coordinators and strike captains and they voted to follow the lead of clerks in other parts of the country. Tuesday evening, September 9, a rally of five thousand members at the Ottawa Civic Centre saw local leader after local leader calling for strike action. On Wednesday the walk outs started.

The permanent staff was initially told not to go near the unofficial picket lines. Aileen Manion felt that some Representatives had encouraged the walkouts and wanted the staff kept away from the activists. She also believed that leftist groups were behind some of the unofficial strikes. As Manion saw it,

A lot of this too was not spontaneous. You have factions and that when they see something like this developing they're going to jump in Sometimes there was action that was not in the best interest of the clerks (PSAC Manion Report 1980:10).

By Thursday morning, however, with strike action growing across the country, the leadership was concerned that there could be accidents and violence on the picket lines. This concern prompted the leadership to instruct Representatives, including myself, to check out what was happening and send reports into the centre.

Driving towards the centre of Ottawa, I noticed groups of clerks outside/

government buildings, some with home made picket signs, in earnest discussions apparently trying to persuade others not to go in. I drove to the corner of Lyon and Slater, where the Department of Communications was housed. When I got there, the police had already arrived and were preventing the clerks from blocking cars entering the parking lot. Recognising some of the strike captains, I found out that earlier that morning they had entered all the government buildings in that area and told any clerks they encountered that there was a strike and to get out of the building. Many supervisors, in higher level classifications, instead of challenging the strikers, encouraged them to clear the building of clerks.

Later Bill Doherty, an Executive Vice-President of the PSAC, denounced these local strike organizers as 'anarchists' (National Board of Directors Emergency meeting: Sept. 13, 1980). In his view their anarchy rested in organizing the first clerks' strike and ignoring the leadership, regulations and/ structure of the Alliance. It was, however, neither anarchy nor spontaneity but rather working-class formation based on occupational location and the subordination that flowed from that location. Regional leaders and strike captains in nearly all regions of the country undertook actions similar to those in Ottawa. In this, they disregarded the structure of the PSAC, based on component and regional lines of authority. Clerk leaders attempted to organize as many clerks as possible to strike against the union leaders in an attempt to change the policies and practices of the union at a crucial moment in time.

Through their organization at that moment, they were able to build collective action and solidarity not only among the clerks but among other activists within the union. The PSAC would never be quite the same again.

Most of the regional leaders and strike captains were not well integrated into the component structure of the Alliance. Neither were they very knowledgeable as unionists. Not only were they inexperienced in the politics of the Alliance, but they also were inexperienced in the operation of labour relations law. They did not know the rules of the game for either world, and this became clear as the story of the clerks strike unfurled.

Marie McGraw, strike captain in a local of the Solicitor General Component, who worked in an office at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Headquarters, provides an example.¹⁰ She had been at the meetings of the strike captains and at the rally on Tuesday night, September 8th. She went back to her office on Wednesday morning to find her members demanding to know what was going on and wondering what should they do. She continued to hear about other clerks walking out in other locals. Pressure was mounting both from other strike captains and her own members. She and the other clerks in her office made the decision to walk out on Friday morning, September 11, 1980. Marie remembers how they all backed out of the office together, watched by the RCMP officer who was their supervisor and was not

¹⁰ The details of this story come from memory and the notes I have on this incident. I followed these up with an interview with Marie McGraw in February, 1993.

part of the clerks bargaining unit. She laughed recalling their backwards exit, with the supervisor "scowling at us. Telling us we could not go". At the time, they were very fearful of the consequences of their action, even though they knew they were in legal position to strike. The authority and discipline exerted by the RCMP officers increased the subordination they experienced as compared to other clerks. Workers in National Defence had a similar experience. Marie stated that "...all we were clear about was that we had to stick together. We held on to each other as we backed out through the door (Interview no.3)".

I found them sitting on the sidewalk not sure what to do, anxious about what they had done and what lay before them. They were unclear why they should be staying around, outside the fence of RCMP headquarters. At the same time, they were proud of their action, feeling good because for the first time in their working life they had stood up to the supervisors (Interview no.3). There was no awareness on their part, however, why they should picket outside the workplace. Initially everyone had walked out together, so the need to persuade others from entering the building was not obvious. When they got out on the street, they were at a loss about what to do. I had picket signs and started walking up and down the road, but many of them did not see the point of doing this.

As the strike proceeded it became clear to them and other clerks that picket lines were necessary to persuade others from crossing into the

workplace, for information, moral, and communication purposes. The dawning recognition of the purpose of strong picket lines, of the need for solidarity and collective action was in itself part of feminisation, class formation and learning during the strike. Most CRs had never been on strike before and had to learn the difficulties of such action.

My reaction was fright - we knew we were on strike but what do you do? No one told us what to do, like when I stepped off the sidewalk and a policeman hauled me back on the sidewalk and was about to put me in jail...

It was a constant learning experience from the time you got up to the time you went to bed - if you went to bed. There were things to be learned every moment of the day (Bernice Miller, CR Union of Energy, Mines and Resources, Ottawa Local, CEIU Ontario 1980: 17).

Bernice Miller was typical of many women in the strike. She was active in her local and area council prior to the strike but had no experience of this kind of collective action. Like others she learned as she went along.

The unofficial strike had a number of different consequences, one of the most immediate was to test the effectiveness of the strike system that had been built up over the spring and summer. It revealed where organization was ineffective and redoubled the efforts of the activists in organizing for the upcoming official strikes. In a later report to the Director of Organization Branch, regional representatives in the National Capital Region pointed out that,

....despite temporary and partial lack of control at the regional level, there were positive effects on the strike planning as a result of this action. Local strike captains had the opportunity to exercise and practise the skills they had acquired and to come face-to-face with realities of strikes and their own preparedness. Members gained the opportunity to experience strike action and the fear of

the unknown began to dissipate. This brief interlude allowed local CRs the chance to replace locally chosen leaders who were unprepared to handle the situation. At the regional level, additional Area Co-ordinators were selected bringing the total number to 10 (PSAC, Learmont and Doyle strike report 1981:4)

During the unofficial strikes new activists identified themselves and over a third of the strike captains were changed and the numbers of women clerks involved increased (Regional coordinator notes for strike report: September 1980).

Officially Striking Against The Employer/Treasury Board

Repercussions from the unofficial strikes reverberated throughout the headquarters of the PSAC. Pressure on the Alliance leadership from regional leaders/activists to take an official strike vote immediately mounted. During the following week, meetings were called by area council activists across the country and the word went out to pressure the leadership to call a special meeting of the National Board of Directors. The purpose of the meeting was the need to suspend Regulation 15. In Toronto at a meeting of the Area Council on September 9, 1980, "it was decided to step up the pressure by calling for a full CR walkout in Toronto on September 15 (CEIU Ontario 1980:13)".

All this action and pressure had the desired effect. On Saturday September 13, 1980 a special meeting of the National Board of Directors was held. Two major decisions were taken at the meeting that reversed previous decisions and policies. These were

- 1) That, for the duration of the dispute the Executive Management Committee is empowered to waive any provision of Reg. 15.

2) That the NBD recommends to CR members to reject the majority report of the conciliation board (Telex to regional offices, September 13, 1980).

The way was now clear for a strike vote to be taken simultaneously with the vote on the Conciliation Board report. Regulation 15 had been put aside and the PSAC leadership began the process of strategizing based on the actions of the rank and file CRs. The old civil service association practices were, for the moment, suspended

September 22, 1980 was the deadline date for the vote counts. Voting so expeditiously also represented a major shift in philosophy and practice for the Alliance. It meant that voting would take place in meetings held in the locals and regions. Activists would be able to speak in favour of strike and against the Conciliation Board report. While still a secret vote, this process meant local rank and file members would communicate together about the 'pros and cons' of undertaking strike action. Also it meant that the vote count would be known on a local basis and activists would be clear where their members stood on the question. Overall it meant increased power for local leaders and hence an important contribution to building the union in the workplace and the regions. It was another exercise in collective class formation.

The second round of strike action began on Monday, September 29, 1980 authorised by the President following approximately 75 percent vote in favour. In Ottawa another large rally was held at the Civic Centre on

Wednesday, October 1, 1980.¹¹ President Andy Stewart used the opportunity to warn Treasury Board that, unless there was a significant change in the employer's offer by midnight, October 5, the strike would escalate. Those at the rally took this to mean that other bargaining units would be asked to respect the CRs picket lines even though they were not in a legal strike position. In the first week of strike the tension was also building on the picket lines. Clerks found it difficult to see designated employees and members in other bargaining units of the Alliance crossing the picket lines. Part of being new to unionism meant they were not schooled in following the rules and regulations of either the union or the law. They were on strike and their struggle would benefit all workers in the federal government administration, they reasoned. As they reasoned, so they sang:

We need you CRs and PMs too
We need you out here and support us do
We need the COLA and so do you
Oh fellow workers, we need you.
(CR Picket line song, September/October 1980)

On the picket lines the disregard for legality was manifested by the clerks linking arms in an effort to prevent anyone from entering the building. Police warned regional coordinators that this action constituted 'watching and besetting' and was a criminal offence. Clerks who ignored this warning could

¹¹ Members of the Executive Management Committee of the Alliance were ambivalent about holding this rally. On the one hand they wanted to demonstrate to Treasury Board popular support for the strike but on the other hand they viewed it as part of a process that they could not control.

be arrested for obstructing the police. These warnings seemed to have little impact on the clerks whose fear had been transformed into anger.

Under pressure from rank and file clerks, activists and other unionists, President Stewart put out the call to all groups to respect the picket lines at the beginning of the second week of the official strike. The call met with mixed success from region to region. In Montreal members of the Public Administration (PM) group heeded the call, as did members in large postal facilities across the country. In Ottawa the call was largely ignored by other groups. There had been little time to prepare other employees and mobilize them to join the clerks. Furthermore there was no tradition among members of the Alliance to respect picket lines. Furthermore, on Sunday Don Johnston Treasury Board President announced that anyone participating illegally in the strike would be severely disciplined.

Clerks responded by simply linking arms in front of entrances, preventing anyone from going into the buildings. As a result, area coordinator after area coordinator was arrested by the police. In other areas, clerks lay down in front of trunks or linked arms in front of cars. Numbers effectively prevented the police from breaking up the lines (although, in many places the police stood back sympathetically). The sight of large numbers of women office workers fighting tenaciously to make gains seemed to stop them from intervening.

Both the leadership of the Alliance and Treasury Board had lost control of the situation and together they acted to end the 'lawlessness' and militancy.

On October 7, 1980 a tentative settlement was reached "... after a 30-hour marathon bargaining session... The agreement was reached with the assistance of Jacob Finkelman (PSAC News Release, October 8, 1980)". The wage settlement resulted in 4.8 percent more than the majority conciliation board report that the Treasury Board had rejected. In addition there was a lump sum payment and a settlement that "the employer would freeze disciplinary action... A joint committee of labour and management representatives would review all matters of discipline at the departmental level (Ibid)". For a union that normally operated within the context of arbitration dispute settlement, this was a victory. For the clerks it was too little too late. Nevertheless, they went back to work and accepted the agreement.

The Rising of the Women: Gender and Class formation within the PSAC

Consciousness by women clerks that their subordination arose both from their class and gender position began to develop before the clerks' strike. The clerks strike, however, was an important crystallizing point in bringing this consciousness to the fore, and provided a catalyst for changing the status of women within the union. During the preparation for the strike, women took up organizing positions as strike, regional coordinators, strike captains and picket captains. Susan Giampetri was one such clerk who later became first vice-president of the Alliance. Speaking shortly after the strike she stated that she remembered

...a young woman in my local, she was a CR2, and in the work relationship her supervisor exerted a lot of control over her and had a great deal of power over her. But when she was on that picket line, she was her own person she became very strong. After the strike we had local meeting to discuss setting up the strike funds and we had a great deal of debate about it. And at this local meeting this young women stood up and challenged the values and beliefs of that supervisor... She really grew in that strike and her character really built, to such a degree that I don't think it would have happened otherwise (CEIU Ontario 1980: 38)

What is clear here is the way in which the union relationship between the supervisor and the woman clerk was transformed as a result of the strike. The Alliance was and still is a union where workers and supervisors are in same locals. This is not unusual in unions of white-collar employees, but the situation is made more difficult for those in lower-level positions when the degree of hierarchical differentiation is as great as it was in the federal government at that time. The experience of being on the picket line with other clerks generated a sense of power that was an integral part of both working-class and feminist formation. Furthermore, women clerks who normally played a service and support role in the workplace found themselves in charge of organizing picket schedules, demonstrations, strike pay and a whole host of other tasks without any direction from supervisors. They found they had the capacity to organize without the 'help' or expertise of higher-level officers.

By the beginning of the 1990s the Alliance was known, within the Canadian Labour movement, as a union whose women members had brought about significant changes within the union (White 1993:130-133). Changes had occurred both in the practices of the union, in representation and in the issues

brought to the bargaining table and the Alliance's conventions. Right up to the early 1980s, however, the union was perceived in exactly opposite terms despite its large numbers of women members.

Like the Canadian Labour Congress, the PSAC adopted an equal opportunities approach to women in 1976. Influenced by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the federal government's policy of Equality of Opportunity, the union established an Equal Opportunity committee in 1976 after giving limited verbal support to International Women's Year in 1975. An executive decision was taken to run an article in the Civil Service Review identifying women who had made a contribution to the Alliance. The article focused on the individual achievements of certain PSAC women rather than on collective issues as they related to women's subordinate role in the workplace and union.

At the 1976 triennial convention, Eleanor Ryan was elected as the first National Director to the Board while Aileen Manion was the first woman elected to the Alliance's Executive Management Committee. At this same convention, 24 percent of the delegates were women. At the time, women comprised 39 percent of the total membership. By the 1979 convention, however, the number of women members of the Alliance as a percentage of the whole had risen to 41 percent, while the share of women delegates to convention had dropped to 20 percent (PSAC, Social and Occupational Rights Branch 1993). By the beginning of the 1980s the equal opportunities rhetoric had produced very little

in terms of changing either representation within the union or its approach to women's subordination. Women remained under-represented in the leadership at the centre and component levels. The staff at both the national and regional levels was male dominated and issues within the union and at the bargaining tables did not reflect the needs of a union with women composing over 40 percent of its membership.

This latter point became very clear during the 1980 clerks' strike. Despite the fact that the Clerical and Regulatory group was 76 percent female there were no Alliance bargaining demands directly related to women's work and home needs. For example, at that time, women in the federal service did not have paid maternity leave, only the right to take leave and collect unemployment insurance. As a result of the Postal Strike of 1981, this benefit was won and then extended to other bargaining groups within the federal public administration. As a result of the CR strike and the aftermath within the PSAC, by the mid-eighties issues such as pay equity, sexual harassment and workplace childcare became bargaining demands (see Chapter three) as they did in other unions. Within the Alliance, it was the education program that was an important vehicle for raising consciousness and knowledge about these issues and developing pressure on the Alliance leaders and negotiating staff to change.

In the late seventies, the PSAC education branch, headed up by Fritz Bauer, hired a number of women committed to creating awareness about

women's issues. In 1981 the weekend course "Fighting Discrimination: the Local's Role" was introduced and included a section on bargaining demands. This was followed in 1984 by the in-residence course "Women at Work" (WAW), a six day course for women only at a hotel. This latter course was especially important in developing activists committed to changing the union and the workplace. The course attempted to undertake a broad analysis of women, the economy and the home. It focused on how to change the union and make it more responsive to women's needs.¹² The WAW in-residence course enabled women to learn and strategize together about changing both the processes and the issues dominating the union's agenda. The courses played a fundamental role in bringing Alliance women from the 'margins to the mainstream' (interview no.10).

The other important vehicles for learning, strategizing and change were women's conferences and women's committees. The first Alliance National Women's Conference was held in 1985. It had no constitutional status and no decision-making power. It was held prior to the PSAC Triennial Convention, 1985 and therefore played an important organizing role for women going to convention. At the following convention held later that year, a resolution was

¹² In the late 1970s the Education Branch had developed the Union Development Program for both men and women members. It also attempted to undertake a broad analysis of unions in Canada, together with a focus on union activism and how the members should strategize to change the Alliance. This course came under attack from the component leadership, charging that the Education Branch was espousing the demise of the components and a change to the structure.

narrowly passed that changed the PSAC Constitution. The successful resolution established Triennial National Women's Conferences and that future conferences would "review the report of the Triennial National Women's Conference and vote on recommendations adopted at the conference". This was a 'first' for unions within the Canadian Labour Congress. No other affiliate provided for women's conferences to send resolutions directly to convention without first passing by other union bodies. It meant that women in the Alliance would see their resolutions at the main convention without having them 'watered down' by other members in other parts of the union structure. The same Alliance Triennial Convention also passed a resolution providing funding at six cents per member/month for regional and national women's conferences.¹³

Regional conferences held in 1987 fed resolutions into the next national women's conference. In 1988, at the Alliance's Triennial Convention, 27 percent of the delegates were women, an increase over the 24 percent of 1985. Also at this convention delegates voted to increase the funding for women's conferences to 21 cents per member/month. By the time of the PSAC Triennial Convention in 1991, 34 percent of the delegates were women and three out of

¹³ I observed this conference and Alliance women were, in general, surprised that the resolutions passed. There was discussion afterwards that delegates had not understood the full implications of the change. Also many of the delegates had already left as it was the last day of convention. In any event, a majority of the required quorum did vote in favour of the resolution and established that Alliance women had a separate constitutional voice in the union.

the five elected fulltime executive positions were filled by women. Although still under-represented as delegates, on component executives and on the National Board of Directors, women had effected significant changes in representation since the clerks strike.

The other important vehicle for mobilizing women in the Alliance is through women's committees. Committees operate at the national, regional and local levels, although it is at the regional level that they are most effective. This is because women can organize together across component/local lines within a region, gaining support from each other for battles back in the local. By 1990, 35 regional women's committees had been established. These committees operate as educational forums, but also as organizing committees around current, important issues. Campaigns to achieve pay equity became a central activity of the committees during the late 1980s and the 1990s. As a result of their activity, the equal pay complaints were transformed from a legal issue, pursuant to the Canadian Human Rights Act, into a process of mobilizing Alliance members for 'just wages'.

In the 1990s women in the Alliance have become a force to be reckoned with. More than any other issue pay equity is the symbol of this transformed union and its learning to be 'uncivil'. The clerks strike in 1980, while the defining moment for the union, did not link the demand for increased wages to women's lower pay and undervalued work, although many of the picket line songs, spontaneously made up by the membership, did. In the following chapter the

Alliance's fight for pay equity is taken up in detail. Again it is a story of class, gender formation and learning.

Chapter Eight

Pay Equity: The Development of a Striking Issue, 1977-1991

Pay equity is a key issue in the formation of the new working-class unionism within the PSAC. Because pay equity ultimately concerns the price of female wage labour, this chapter examines the intersection of class and gender forces as they manifested themselves in the conflict that developed between Treasury Board officials and the PSAC over the demand for equal pay for work of equal value. In this sense the Alliance's conflict with the employer over the achievement of equal pay was and continues to be a learning process involving both working-class formation and the feminisation of the union. It is an exercise that is set within the strategic selectivity of the state and involves the dynamic movement of both class and gendered agents. It is this movement that this chapter examines, placing the learning process of Alliance activists with respect to equal pay within the context of the legislation enacted in 1977.

During the 1970s and 1980s, in large part because of demands by feminists and minority groups, legislation incorporating the concept of equal pay for work of equal value (hereafter referred to as equal value) was enacted in the federal and a number of provincial sectors. Equal value, activated by a complaints process, was first introduced in Quebec in 1975 through the Charte des droits et libertés de la personne du Québec¹, and then in the federal

¹ See article 19 - "un salaire égal pour un travail équivalent".

jurisdiction in 1977, through section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. In the 1980s the concept was expanded and developed with the introduction of proactive pay equity legislation in a number of different provinces. Proactivity places an obligation on the employer to determine whether gendered wage discrimination exists in the workplace and, if so, to put in place a remedy within a pre-determined time frame. Furthermore, where unions are present as bargaining agents, employers are required to negotiate remedies in concert with them. This means that where pay equity legislation applies in unionized work places it is automatically transformed into a labour relations issue. This is also the case, to some extent, in jurisdictions where the legislation is complaint driven. In these cases it is primarily unions that file complaints against employers and this, when combined with pressure from the Human Rights Commission, has on occasion led to pay equity studies and negotiations (Gagnon 1990; PSAC 1991).

As we saw in Chapter four, during the 1980s many unions were confronted with women's demands for equality. By virtue of their presence in the workplace -- at the point of production and at the bargaining table -- unions, where they exist, are one of the main vehicles that women have at their disposal for addressing issues of workplace inequality. Feminist groups and political parties are obviously others, but, since neither of these have an institutionalized presence in the workplace, it has mainly fallen to unions to articulate women's demand for equal pay from the standpoint of women as

wage workers and as members of unions. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that early on during the second wave of feminism, unions and union practice became an important target of feminist activity (White 1980; Briskin 1983; Stinson 1988; Warskett 1988).

During the 1970s and early 1980s, union feminists, seeking ways of raising women's pay, mainly directed their efforts towards collective bargaining practices and demands (Adams & Griffin 1983:182-197). Across the board increases in pay as opposed to percentage increases, reductions in the number of increment steps, equalization of base rates, are all examples of collective bargaining demands that have the potential to increase women's pay in proportion to men's (CUPE 1986). Yet, in that the Canadian Labour movement is divided and fragmented into certified bargaining units, such strategies are left primarily to the efforts of individual units and locals. And since the majority of unionized women are in female dominated units, segregated from male workers, this means that, in the main, women must rely on their own bargaining strength to gain increases in pay. This is one reason why union feminists have, in general, welcomed pay equity legislation embodying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value (Cuneo 1990:51-54). Through its application, they hope that women will benefit from value comparisons with male-dominated groups (or classes) that for a number of reasons are more successful in achieving higher rates of pay (Warskett 1990).

When pay equity proposals were brought before several provincial

legislatures, in general, employers, and more particularly their personnel managers, took a hostile position towards them (Cuneo 1990). In the political climate of neo-liberalism any policy that had a higher wage bill as its objective was regarded with antagonism. Faced with the reality of enacted laws, however, these same 'human resource' managers, especially those in the public sector, were obliged to acquire knowledge of equity practices. This meant training or hiring personnel to deal with the intricacies of the law.

At the same time that 'human resources' practitioners' learned to accommodate and limit the impact of the new policies related to work place equity, there was a growing acceptance among certain mainstream labour relations theoreticians that both pay and employment equity policies, directed at women and other target groups, could be incorporated into 'fair' employment practices without too much cost to employers (Kelly 1984; Robb 1987; Patten 1988). And indeed, the argument has been made that an emphasis on equity and fairness might open up opportunities for management to restructure outdated classification systems (Patten 1988). Critics of this approach, however, point out that reclassification of workplace hierarchies may have more to do with the restructuring of labour processes arising from the new realities associated with 'post-fordism' and the need to be competitive in the global economy, than with any concern for equality (Bakker 1991).

Though equal value may be accepted as part of industrial relations practice and theory, this does not mean that it has become incorporated into

traditional collective bargaining. On the contrary, in the cases of both human rights and pay equity legislation, at the federal and provincial levels, new structures and practices developed separately from those of conventional collective bargaining processes. Indeed, on both sides of the employer/employee divide, and in the literature, the idea that predominates is that 'doing equal value' is a very different process from traditional collective bargaining.

In large part the difference between the two processes emanates from the establishment of pay equity and human rights commissions responsible for the administration of the 'equal value' process. These commissions operate separately from boards established to administer labour-relations legislation. Commissions responsible for administering equal value have established guidelines, rules and procedures that in nearly all cases include recourse to a tribunal or a type of third party arbitration, if the parties cannot agree on any part of the process. The perceived difference between these processes and those of collective bargaining was outlined recently in a newsletter issued by the Pay Equity Commission of Ontario where it was emphasized that

....traditional collective bargaining is usually adversarial in nature.... Pay Equity is different. It requires a problem-solving approach. For example, if a party comes to the table insisting on a different gender-neutral job comparison system, a compromise - such as a system which is an adaption of the two may be difficult to reach. It is better for the two parties to negotiate the criteria on which they will select a gender-neutral job comparison system, than work together to identify the system that will satisfy the criteria (Ontario Pay Equity Commission 1990:2).

Implicit in the problem-solving approach outlined by the Commission is the assumption that constructing a gender-neutral job-comparison system can be achieved scientifically and rationally, making recourse to conflict unnecessary and unproductive. In this sense, achieving a gender-neutral system is perceived wholly as a matter of applying technical expertise rather than involving the political power of employers and unions (Warskett 1991).

This view of pay equity, as an essentially non-adversarial process in which the relations of power between employers and employees are absent or at least minimized, is not confined to the Ontario Pay Equity Commission. A similar view was expressed by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC):

...Because we think it best to emphasize a relationship of confidence rather than the balance of power between the parties concerned, ... the Commission has developed an investigation procedure which provides for consultation among the various parties with the possibility of conciliation at that stage of the investigation (CHRC 1981:28).

An atmosphere of mutual confidence and cooperation between the union and the employer, however, does not characterize the reality and actual practice of implementing equal value in a number of different jurisdictions. In Ontario, the Pay Equity Tribunal appointed additional officers to deal with the load of appeals from unions regarding employers' interpretations of equity and the inability of the parties to reach agreement (Municipal Employment Equity Network 1990). In Quebec members of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) went on strike for several days in the fall of 1989, many of these

undertaking 'illegal' action. In that case pay equity was a major demand of the union (Leblanc 1990). In the federal sector, the case examined in this chapter, conflict over the implementation of equal value has been an enduring feature of the process, resulting in lengthy attempts by the CHRC to conciliate between unions and employers. Some agreements were reached, but not without substantial conflict and difficulty (Marcotte 1987; PSAC 1988). Furthermore, during the 1991 round of negotiations between PSAC and Treasury Board pay equity emerged as one of the major strike issues.

Below, I examine the set of social relations that resulted in collective bargaining intersecting with wage discrimination complaints, in an effort by the PSAC to achieve pay equity for members in female-dominated groups. I begin by arguing that the federal state, for a number of reasons, became strategically open in 1977 to the legal extension of equal pay for equal work to equal pay for work of equal value. Equal value was established as a form of human rights legislation and generated a set of practices and meanings that are ostensibly of a gender rather than class nature. Given that the state, however, is a site where gender, class, and other kinds of strategies are generated, as well as the site of conflicts and rivalries among its different hierarchically ordered branches,² I focus on both Treasury Board's and the CHRC's approaches to equal value

² Rianne Mahon's conception of the state as an unequal structure of representation is very relevant in this context. Jessop's (1990) focus on the strategies generated by different class branches and state managers, however, places greater emphasis on mediated class relations and struggle even though this aspect was present in the work of Mahon(1984).

and the attempt by both agencies to impose a measure of coherence on state strategy. Treasury Board officials have more power to do this than do those in the CHRC, but what is of interest are the contradictions that emerged and the resulting limitations placed on this power.

Finally, given that the state is produced through past political conflicts and strategies, both internal to it and at a distance from it, I argue that in the 1970s the federal state was open to incorporating the principle of equal value because it was articulated and supported by professional women who had links to the Liberal Party and the federal cabinet. Once the legislation was enacted, equal value lent itself to the development of strategies by women in the PSAC and, as a consequence, the elaboration of gendered-class conflict around its implementation. It was this strategizing and conflict that transformed the matter into a labour-relations issue within the federal administration and contributed to the widening of the cracks and fissures in the social category of 'civil servants'.

The Beginnings of the Equal Value Principle

As was the case at the turn of the century for the first wave of Canadian feminism, the second wave in the 1960s was launched by educated, middle and upper-class women. A significant moment of the second wave occurred in 1968, when professional women addressed Liberal cabinet ministers at the Houses of Parliament and demanded equality of opportunity with men (Findlay 1987:34). Adopting a liberal-democratic discourse, they compared the

difficulties they faced as educated women with those of men from a similar socio-economic background. The fact that they were the class equals of the male politicians listening to their demands heightened the perception of their inequality, allowing it to shine through and become visible. Given their education and cultural background, the contradiction of their subordinate status was more apparent than for working-class women. As Dorothy Smith puts it, "the ruling apparatus"

... confronts women of the dominant classes primarily in its gender aspect. For working-class women, on the other hand, its patriarchal practices are not easily distinguishable from its class rule(1985:40).

These professional women addressed liberal politicians in the name of all Canadian women. Their equality of opportunity discourse assumed that all women experienced inequality in the same way, irrespective of class, race or ethnicity. It did not, therefore, uncover the contradiction embodied in the demand that all women should be allowed to participate in paid work on the same basis as men.

Relative prosperity in the mid-1960s, together with a renewal of federal strength, led to an economic surplus and created the possibility for the Liberal government to initiate programs designed to promote opportunities for the disadvantaged to compete 'equally' in the market economy.³ As part of these

³ Reg Whitaker points out that during the 1960s "... a certain innovative role in the introduction of such schemes as medicare, the Canadian Pension Plan, national minimum standards and increased transfer payments from rich to poor provinces, was undertaken by the federal government (1977:61)".

moves the government ratified the International Labour Organization's (ILO) convention on discrimination in employment in 1964 (Archibald 1970:8). By this time, labour unrest and conflict were on the rise, including within the federal public service. Both the presence of labour conflict and liberal innovation within the federal government of the time, were in part responsible for the extension of collective bargaining rights and employment rights to civil servants in 1967. Both sets of rights were enshrined in the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA) and the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA). The latter is the legal instrument for regulating employment and prohibiting discrimination, based on race, religion and sex, within the federal government.

Within the context of the expanding Canadian federal state, professional women were able to bring pressure to bear on politicians to institute the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which was charged with "inquir[ing] into... the status of women in Canada... to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian Society...." (Canada, Sessional Papers 1970:vii) Reporting on September 28, 1970, the Commissioners identified occupational segregation as an important reason why women in general were paid less than men.⁴ Women professionals, such as nurses, home economists, librarians and social workers, were singled out for special investigation, and it was concluded that comparing identical or similar jobs of men and women was

⁴ The Commissioners also criticized unions and employers for negotiating separate rates of pay for men and women and ignoring equal pay laws.

...much too restrictive. The term "equal" is more within the intent of the International Labour Organization's Convention (ILO) 100 which speaks of "work of equal value" (1970:76).⁵

Although the Commissioners were critical of the fact that women's work in general was not as highly valued as that of men, their explanation of this phenomenon, nonetheless, stayed within the limits of neoclassical economics and the supply and demand mechanism of the market. In advocating equal value, their intent was to allow women to benefit from the operation of the market economy in the same way that men had. It was a recommendation to policy makers to fit women equally into the market economy and to allow them to compete on the same basis as men (Warskett 1990a). In the context of the economic growth of the 1960s, the significant contradiction embodied in the recommendation to generally raise the price of women's labour, while supporting the accumulation goals of capital, was not as immediately apparent as it became later on.

The report was the end result of a three-year inquiry involving submissions from groups and individuals across the country. Significantly for women's struggle for equality, the report gave substantial recognition to their contribution to the economy. For the first time in the history of the Canadian state, women were conceived as producers in terms of both their paid and unpaid work. In section two of the Report, focusing on the economy, the Commissioners stated unequivocally that women "produce goods and services

⁵ See Lindsay Niemann(1984) for the background regarding the ILO's convention 100.

but often receive no pay in dollars and cents" and that "women often produce the same goods and services as men for lower pay (1970:17)".

Paving the way for the federal government's endorsement of the ILO's Convention 100 in 1972, the Commission's report served as a confirmation of Canadian women's own experience and provided an important focus for consciousness raising and mobilization in communities across the country (Lewis 1988:42-3). The movement for women's liberation, which was reactivated in the 1960s, was mainly confined to the universities and to professional, middle-class women. It was mainly these women who came together in April 1972 to examine the prospects for implementing the recommendations from the Royal Commission:

From [this meeting] emerged, in addition to a set of resolutions and recommendations, formal recognition for the newly formed National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) (Marsden 1980:244-5).

It should be noted, however, that even at the inception of NAC there were women present who represented working-class and other marginalized groups of women. For example, both Madeleine Parent, a long-time union activist in Quebec and Ontario, and Mary Two-Axe Early, a Mohawk woman from the Kahnawake reserve in Quebec, were active in NAC in its early stages (Parent 1989:30), as was Grace Hartman, who later became president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and was president of NAC in 1974-5. It was also apparent that it was not only middle-class women who were touched by the Commission's report.

As discussed in chapter four, equal pay became an issue for women in unions in the 1970s. Instead of relying on the state to enact legislation with respect to women's unequal pay, women in unions focused on traditional union methods of collective bargaining as the principal means for improving their wages. During the 1970s and early 1980s, there was a series of important strikes that demonstrated women's willingness to undertake militant action in support of their right and need to earn a living wage. These included strikes at Fleck, Blue Cross, and Radio Shack, the clerks' strike in the federal government, and that of Lower Mainland municipal workers in British Columbia (Maroney 1987; CEIU 1982; White 1980; Cuthbertson 1978). In the process, women, both in unions and in feminist organizations such as NAC, learned that unionism and collectivity can be important weapons for fighting subordination.

While union women were effectively using strikes to press their claims for equal value, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) was concentrating its efforts on legislation. NAC had adopted a position on women's equal pay that was similar to that outlined in the Royal Commission's report (Marsden 1980:250). In May 1972, at their Strategy for Change conference, NAC began to put in place a campaign whose main goal was ensuring that equal value became government policy.

On July 21, 1975 the federal government introduced Bill C-72, the proposed Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA). The Bill was an important 'plank' in fulfilling Pierre Trudeau's promise of a 'Just Society' and was

predicated on addressing discrimination that individuals experienced in Canada's liberal-democratic society. Yet, while the legislation was an important symbol of the government's commitment in this regard, provisions addressing women's unequal pay were fairly weak. The Bill included the principle of equal pay for similar work, but made no reference to equal value.

Bill C-72 did, however, act to catalyze support for equal value. Lynn McDonald, writing in response to it in the Canadian Forum, documented the gap between the average wages of men and women workers, and called for people to "be paid according to the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions associated with the job they do, whether it is a job done by men, women or both (McDonald 1975:6)". Early in 1975, material about the wage gap and equal value, taken from McDonald's article, was circulated as a fact sheet to meetings of women in Ontario and elsewhere (Marsden 1980:259-60). It was at these meetings that NAC solidified its position on women's unequal pay and called for the federal government to adopt ILO Convention 100, embodying equal pay for work of equal value (Marsden 1980:250; Morris 1982:87-108).

The campaign to change the provision in the Bill from similar work to work of equal value was conceived mainly in terms of changing the mind of the Liberal government legislators through the lobbying efforts of middle-class women. NAC did not attempt to mobilize women in general or to spark widespread debate about the type of legislation that should exist or what was meant by equal value and how it could be operationalized in the context of the

workplace. Lobbying by NAC produced important changes to the proposed Act, including the significant change from 'similar' to 'equal value', and the insertion of a new clause charging Labour Canada with the responsibility of enforcing the equal value provision. These provisions were included when, in November 1976, the federal government reintroduced a new bill (C-25) that came into force as the CHRA on March 1, 1978.⁶

Form and Implementation of Section Eleven of the Canadian Human Rights Act

One important effect of the new federal equal value law was to separate out women's demand for equal pay from the structures and practices of employer/employee relations and establish it as a human right. This identified the problem of unequal pay as a form of sexual discrimination that could possibly be rectified through the complaint mechanism provided in the legislation. At the time there was little criticism of the complaint form of redress. Yet, underlying this process is the idea that the market wage system is basically equitable, and the assumption that, in those few cases where discrimination occurs, filing a complaint will operate to correct it (Armstrong & Armstrong 1990). In this sense it is an approach that denies the systemic nature of women's unequal pay.

⁶ Section 11(2) of the CHRA states that "In assessing the value of work performed by employees employed in the same establishment, the criteria to be applied are the skill, effort and responsibility required in the performance of the work and the conditions under which the work is performed."

Providing a mechanism to deal with equal value complaints, no matter the limitations of the process, ensured that the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) became one of the main sites of action for addressing the issue of women's unequal pay. This was the case even though Labour Canada was assigned the secondary responsibility of carrying out inspections of employers' occupational and wage structures. The intent of the law was that, if sexual discrimination was found, it should be referred to the CHRC for action. In fact, Labour Canada's secondary role in enforcing equal value law remained untried for six years. There was little commitment from the state administration in general, and Labour Canada in particular, to enforce the provisions. Indeed, there was little awareness within the departmental system of the equal value provisions and what they could possibly mean.⁷

Categorizing unequal pay as a human rights or women's rights issue, rather than a labour or class issue, seems to have had the contradictory effect of making wage inequality more visible to certain union women. The existence of the equal value provisions in the CHRA led to the further elaboration of feminist strategies within unions. In fact, in the federal sector, it is primarily unions who have made use of equal value laws on behalf of their female members (CHRC,1984; Marcotte,1987). Although unions are the principal

⁷ It was only through criticism from women's and labour groups, both inside and outside the state, that a program of inspection and compliance was established finally in 1984 (Cornish,1988 & Niemann,1984:78). To date no complaints have been laid as a result of Labour Canada's investigation process, and the extent that the program is effective remains an open question for research.

complainants and beneficiaries under federal equal value legislation, not all unions are able to take advantage of the law, and many are compelled, therefore, to use more traditional collective bargaining strategies when responding to the demands of women members for equal pay.⁸ Some women workers are better located in the employment structure to form strategies around equal value legislation. This is the case for women working in federal government departments, who, for a number of reasons that I examine below, were able to use the legislation in ways seemingly not anticipated by legislators. These strategies led in turn to the moulding of the law through practice and evoked responses from other parts of the government and state.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, constant conflict, stemming from the equal value complaints, was generated between Treasury Board as employer of federal government employees and the PSAC as representative of the vast majority of low paid women working in the various Ministries (Warskett, 1990 & 1991). Treasury Board, as the largest employer of women in Canada, plays a significant role in representing the interests of employers within the Canadian State and also directly representing its own interests as employer within the federal departmental system. State managers within Treasury Board have consistently adopted both a dominant class and gender strategy by

⁸ A case in point is the Communication Workers of Canada (CWC). The union laid complaints on behalf of Bell Canada telephone operators. The problem, however, of finding an appropriate male-dominated job class of the same value was insurmountable and the complaints were rejected by the CHRC (1984; Labour Canada, 1988 & Marcotte, 1987). Despite these rejections the filing of the complaints had an important consciousness raising effect on union members and since that time the union has pursued pay equity negotiations with the employer.

seeking to depress the price of women's labour, and placing the concerns of its women employees low on the agenda. This was immediately apparent shortly after the CHRA was promulgated. In meetings convened by officials of the CHRC with management and union representatives, Treasury Board officials took the position that they were exempt from the provisions and application of the law.⁹

When compared to Treasury Board which is responsible for the human and financial resources of the government, the Canadian Human Rights Commission is a marginal site of importance and power in the federal departmental system. Yet despite these power differences, the CHRC has the right to investigate complaints of a human rights nature and recommend the establishment of a tribunal, which has the power to compel testimony and impose settlements. It was this opening in the legislation that the PSAC women were able to strategize around, allowing them to pressure Treasury Board officials to place the problem of women's unequal pay higher up on the government's agenda.

Treasury Board officials' view that the CHRA did not apply to the government's classification system was apparent in their reaction to the PSAC's first equal value complaint. The PSAC charged Treasury Board with wage discrimination on behalf of the female-dominated Library Science (LS) group

⁹ Treasury Board officials based this both on their representation of the Queen in Right of Canada and on section 8 of the PSSRA that gave them unfettered right to classify positions (Interview no. 5).

claiming that the work of librarians was of equal value to that of the male-dominated Historical Research (HS) group. Treasury Board officials were adamant in their refusal to enshrine the equal value concept in the LS collective agreement and refused to even consider negotiating an equal value pay settlement. When it was clear to union negotiators that the demand for equal value would not succeed at the negotiating table, the PSAC filed a wage discrimination complaint with the CHRC on behalf of the librarians. This turned out to be a successful strategy for the union. The possibility that a tribunal might be convened and impose a settlement was sufficient threat to turn around Treasury Board's not to negotiate equal value. Two years from the date of the union's first demand to negotiate the matter, a settlement was reached with the assistance of officials from the CHRC.¹⁰

There was, however, another important reason why PSAC representatives were successful in harnessing the equal value provisions of the CHRA to a collective bargaining strategy for librarians. It hinged on the structure of

¹⁰ It provided the 470 librarians with a total of \$ 2.3 million backdated to March 1, 1978 - the point that the original bargaining demand was delivered to Treasury Board. Librarians individually received wage adjustments varying from \$500 to \$6,000 together with annual adjustments to ensure that 'equality' is maintained as new contracts are negotiated (PSAC, 1988:4 & Labour Canada, 1986:18-19). These 'equalisation' payments became a bone of contention for the union since the payments are not rolled into the wages of the employee. One of the demands of the 1991 PSAC general strike was that all payments resulting from equal value settlements should form part of the basic salary. This would mean not only that other benefits such as pensions would be calculated on a higher salary but also that 'equalisation' would not be adjusted if the wages of the comparison group changed.

Treasury Board's classification and job evaluation system.¹¹ Because of the implications for the pay and occupational status of its membership, the PSAC has a well developed expertise in the inner workings of the government's job evaluation plan and process. The PSAC hired classification officers trained within the departmental system itself, and it was these technical experts who took up the responsibility of initiating the union's equal pay complaints. Since job evaluation analysis was well established within the PSAC, it seemed 'natural' to the union staff that it would provide the basis for determining equal value. As an inherited structure and set of practices, job evaluation was, therefore, modified and fashioned by the union to identify gender bias as part of a strategy to achieve equal pay (Warskett 1990).

By making a successful comparison with the HR group, the librarians' case encouraged other PSAC wage discrimination complaints to be filed with the CHRC. By December 1984 the union had filed complaints on behalf of approximately 65,000 members (the vast majority are women, but at least twenty percent are men in jobs that are female-dominated). The complaints covered over a third of the PSAC membership and two thirds of its women members. The largest complaint was on behalf of the 50,000 strong clerical (CR) group.

During the 1980s, the emphasis on cutting programs and lowering costs

¹¹ Immediately following World War 1, a group of consultants from the United States were hired to examine the Federal Public Service. Their recommendations led to the beginnings of the present complex and elaborate system of job classification and hierarchies (Hodgetts & Corbett, 1960:250 - 264).

in the name of efficiency resulted in wage restraint programs. At the same time, the government supported a discourse of improving women's status and eliminating discrimination. When the Liberals were elected in the early 1990s, they engaged in the same contradictory discourse, proclaiming they intended to settle the equal pay issues within the federal administration while at the same time developing the discourse of deficit reduction.

Equal Value, Collective Bargaining and Union Power

When the CR complaint was filed in December 1984 it brought an entirely new response from Treasury Board officials. Large numbers of workers were now implicated, changing the entire social dynamics. Up to that point the Alliance had achieved some success with equal value settlements, but these had involved small numbers and similar if not identical work.¹² Given the large numbers of workers now involved and the proposal from the PSAC to make value comparisons of very different occupations, Treasury Board officials sought to assert control over the process. Instead of acquiescing, albeit after

¹² This was the case with the LS complaint. Librarians' work in the National library is very similar to that of the HR's who work mainly in the National archives. Another case was the General Services (GS) group where a settlement was achieved in March 1982 involving female dominated food, laundry and miscellaneous service groups in comparison with male-dominated stores, messenger and cleaner groups. Although all these groups performed different services, Treasury Board's current evaluation plan revealed them to be of equal value to the employer. Under this circumstance it was practically impossible to deny the validity of the unions complaint (PSAC,1988).

initial resistance, in the rulings of the CHRC,¹³ Treasury Board officials devised a strategy to deal with the union's demand for equal value that reflected their power and their class position. Their strategy was also gendered in its male dominance.

On International Womens' Day, March 8, 1985, it was announced that all thirteen unions within the federal administration together with the employer had "agreed to work together on achieving equal pay (PSAC 1990b:6)". A Joint Union-Management Initiative (JUMI) was to undertake a government wide equal pay study. Immediately the PSAC found itself in a less powerful position than it had been enjoyed while pursuing complaints through the CHRC procedures. Even though the union represented the large majority of women that would be affected by the study results and had twice as many women members as all other unions put together, PSAC representatives were allocated only one seat on the committee. This in itself was an assertion of the dominance of men over women, but it also constituted a dominant-class strategy in as much as the PSAC represented the lowest paid employees in the government, both female and male. In other words Treasury Board's strategy in this instance reduced the power of the union both in class and gender terms.

Precedent for limiting the PSAC's participation on the committee was found in the long standing 'civil service' practice of the National Joint Council.

¹³See Mahon (1977 & 1984) for an analysis of Treasury Board's powerful position in the 'unequal structure of representation' of the departmental system.

As was noted in chapter five this was the consultative forum between management and staff where one seat is allocated to each union and employee association making up the staff side of the council.

While there was reluctance on the part of some PSAC leaders and staff to place the equal value complaints in abeyance while participating in JUMI, the union was not in a position to refuse to take part in a seemingly genuine attempt by the employer to resolve the equal pay issue. Although agreeing to participate in the study, the PSAC, therefore, retained the right to pursue the equal value complaints if it was not satisfied with the outcome.

It took nearly five years to complete the study. At all levels of the process and on a variety of issues, representatives of the PSAC, the majority of whom were women, came into conflict with management and male-dominated unions (who also formed part of the management-union process). At the heart of the conflict was the attempt by PSAC women to revalue the work of its women members. For management, the consultants, and many of the male-dominated unions, the pay equity study simply became an exercise in applying the Willis job-evaluation plan (Interview no.6). The plan was named after consultant Norman D. Willis, who had been responsible for convention job evaluation plans in the past. In this case he and his fellow consultants devised a plan that was applicable to all occupations in the federal administration, thus allowing all occupations to be evaluated using the same set of factors.

Although this plan was deemed to be gender neutral by the CHRC,

application of such plans is never a neutral process. The outcome of job evaluation depends on the subjective judgements of evaluators at every step of the process (Warskett 1990). For most of the PSAC evaluators the study presented an opportunity to raise the value of women's work; indeed, from their stand point this was meant to be the whole point of the exercise. Their attempt to do this at each step of the process resulted in repeated conflicts with other members of the study who were intent on retaining the status quo. This was the case with the male-dominated Canadian Air Traffic Controllers Association (CATCA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Representatives from both these unions strongly rejected the attempt by PSAC evaluators to make a positive value comparison between secretaries and trades workers (Interview no.7).

The evaluation committees completed their work and achieved a consensus decision on the 3,100 sample positions in September 1989. Many of the evaluation decisions did not result in the improvement of women's position within the occupational hierarchy precisely because of the PSAC's minority status on the Master Evaluation Committee. As a result the study revealed that only certain kinds of women's jobs should be substantially revalued, for example, librarians and nurses. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that clerical and other kinds of information work be upwardly revalued to a certain extent, but the findings did not support any substantial change in the value of jobs held by secretaries (Interviews no. 5 & 6.)

Despite the limited results of the equal pay study for women lower down the hierarchy, the overall results were considered by the PSAC to be a step forward in the process of closing the wage gap. Estimates, made by the Alliance based on the study's evaluations, indicated that women in the federal administration were owed over a billion dollars in retroactive equal pay adjustments, together with 250 million per year for future pay adjustments, an approximate 15 percent increase overall (PSAC 1990a).

Shortly before the termination of the study, Treasury Board officials, apparently with the agreement of Norman D. Willis, raised questions concerning bias in the evaluations. That Willis should agree to this reflects poorly on his own role as consultant. Both the CHRC and employees of the Willis firm closely monitored the entire evaluation process. For the consultant to support a charge of bias at a late stage in the process was, in effect, to criticize his own methodology. It inevitably raised questions concerning the consultants' independence from Treasury Board, especially since the study was entirely funded by the government (Interview no.5).

For four months after the termination of the study Treasury Board made no statement about the findings and would make no commitment to implement the results. Then officials announced their intention to commission further analysis of the evaluations by the Willis firm (Barrett 1991:10-11; Interview no.5). At that point, the PSAC withdrew from the study and filed a global complaint with the CHRC (PSAC 1990a). Shortly after, Treasury Board made its own

move, unilaterally announcing a new interpretation of the data and the equalisation payments that would be forthcoming for workers in the female-dominated groups. The proposed retroactive payments were about one quarter of those demanded by the PSAC and only one third for correcting pay inequities in the future. Robert de Cotret, President of Treasury Board at the time, insisted that the proposed payments were

based upon an independent assessment of what these jobs are worth. They reflect the law of the land and our commitment to applying fairly the principle of equal pay for work of equal value (Ottawa Citizen, January 27, 1990).

While attempting to retain a discourse of fairness towards women, Treasury Board moved decisively to limit increases in labour costs, especially as these applied to lower-waged women workers. This contradiction between the discourse and the practice was not lost on PSAC activists and fed into the growing frustration and anger of federal government workers towards their employer.

Responding on the basis of its mandate to protect human rights within the federal jurisdiction, the CHRC investigated the PSAC's complaint of wage discrimination and found that the equal pay adjustments were not adequate and that discrimination still existed. Because of this, staff of the CHRC recommended that a tribunal be established to determine the extent of the discrimination. Following this recommendation a tribunal was established under the provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

On April 22, 1991, one day before the Tribunal was due to begin, the

Deputy Attorney General of Canada filed a statement of claim in the Trial Division of the Federal Court of Canada. The main thrust of the claim was that the CHRC had "exceeded its authority in requesting that the President of the Human Rights Tribunal Panel appoint a Human Rights Tribunal to inquire into the complaints (Barrett 1991:12-13)". It was apparent that the Conservative government was prepared to act against the attempt by the CHRC to rectify gender discrimination.

During 1990 and the early part of 1991, the PSAC was engaged in contract negotiations with Treasury Board for the majority of its bargaining units within the departmental system. With the unilateral decision of the employer to impose equal pay adjustments, the PSAC asserted its demand for equal value at the bargaining table. While not dismissing the legal avenue provided by the CHRA, negotiating pay equity became an important priority for the union and one of the main objectives of the unions pay demands (PSAC 1991). In August, a conciliation board, established by the Public Service Staff Relations Board in an attempt to settle the bargaining dispute, took a very strong stand in favour of the union's position on pay equity. Anne Barrett, the Chairperson wrote, on behalf of the majority of the Board:

It is our recommendation that the parties seriously negotiate pay equity adjustments in this round of collective bargaining. They worked well together for four years and they have all the background, studies and statistics they need to come to a fair settlement. Pay equity has been the law since 1977: it is time it was implemented for the federal public service (Barrett 1991:15).

The nominee for the employer issued a minority report and Treasury Board,

with the backing of the cabinet, dug in its heels both on the equal pay issue and general wage freeze.

The PSAC 1991 General Strike: Learning to Mobilize Around Pay Equity

Leaders and activists within the PSAC were determined to make wage breakthroughs in the 1991 round of bargaining. Wage settlements in both the public and private unionized sectors had been in the 5 to 6 percent range in the mid to late 1980s. Increases for federal government workers, moreover, had been consistently lower than those of other public sector workers during that period (Swimmer & Thompson 1995:398). In February 1991, Michael Wilson, the Minister of Finance for the Conservative government, announced in the budget speech that there would be a one-year pay freeze for federal government employees, and legislation would be introduced to ban strikes and roll back arbitral awards of more than three percent (Canada, Sessional Papers 1991:9-10). Instead of ending any thought of militant action, this budget announcement had the opposite effect on PSAC leaders and union activists. In the early Spring of 1991 the PSAC leadership gave instructions to the regional representatives to mobilize its members in support of a general strike (Interview no.2).

After the 1985 bargaining round the PSAC and Treasury Board had agreed to a limited form of master negotiations. Within the PSAC, the resolution to adopt a master-agreement approach to collective bargaining had resulted in

conflict between certain components and members of bargaining units. The clerks strike had taught many members about the frustration of attempting to conduct a strike of one bargaining unit when the other units streamed across its picket lines. Many activists coming out of that strike were determined to forge one large collective-bargaining unit of federal government workers.

The problems encountered in achieving this goal were formidable, but the PSAC Executive elected in 1982, after the clerks' strike, took the task very seriously. Agreement had to be reached with Treasury Board to restructure the bargaining process and within the PSAC all bargaining units had to be convinced to opt for the conciliation/strike route. Certain groups refused to accept the recommendation of the leadership that the binding arbitration route be abandoned and become part of the master negotiations. Finally, at the 1985 triennial convention, the PSAC delegates voted to put all bargaining units on the conciliation/strike route and to mandate their participation in the master agreement. In adopting this resolution, the convention opted for a collective-bargaining strategy designed to bring all bargaining units into a strike position at the same time, thus paving the way for a possible general strike. This was a significant moment for the PSAC and marked a change in the union's attitude and focus, from consultation and collective begging to conviction that it had the power to mobilize its members to undertake strike action in support of its demands. It was an important step in changing the orientation of the union and marked a significant break with the past 'civil service' practices of consultation

and harmony.

Getting the government to agree to change the structure of bargaining was difficult. The Conservative Party gave a commitment to master negotiations during the election campaign of 1986. After the election, Robert De Cotret, the new President of Treasury Board, implemented a system of coordinated bargaining which resulted in a limited number of issues being incorporated into a master agreement that was settled by binding conciliation in 1987.

Negotiations around wages resulted in a settlement that was adopted by all bargaining units (Interview no.2). The 1988 negotiating round was structured around five bargaining tables that simultaneously dealt with all issues. It proved to be a difficult process and the contract that was settled in 1990 was narrowly ratified by the PSAC membership (Swimmer & Thompson 1995:392). For the 1991 round it was agreed that seven tables that grouped the various bargaining units together would be established, allowing for the negotiation of a master agreement as well as the negotiation of issues linked to specific bargaining groups.

During the initial round of master-agreement negotiations little had been done by the PSAC in negotiating equal value. Treasury Board had always refused to incorporate the equal value principle into collective agreements. Each round the demand came from the PSAC membership and was part of the PSAC's bargaining demands, but it was quickly dropped once the union and the employer got down to the main business issues (Interview no.2). From 1984

to 1989 the Joint Union Management Committee (JUMI) was in operation and it was not until 1989, as noted earlier, that its work came to an end. Up to this point, activists concerned with equal pay had counted on the study results. When Treasury Board started to question these results and charge bias, Alliance women leaders and activists turned to collective bargaining and strike as a strategy for addressing the issue. The problem was to convince the rest of the PSAC to make equal value part of the main collective-bargaining business.

Making and keeping pay equity as an important issue on the PSAC's bargaining agenda was not easy. Women activists had been concerned that, since it remained an issue before the Human Rights Tribunal, the union leadership would not make it part of the main business in bargaining the master agreement. Activists were also concerned that in bargaining wage rates for all the occupational units covered by the master agreement, the PSAC negotiators would neglect to ensure that equal value comparisons were retained. These concerns resulted in union negotiators for Table 4, which included all the female-dominated administrative support units, recommending that "current pay equity adjustments be folded into the base salaries; additional pay equity adjustments of 10 to 15 percent should be paid; and these groups should receive an additional economic increase of 6 percent in the first year of the agreement in order to keep them from falling even further behind the private sector. (PSAC Resource Notes on Pay Equity, May, 1992)". These recommendations all reappeared in the Conciliation Board Report written by

Chairperson Anne Barrett addressing the situation of administrative employees. She made it clear that clerical workers with the federal administration were paid less than private-sector workers and there was need for an upward adjustment. This report gave the PSAC ammunition both for the general wage demand and for pay equity.

Getting the other PSAC negotiators, at the male-dominated negotiating tables, to agree to accept the recommendations of the Barrett Conciliation Board Report was not as easy, however. It required a campaign directed internally at leaders and members of male-dominated bargaining groups. PSAC pay equity activists had been engaged in a campaign around the complaints before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. It was mainly directed at the members of the female-dominated groups and designed to encourage them to place pressure on the Conservative Government and Treasury Board. In the Spring of 1991 these activists started to direct their campaign at PSAC leaders and activists involved in the other negotiating tables.

In June 1991, the top leadership, which now included Susan Giampetri and Nycole Turmel, both active as women clerks in the 1980 strike, issued a Background on Negotiations 1991. This backgrounder made it clear that the majority of the top leadership of the PSAC were part of the pay equity campaign. An important part of this campaign was to convince other leaders, activists and members to make pay equity an integrated part of the main business of the union. The opening statements of the 'backgrounder' read:

The pay demands adopted by the Alliance Bargaining Committees have two main objectives - inflation protection and pay equity..... Pay equity should be a reality for all Alliance members in the federal public service based on the following elements: equal pay for work of equal value, comparability and national rates of pay (PSAC 1991).

In this document, PSAC leadership spelt out the elements of the redefined conception of pay equity. 'Equal pay for work of equal value' was linked to the definition of pay equity found in the Canadian Human Rights Act and in the provincial Pay Equity Acts. The other two elements are quite different and are designed to include all members of the Alliance 'pay equity' claims.

Comparability makes the link with the traditional prevailing rate notion adhered to by members of the Operational Category and the General Labour and Trades group. "Pay levels should guarantee that employees in the federal government are paid at least as much as workers in private industry who do the same type of work (PSAC 1991)". By recognizing comparability as a pay equity issue, the executive hoped to gain the support of Operational Category members for their women members' demand for equal value.

The third element in this newly defined discourse of pay equity was national rates of pay. Again this directly implicated the grievances of blue-collar workers. The Backgrounder made it clear that "Regional rates of pay, where they currently exist, should be eliminated..." . It went on to point out that elimination of pay zones had been an objective of the Alliance since 1967 and that the number of pay zones for the General Labour and Trades (GLT) and the General Services (GS) groups had been reduced from 22 to 10 zones during

the last round of bargaining.

The fact is, regional rates of pay discriminate against certain groups in the federal government. Curiously, the regional rate concept is never considered for federal employees in the senior management category, or for Members of Parliament for that matter (PSAC 1991).

Regional rates of pay were an important issue in the GLT strike in 1975, as was discussed in chapter six. There was thus a strong identification of pay equity with the grievances of the male working-class members of the Alliance. In 1991 regional rates were redefined as discrimination, and their solution as the implementation of pay equity. Issues of male working-class members were linked with those of female working-class members. In this document, the interweaving of class formation and feminisation of the Alliance is clearly revealed. The intention was to build solidarity between the large female and male-dominated militant groups in the union and take them forward to strike, united around the newly defined discourse of Pay Equity. The leadership that produced the Backgrounder was profoundly changed from that of the 1980s clerks' strike.

By all accounts the Alliance leadership's pay equity strategy was successful. In September the union went on strike with unprecedented support for the pay equity issue and unprecedented support on the picket lines, in the demonstrations and in the long marches. Pay equity activists made sure that the issue remained in the forefront.

As the conflict progressed it was clear that the government expected the

union to fail in its strike efforts. But the call to its membership evoked a response that surprised even the union leadership and activists. Pay equity became a very popular issue among the membership and the public. The union leadership was pushed by women activists to bring the issue more and more to the fore as the strike proceeded. 'Sit downs' in government offices' were held in Ottawa and Vancouver in an effort to raise the profile of the issue among union activists and members (Interview no.4). With the strike causing havoc across the country, Treasury Board and the Cabinet again reached out to assert their power and enacted back-to-work legislation. While it initially appeared that the Alliance had gained little from the strike, Treasury Board announced major changes to the job security provisions of the Work Adjustment Policy. There were however, no changes in pay or pay equity.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) continued to sit and hear evidence and argument from all parties. It was not until 1994 that the Alliance completed its representation and finally, on February 15, 1996, the CHRT ruled that the original data, collected over the four year period of the pay equity study, were valid. Treasury Board appealed this decision to the Federal court arguing there had been bias in the data collection. In June 1996 the court rejected this argument.¹⁴ Treasury Board then initiated negotiations with the PSAC. No settlement has been achieved to this date. The Alliance maintains adamantly that the full costs, as determined by the study, should be paid.

¹⁴ Personal communication with Andrew Raven, lawyer for the PSAC before the Federal Court of Canada, July 1996.

Meanwhile the vast majority of people working for the federal government in female-dominated groups continue to receive unequal pay and many others who are no longer employed by the government sit waiting for back pay from 1984. Alliance women, active in women's and equity committees across the country, with the support of Alliance men, continue to mount demonstrations and other kinds of action in support of their demands.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: Learning to be 'Uncivil'.

In 1980 fifty thousand federal clerks took their demand for fair wages into the streets. This was one of the largest strike actions ever launched in Canada. What was perhaps more remarkable at the time was that fully three quarters of the clerks were women.

We came from every Component of the Alliance. We were older women, younger women, francophones, anglophones, lesbians, women with disabilities, aboriginal women and women of colour. Women of all races and backgrounds struggling collectively for the first time for recognition of the worth of our work.

Until that time women had been regarded as passive members of the Alliance and of other unions. Very few of our brothers suspected that we were capable of sustaining militant action and very few women really felt themselves to be trade unionists

Yet with the clerks' strike, women were front and centre. Serving notice, not just on the employer but also on the union, that we were not willing to passively accept low wages and subordinate status. Women were demanding fair wages and respect, recognition at work and within their union, bread and roses.

Since the clerk's strike in 1980 women's activism has become a force for the revitalization of the union. Women's unequal pay has become a major issue for the Alliance and women have increasingly taken on leadership roles.

But more than this we have challenged the vision of the Alliance.... broadening the focus to include equity and social justice.... Together we have struggled to build a new solidarity which recognizes and respects these differences so that those of us who remain marginalized at work, in society and in the union may take our rightful place in the mainstream (PSAC 1993).

So begins the policy paper "Women and the Alliance: From the Margins to the Mainstream", adopted by delegates to the PSAC Triennial Conference in 1996. It recognises both the transformation of women themselves within the union and, in turn, how they transformed the PSAC. Furthermore, it identifies with others who experience subordination and marginalization at work, in society and in the union. It is a call for a different kind of union, a different kind

of workplace and a different kind of society. The contrast with the Alliance at the 1966 founding convention, thirty years earlier, is startling. This is an entirely different vision of unionism and the employer/employee relationship. The present study has attempted to explain the change in vision and conception, to analyze the limitations of the new militancy, and examine the ways the Alliance remains unchanged.

In the 1950s federal civil servants, active in both the Civil Service Federation of Canada (CSFC) and the Civil Service Association of Canada (CSAC), were at a crossroads. Should they attempt to press their claims for greater salaries and benefits through the National Joint Council, or should they reconstruct their identity and learn to become part of the Canadian trade union movement? The Canadian Postal Employees Association (CPEA), which was part of the Federation at that time, strongly supported the latter approach, as did many other blue collar groups within the CSAC. Most civil servants, and certainly the leaders of the two staff associations, however, wanted to keep one foot in the traditions and principles of the civil service and the other in a limited form of collective bargaining which could resort to binding arbitration if a dispute arose between the employer and the employees.

The CPEA was a notable exception in this regard. A long time affiliate of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress, the Postal Employees Association pressured for the same rights as other industrial workers. They were blue-collar workers, who remained on the margins of the social category of civil

servants. Belonging to the category held no great promise nor benefits for them. When consultation with the government over a wage increase failed in 1965 they simply took the right to strike, put up the picket lines and forced a different outcome from that recommended by the 'Heeney' Commission. As a consequence, strike as a legitimate dispute resolution route was enshrined in the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA).

In 1966 the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) was formed by federal civil servants who carried with them the traditions of the earlier staff associations. The leaders of these associations were committed to remaining part of the social category of civil servants and maintaining the characteristics that defined that category. The majority of these employees were white, Anglosaxon men, many of them returning veterans of World War II. By 1966, however, the material basis of this category was already undergoing change: Women could now be appointed to permanent positions and, with the rapid expansion of the Canadian State and its administration, they rushed to fill many of the newly created positions in the Administrative Support Category; Blue-collar males, at that time comprising approximately 30 percent of the Alliance membership, were under-represented in the Alliance leadership. Furthermore, mounting dissatisfaction with the disparities in conditions of work and compensation between civil servants and their private sector counterparts was growing. Prevailing rate comparisons, which had allowed PSAC employees the same rates of pay as those in the private sector, had been abandoned by the

employer.

The PSSRA placed a number of important restrictions on the development of working class collectivity and solidarity while at the same time providing legal union recognition for civil servants. It, therefore, structured and restricted the development of labour relations while at the same time providing some openings for union resistance. Binding arbitration as an option, as opposed to the strike/conciliation route, provided for a different kind of collective action for the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) than that practised by the postal workers. It allowed the newly formed union to continue its harmonious relationship with Treasury Board. Binding arbitration depends, in part, on the expertise of staff in presenting pay and benefit data before arbiters and convincing them of the justice of their case. It does not require the collective participation or mobilization of the membership. Furthermore, it does not require the members to take a ratification vote on its outcome. As was clear from the evidence in chapter six, the Alliance's collective bargaining Regulation 15 was designed to fulfilled the needs of a union accustomed to consultation and collegial relations with the employers representatives. Its processes were geared to taking the arbitration route rather than the strike option.

Structured as a two-tiered organization, the components and the Alliance centre, there was no direct representation of the membership at the PSAC Triennial Convention. It was a structure that encouraged consultation and collaboration between component staff and departmental staff, rather than

confrontation and militant activism on the part of the rank and file. Furthermore, since the Alliance structure cuts across bargaining units, each time there was a strike the centre came into conflict with component leaders over the attempt to directly mobilize members and prepare them for action. Component leaders complained that the normal structure was being disregarded and 'sidestepped'. Which of course it was. It had to be in order to conduct the strike effectively.

Leaders of the newly formed union strongly supported and policed the merit principle; they wanted to maintain political neutrality; they were proud of their distinctive employee status and did not want to be treated like other workers in the private sector. They supported the idea of separate legislation that recognized their distinctiveness and the important role they played in maintaining a neutral state administrative bureaucracy 'far from the madding crowd'.

In keeping with the conception of a politically neutral and efficient bureaucracy, President Claude Edwards sought to distance the PSAC from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the perceived militancy of the industrial unions that dominated it. This began to change significantly after the 'shame' activists experienced over the PSAC's lack of participation in the 1976 Day of Protest. The relationship with the labour movement also improved after the clerical workers' strike in 1981. It was as if the Alliance won its union 'stripes' through the strike action and was accepted into the fold of the larger labour movement. Also, from that point in time women activists' became more

involved with CLC women's conferences and committees.

Despite the large numbers of women in working class locations it was the male-dominated blue-collar groups that dominated the working class formation of the union in its beginning period. All during the 1970s, conflict festered around the General Labour and Trades (GLT) group. The conflict operated on a number of different levels; between the group and the employer over prevailing rates of pay; with the leadership of the Alliance over the lack of success at the bargaining table and within the group itself between the trades and the labourers. It was the trades perception that both their status and benefits were undermined by the connection with general labour. The division between the trades group and general labourers meant that collective solidarity was not produced either within or between other bargaining groups. At that point in time, these blue-collar men were incapable of forging working class solidarity between themselves and the female-dominated clerks. Perceiving themselves as skilled craft workers they remained stuck in an earlier time of relative privilege. The issues that were the source of the dispute between them and the employer were connected to returning to past 'glory' in terms of prevailing rates of pay and status. As the main blue-collar working class group they were incapable of leading the PSAC into a different kind of unionism. They failed to take up leadership of the Alliance as a whole that not only includes diverse occupational groups, but large numbers of women occupying working class clerical locations. Also, it is doubtful that the female-dominated clerks

would have accepted their leadership given their lack of a union tradition and distance from the operational group.

The clerks' strike was the defining moment of the present union. Initially the strike was not perceived as a 'woman's struggle' within the Alliance. The analysis of the clerks' strike as an important moment in the feminisation of the union came later, once feminisation was well developed in the Alliance in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, the strike played an important role in allowing women clerks new possibilities for organizing within the union. Its importance lay in the fact that it cracked apart the social category of civil servant as it was constituted within the Alliance. This resulted in the rejection of many practices of consultation and cooperation that characterized the relationship with the employer up to that point. Clerical workers, without any tradition or experience of strike, voted with 'their feet', rejecting the advice, the tradition, the regulations that the Alliance had inherited from the old staff associations and began the process of constructing a democratic union based on collective solidarity and action.

The Right to Strike: Importance to the Development of Democratic Unionism

Unions throughout history have argued that the right to strike is fundamental to their existence and to their freedom of association. The

significance of the 'right to strike' in the transformation of civil servants into unionists became clear during the clerks' strike. During the 1960s when the provisions of the future PSSRA were under discussion, the double settlement route was enshrined in the Act because the Liberal government of the day knew that the postal workers would take the right anyway, even though it might involve illegal action. By providing both binding arbitration and the right to strike in the event of a dispute, the government offered a compromise that seemed to limit both the use of the strike weapon and more illegality on the postal workers part.

At their inception and through the 1970s, the Alliance's bargaining units mostly remained on the arbitration route. Designed to be 'in line' with binding arbitration rather than strike action, the union's collective bargaining practices laid out in Regulation 15 did not encourage collective action or solidarity building. Once the Clerical and Regulatory (CR) bargaining group had opted for the strike route and organized towards that end the normal collective bargaining practices of the Alliance were thrown aside and the union started to be transformed. Its practices began to be built on collective mobilizing and solidarity rather than depending on experts to present a convincing argument before a departmental official or arbitrator. After the clerks' strike, in the 1980s, the union turned to using the conciliation/strike route as the normal way of dealing with the employer's unwillingness to negotiate. By the mid-1980s the leadership took the decision to place all bargaining units, with Treasury Board

as the employer, on that route and work towards a Master Collective Agreement. Gradually the PSAC changed its orientation, so that its executive leaders' main task became how to mobilize the membership around certain issues, rather than how to keep conflict at a minimum.

By 1991, the Alliance was ready to undertake the massive organizing task of a general strike against Treasury Board. Ten years of strategizing and learning through mobilizing the membership 'paid off' and the 1991 strike proved a resounding success in terms of organizing even though little material gains were made.

Without the strike dispute route in the PSSRA the Alliance would have been unable to undergo this transformation. It was the right to strike that opened up the possibility for Alliance activists' to learn and to embark on a different course of action and mobilization. Without this possibility enshrined in law, the leadership of the Alliance would have remained stuck in the mode of consultation with Treasury Board and the Departments. The strike route allowed the Alliance membership to come into its own and challenge the old social category of civil servant mentality within the Alliance. Strikes are always traumatic events and especially for unions that have no tradition of them. There are glorious moments but for the most part they are full of anxiety and stress for leaders and members alike. Most of the time members, after considering all sides of the matter often vote no to strike action. But the point I wish to make here is that the possibility of a vote being taken at all produces a different kind

of union, a different kind of collectivity and a different set of practices from a union where no vote will be taken because the legal right does not exist. This does not preclude members from going on strike anyway, as the postal workers demonstrated in 1965. But for a union like the Alliance, where the traditions were embedded deeply in consultation with the employer, this was an outcome not like to happen without the legal right being in place.

The case of the Alliance has implications for other civil service unions. The evidence from this case enforces the claim that the right to strike is crucial in forming the traditions and practices of working class formation and class solidarity. Where unions of civil servants do not have the right to strike this study suggests that the continuation of the practices associated with the characteristics of 'servants of the state' will likely continue and the 'cracking' of the social category is less likely to happen.

Feminisation and Class Formation Through the Struggle For Pay Equity: A Counter-hegemonic Strategy?

During the 1970s the strategic orientation of the federal Canadian State became open to the adoption of a policy of equal pay for work of equal value, a policy which has the potential to significantly increase the value and cost of some women's wage labour. If there is indeed a bias operating within the state in favour of the dominant classes and men there is a need to explain how this opening occurred. In doing this in chapter four and eight I pointed to the

conjuncture of a number of different strategies, practices and meanings.

The Human Rights orientation of the Liberal Government in the 1970s, together with state's ratification of ILO convention 100, although amounting to a purely symbolic gesture in 1972 and at that point not resulting in actual legislative change, provided a basis on which a change in law could be contemplated and justified. Furthermore, the fact of professional women addressing dominant class men in the language of equal opportunity, an important element of the Liberal Government's Just Society, gave the strategy of equal value further legitimacy in the eyes of elected legislators. It must be added also that there was little understanding by these legislators of the meaning of equal value. It was only once the principle was given substance by its incorporation into the Canadian Human Rights Act that it became the focus of strategizing by subordinate class women and came into conflict with dominant class and male interests.

Members of the PSAC in female-dominated jobs were able to benefit from the equal value law to some extent, by a strategy that extended their bargaining power. This was achieved through using the wage discrimination sections of the CHRA in concert with collective bargaining legislation, in this case the Public Service Staff Relations Act. Although equal value is enshrined as human rights policy within the Canadian Federal State and therefore as an ostensibly 'classless' policy, the conflict generated between subordinate class women and Treasury Board, as the employer, revealed the intersection

between gender and class forces and therefore the subordinate nature of women's struggle for equal pay.

Treasury Board, operating from a powerful position in the administrative hierarchy of the federal system and also as employer of the largest group of women workers in Canada, moved decisively to limit the success of the PSAC's strategy and regain control over their pay policy. By dint of its power within the departmental hierarchy, Treasury Board was able, for a certain period of time to emasculate the power of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It did this initially by establishing the Joint Union/Management Initiative (JUMI). Through this strategy Treasury Board moved the conflict to a new terrain and set off a further set of strategizing and learning for the Alliance. This stage of the process ended with the unilateral imposition of Treasury Board's own version of the equal pay study's results.

When it became clear, however, that wage discrimination still existed within the departmental system, the Canadian Human Rights Commission moved to investigate the PSAC's complaints by recommending the establishment of a tribunal. It was at this point that Treasury Board took a decisive ministerial power stand by challenging the Commission's legal authority to act. While Treasury Board is powerful within the federal government bureaucracy, this power does not extend to the judiciary. At the level of the federal court the challenge was quashed and the CHRC established a tribunal to investigate the PSAC complaint. Meanwhile, within the Alliance other kinds of

learning and strategizing were taking place. The redefinition of pay equity by the Alliance during the process of mobilizing for the 1991 general strike brought the issue into the mainstream of collective bargaining. It became an issue to be fought for all and to benefit all, women and men in the Alliance.

Contradictions inherent in this redefinition of pay equity remain unexplored because they were put into practice. If the Alliance had been successful in achieving the pay equity demand, it is likely that contradictions would have arisen between enforcing comparability with the private sector at the same time as attempting to adjust for equal pay for work of equal value. Pay equity as redefined by the Alliance remains untested and untried.

Be that as it may, the redefinition of pay equity, to include all members of the union, launched the entire issue of women's unequal pay into another kind of strategizing and learning. The demand for pay equity within the Alliance no longer operates as a legal process separated from the main agenda of the union. It is an issue that mobilized all members of the union during the 1991 General Strike. After the strike and further attempts by the employer to undermine the results of the equal pay study the CHRC ruled in the Alliance's favour. Treasury Board, however, still refuses to pay employees in female-dominated jobs the full extent of their undervaluing as determined by the study. The outcome of this particular gender/class conflict between Treasury Board and the PSAC remains uncertain. What is more certain is that, although pay equity for women, remains part of the Federal state's discourse, at the level of

practice there are limits placed on its achievement by the state's bias in favour of dominant gender\class interests.

What kind of strategy is the contestation over unequal pay - can it be viewed as a counter-hegemonic strategy? The demand for equal value does not question the work place hierarchy, yet the practice does reveal the limits of the Canadian State's commitment to women's equality, especially as working-class women are concerned. Through this process, members of the Alliance learned that changing the formal law is not sufficient; if the law is to have substance it must be fought for. While there are limits to the concept of equal value with respect to changing the hierarchical nature of the work place, nevertheless, the contestation over the issue developed both the working class and feminisation capacities of the union and strengthened the union's organizing capacities for future contestation. It is in that sense that it has been transformed into a process that constitutes a move towards a counter-hegemonic strategy. Through the redefinition of pay equity, the Alliance leadership wove together class formation and feminization and thereby increased the working class capacity of the union.

Class Formation and Feminisation: Learning through the Strategic Interplay of Structure and Agency

Both the right to strike and the equal value principle were structural legal changes that occurred as the result of the actions and influence of other agents

outside and within the state. Both these legal provisions opened up new possibilities for action and agency. Likewise the change in the material composition of gender relations within the federal state administration opened up the possibility for action by women, but the possibilities and openings provided by these structural changes were not destined to happen. The structural openings and possibilities required strategizing and learning by class and gender agents in order for them to become actual outcomes. In other words, the interweaving of class and gender struggles do not automatically occur even though the materially conditions already exist. It is not the structures themselves that allow for transformation but the kind of learning that takes place within the context of the possibilities offered by the changes set in place in the past.

Despite the changes referred to above, in many important ways the Alliance as a union remains unchanged. Women, although very active at the local and regional levels, are still under represented on the National Board of Directors and component executives. Bargaining and social issues raised and promoted by women's committees still are not considered central to the union's collective bargaining strategy. The complicated structure of components and bargaining units inherited from the staff associations and in response to the Public Service Staff Relations Act (PSSRA) introduced in 1967, remains in place, although it is being gradually transformed by a process of regionalization. Component staff officers and members still represent on section 21 appeals

under the PSEA, even though they often undermine collective solidarity. In certain important respects the Alliance still carries within it civil service practices although its dominant orientation is founded in its ability to collectively mobilize the membership.

Despite this fundamental change the members of the Alliance remain under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Staff Relations Act. It is a labour relations act that was designed specifically for the social category of federal civil servants. Alliance members, for the most part, are defined through this law as being in the public rather than the private sector. Making sense of this distinction is complex. Labour processes within the administrative state are found in the private sector. Being a clerk or a secretary within the federal administrative state is not much different from working in a large corporation in terms of the actual tasks to be performed. Telephones have to be answered, messages have to be collected from the voice or e-mail, letters have to be typed, reports formatted and photocopied. The same goes for workers maintaining buildings, repairing equipment or delivering materials. It is not the actual labour processes that are distinct. The same kinds of class locations are found within the administrative state as within the private sector.

This fact is clearly illustrated today with the privatization of the public service. Park maintenance, cleaning, repairs and construction in many departments have been contracted out to private companies. This is also the case for office jobs. This does not mean, however, that the Federal

administrative state and the distinction of this public institution is simply an ideological construction. There is a material basis for the distinction between the public and private sectors but this distinction is not based on different kinds of work activities or different class locations of those working within the state. The difference is both the ideological and material construction of the administrative state as a body that operates as an arbitrating and neutral force between the competing interests of civil society. The social category of civil servants is an important part of this construction. Its materiality lies, in large part, in the different and distinct legal construction of this social category as compared to workers in civil society/private sector. A different kind of employment law, emphasizing appointments based on merit and political neutrality of the appointees; distinct labour relations law which restricts full use of the strike weapon and limits the issues that can be negotiated. Staff associations were constructed reflecting these characteristics.

While the Alliance members have acted and learnt and in the process change their union and class and gender relations within the union, this learning has limits imposed by the structures that were set in place in the past. The social category of civil servants was a historical construction that was changed to some extent within the PSAC by men and women organizing and learning collectively. They, however, do not have the power to change the structures themselves. This kind of change requires wider organization, mobilization and learning than within the union and labour-relations context. The integration of

the Public Service Alliance of Canada into the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement means, however, that its leaders and activists recognize that they are not fundamentally different from other workers. As a union the Alliance always had a majority of members, women and men, in working-class locations. During the 1980s this changed and women became the majority in these class locations. The Alliance also now has a set of experiences and learning that define it as a working-class union. Since the 1980 clerks' strike the Alliance has built a tradition of working-class formation interlocked with feminisation. A fundamentally different set of tradition and history from its origins as an association of 'civil servants'.

Appendix One

Figures 3 through 5 were constructed using the following data obtained from three sources: Public Service Commission of Canada, Annual Report, various years 1973-90, Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa, Canada; Public Service Staff Relations Board, Annual Report, various years 1967-90, Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa, Canada. Treasury Board, Occupational Group Job Descriptions, various years, Minister of Supply and Services.

The Public Service Commission of Canada did not publish gender specific data before 1973. For this reason I calculated the percentages used in the graphs for the years 1973 to 1990. Table 7 does include the year 1967. The numbers for this year were compiled using gender specific data from Archibald (1970).

The data from the Public Service Staff Relations Board gave the numbers of PSAC members for each bargaining unit under the PSSRA. This data was not broken down by gender.

The data from the Public Service Commission started to report the male and female numbers of employees in the various occupational groups in 1973. I used this data together with the data from the PSSRB to calculate the male and female composition of the PSAC bargaining units.

The data for 1980 is missing because there were errors in the numbers of the original sources that could not be corrected. For this reason I decided to leave that year blank.

The numbers of PSAC working-class and new middle-class positions in occupational bargaining units were calculated using the Treasury Board job descriptions for those groups. Applying Clement's (1990) minimalist class categories I identified the level and type of position within each occupational group that were either working-class or new middle-class locations. If the supervision responsibilities included sanctioning authority over other employees, it was assigned a new middle-class location. In those positions that included supervision as an element of responsibility, supervision was most often defined as coordination rather than control of labour power. In these cases they were assigned a working-class rather than a middle-class location. As managerial locations were excluded from the PSSRB bargaining unit data there was no need to deal with them, since no member of a bargaining unit could occupy a managerial position.

For **Table 7**:

Total PSAC Membership by Class and Gender for 1967 only.

	Male	Female	Totals
New Middle Class	12,504	3,084	15,588
Working Class	45,717	30,600	76,317
Totals	58,221	33,684	91,905

For **Figure 3**:

Total Membership of Public Service Alliance in Bargaining units under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Staff Relations Act Part 1, 1973-1990.

Year	Membership	Year	Membership
1973	156, 584	1982	165,427
1974	164, 141	1983	163, 275
1975	165, 293	1984	174, 418
1976	171, 160	1985	173,203
1977	173, 454	1986	168,709
1978	177,707	1987	167,290
1979	165, 783	1988	167,199
1980		1989	160,043
1981	162, 974	1990	160,954

For Figure 4

Gender Composition of PSAC Membership in Bargaining units under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Staff Relations Act Part 1, 1973-1990.

Year	Male Members	Males % of total	Female Members	Females % of total
1973	99,348	63	57,272	37
1974	102,348	62	61,792	38
1975	103,420	63	61,873	37
1976	104,777	61	66,372	39
1977	104,072	60	69,382	40
1978	106,158	60	71,548	40
1979	99,388	60	66,395	40
1980				
1981	93,481	57	69,493	43
1982	92,162	56	73,265	44
1983	90,631	55	72,644	45
1984	95,531	55	78,886	45
1985	93,946	54	79,256	46
1986	91,171	54	77,538	46
1987	89,052	53	78,238	47
1988	85,232	51	81,967	49
1989	82,044	51	77,999	49
1990	81,363	50	79,591	50

For **Figure 5**

Percentage PSAC Membership by Class and Gender, 1973-1990

Total Numbers:	Male WC	Male NMC	Female WC	Female NMC
1973	85,804	13,544	54,443	2,829
1974	87,326	15,022	58,652	3,140
1975	88,375	15,045	58,591	3,282
1976	89,243	15,534	62,926	3,456
1977	88,462	15,611	65,913	3,469
1978	90,925	15,233	65,029	6,519
1979	84,883	14,505	60,345	6,050
1980				
1981	79,758	13,723	63,145	6,348
1982	78,334	13,828	66,550	6,715
1983	76,898	13,733	65,980	6,664
1984	81,087	14,444	71,664	7,222
1985	79,078	14,868	74,750	4,506
1986	76,639	14,532	73,096	4,442
1987	74,978	14,074	73,791	4,447
1988	69,244	12,800	73,492	4,507
1989	71,544	13,688	77, 136	4,831
1990	68,316	13,047	74,853	4,738

For Figure 5
Percentage PSAC Members by Class and Gender, 1973-1990

	Male WC	Male NMC	Female WC	Female NMC
1973	54	9	35	2
1974	53	9	36	2
1975	53	9	36	2
1976	52	9	37	2
1977	51	9	38	2
1978	51	9	36	4
1979	51	9	36	4
1980				
1981	49	8	39	4
1982	48	8	40	4
1983	47	8	41	4
1984	47	8	41	4
1985	46	8	43	3
1986	45	9	43	3
1987	45	8	44	3
1988	43	8	46	3
1989	43	8	46	3
1990	42	8	47	3

Appendix Two

Interviews and dates

Below are the positions of elected and staff members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada followed by the date(s) they were interviewed. In some cases the interviewees wished to remain anonymous. The interviews are numbered and it is this number that appears in the text.

1. Elected member of the PSAC National Board of Directors, retired.
July 1996.
2. Robert Allen, staff member, PSAC regional representative,
May 9, 1991 and September, 1993.
3. Marie McGraw, elected member, President of a local in Solicitor General
Component, PSAC.
February 1993
4. Staff member, regional representative.
February, 1993.
5. Elizabeth Millar, staff member, Head of Classification and Equal Pay section,
PSAC.
March 1989
6. Joanne Labine, former member of the PSAC, Representative on the Master
Evaluation Committee of the Joint Union Management Initiative (JUNI),
Equal Pay Study.
February 1989.
7. Members of PSAC, evaluators assigned to sub-committees of the JUNI.
September 1989 and March 1990.
8. Member of the General Labour and Trades Group retired, past President of a
National Component local, PSAC.
September 1989.
9. Staff member, PSAC regional representative, retired.
September 1989.
10. Staff member, Educational officer, PSAC.
October, 1989.

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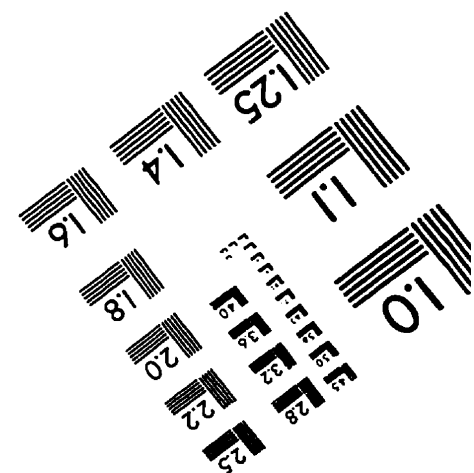
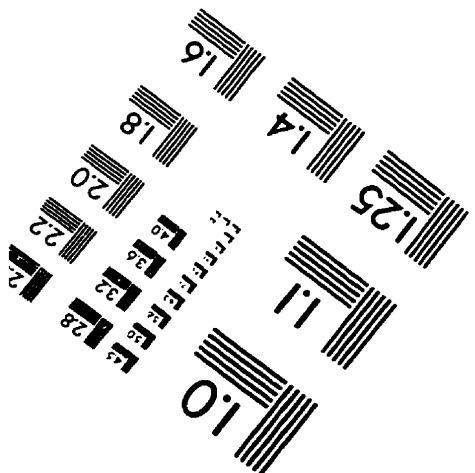
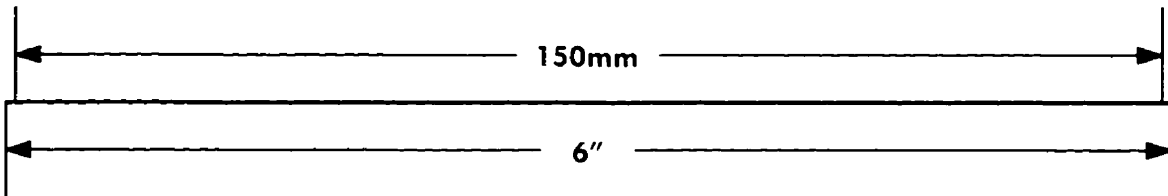
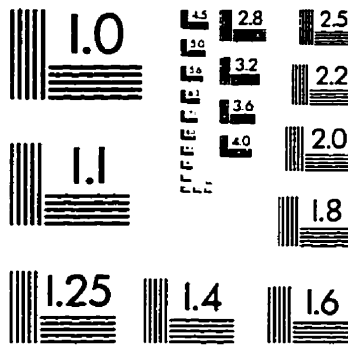
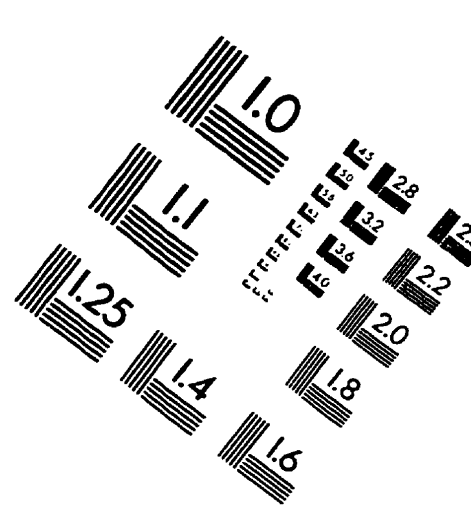
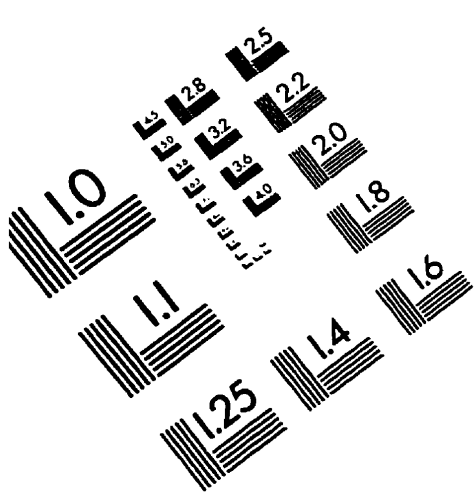
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