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THE VOICE AND THE WOMEN OF WINNIPEG, 1894-1918

by

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Graduate Studies and Research,
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fulfillment of the Master of Arts
degree in History.



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
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ABSTRACT

This is the story of a newspaper and its attitude to women. It examines how The Voice, the Winnipeg labour paper published between 1894 and 1918, portrayed women, and sheds light on the attitudes of the working men of Winnipeg to women. In addition, it demonstrates The Voice's importance as a source for the history of women, particularly working-class women.

The thesis contends that working-class men, as revealed by The Voice, struggled to reconcile two contradictory views of women, women as wives and mothers, and women as members of the paid labour force. The result was an equivocal attitude to women's work. The spectre of women suddenly appearing in factories and selling their labour much more cheaply than would men clearly frightened men. Suddenly all their hard-won gains were jeopardized; as the primary, and often sole, breadwinners in a household, men could ill afford the drop in wages or the unemployment that might follow a female invasion. Yet at the same time since their own arguments for better wages and tolerable working conditions were based on fairness and justice, it was difficult to deny similar treatment to women. This ambivalence is reflected in the pages of The Voice.

The thesis also demonstrates the extent to which some

members of the working class collaborated with middle-class reformers to achieve common goals. It has been suggested by historians that woman suffrage was obtained solely through the efforts of middle-class reformers in collaboration with organized farmers. The thesis addresses the participation of members of the working class in the suffrage movement in Manitoba, and contends that they played a significant role.

The Voice clearly assumed that it was being read by women, and on occasion it spoke directly to them. It published romantic fiction, it directed advertisements at women, and it published a woman's column. Of these the woman's column is probably the most significant. It was designed specifically for women and thus reflects The Voice's attitude to all women, in the paid labour force and at home. The images of women in The Voice's woman's column, advertising, humour and fiction reflect both the diversity of the lives of Winnipeg's working-class women and The Voice's ambivalence regarding women's changing place in society.

The thesis begins with a brief account of the history of The Voice. It then addresses the paper's attitude to working women and The Voice's support for their efforts to organize and its calls for state regulation of women's wages. It then turns its attention to The Voice's involvement in the woman suffrage movement and the participation of working-class men and women in that movement. Finally, the thesis considers those parts of The

Voice aimed at a female audience.

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INTRODUCTION¹

This is the story of a newspaper and its attitude to women. It examines how The Voice², the Winnipeg labour paper published between 1894 and 1918, portrayed women, and sheds light on the attitudes of the working men of Winnipeg to women. It brings forward the lives of a heretofore largely invisible group of women, those in the paid labour force and in the homes of working men.

"The labour press", said Charles Lipton, "is a barometer."³ This is particularly true in the case of The Voice, "one of the best" labour papers in the country.⁴ For twenty-four years the official organ of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, The Voice was open to a wide range of opinions and points of view, and reported upon most issues of concern to its constituency. It is also the largest surviving body of material on the history of organized labour in Winnipeg. The Trades and Labor Council records have not survived, nor have those of most unions. Next to nothing remains of the records of the numerous small labour and socialist parties that came and went in this period.⁵ Except for a few major players such as R. B. Russell and Fred Dixon, few labour activists have left records. For the study of working-class women the situation is even bleaker.

The papers of the Woman's Labor League are not available. Of the 17 women's organizations formed between 1881 and 1924 whose papers are in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba⁶, none is of working-class origin. No papers for individual women have survived. Few witnesses to this period remain. Hence the significance of The Voice. The importance of the paper as a source for the study of Winnipeg's labour movement has long been recognized, but we are only beginning to explore its potential for women's history. As this thesis will demonstrate, The Voice had much to say about women, and particularly working-class women. One of the tasks of the thesis is, therefore, to recount, in some detail, hitherto unknown aspects of the lives of working-class women in turn of the century Winnipeg, as revealed in The Voice. The thesis is thus of necessity largely descriptive.

Nonetheless the thesis does contend that these details reveal an equivocal attitude to women. Working-class men, as revealed by The Voice, struggled to reconcile two contradictory visions: a traditional view of women as guardians of the hearth and bearers of children, and a more progressive view of women as equal partners in public and private life. The paper (and presumably its readers) vacillated in the ambiguous area between the two. They were prepared to support women's claims for higher wages and the ballot, but only insofar as those claims did not challenge

their own rights, or call into question their position as family breadwinners and leaders of labour. It was fine for working-class women's share of the pie to increase, providing that increase came at the expense of capitalists and not of working-class men. While the majority of the time they supported initiatives leading to a greater emancipation of women, at the same time they advocated measures that reinforced women's domestic role and an image of women as subordinate to and dependent on men.

In addition, this thesis will demonstrate the extent to which some members of the working class collaborated with middle-class reformers to achieve common goals. It has been suggested by historians that woman suffrage was obtained solely through the efforts of middle-class reformers in collaboration with organized farmers. As this thesis will show, in this and other areas, some workers, while remaining quite conscious of their working-class status, crossed class boundaries in an effort to achieve certain objectives. The working class played a more active role in the province's political life than has heretofore been believed.

The historian trying to write about working-class women in Manitoba is handicapped by a dearth of information. Manitoba in the early years of the twentieth century has attracted considerable attention from professional historians, journalists and local historical societies, and there have been numerous studies, ranging from broad surveys

to detailed analyses. For all their variety, however, they have one thing in common: working-class women are almost entirely absent.

The survey histories are the most disappointing. The best known of these, W. L. Morton's Manitoba: A History⁷, covers nearly three hundred and fifty years of Manitoba history in a single volume, and is consequently not as detailed as some of the more specific studies that follow it. With the exception of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, there is very little mention of labour, much less of women. Morton covers the campaign for suffrage in fewer than nine lines, and of working-class women there is not a single word. Morton did not consult The Voice. Labour fares better in a book by James A. Jackson commissioned by the Manitoba Historical Society to mark the province's centennial. With the exception of one paragraph on suffrage, however, there is nothing about women.⁸ Like Jackson, Gerald Friesen based his history of the Canadian prairies primarily on secondary sources. Given that he wrote at a time when excellent material on the history of Prairie women was available, particularly about rural women and the woman suffrage movement, it is hard to justify his neglect of the topic. His only mention of women is a slight two page discussion of the "suffragette movement": women do not even appear in the bibliographic essay included as an appendix.⁹

Urban historians have not been much kinder to women. In several books and articles Alan Artibise has chronicled the life of the city of Winnipeg in the years preceding the First World War. Given his focus on economic development and the city building process, it comes as no great surprise that Artibise's Winnipeg is a city of very few women. Though in his best known work, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914, he devotes a chapter to the city's flourishing trade in vice, he does so merely to demonstrate the concern Winnipeggers had for economic growth and prosperity. He barely mentions those at the center of the trade, the prostitutes themselves. The only other mention of working-class women comes in J. S. Woodsworth's report on the cost of living in Winnipeg, which Artibise includes as an appendix.¹⁰ There are even fewer women and next to no working-class men in Ruben Bellan's commercial history of the city.¹¹

Women do not figure any more prominently in the work of most labour historians. Much of their work is about the organized labour movement¹²: given the low rate of unionization among women and their very limited participation in local trades councils and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, the minimal representation of women in these studies is not entirely surprising. But it is irking to note that even in unions where women outnumbered men, the presence of women is rarely mentioned.

Though Desmond Morton and Terry Copp at least attempt to address the subject of working women¹³, most references are merely to photographs. The same is true of Doug Smith's Let Us Rise: An Illustrated History of the Manitoba Labour Movement.¹⁴

Many historians of the Winnipeg General Strike have sought explanations for the strike in the years preceding it, and have thus looked at the history of the labour movement in Winnipeg.¹⁵ Women figure neither in their accounts of the events leading up to the strike, nor in their accounts of the strike itself, where Norman Penner and Mary Horodyski, for example, have uncovered considerable strike action by women. Only David Bercuson has even attempted to address the involvement of women, and he unfortunately completely misrepresented it.¹⁶

Manitoba's working-class women have not fared much better in the work of historians of women. There is a sizeable and growing body of literature on women in the Prairie provinces, but much of it focuses on the pioneering experiences of rural women and on the campaign for suffrage.¹⁷ The suffrage studies present a Manitoba suffrage movement composed entirely of Anglo-Saxon farmers and middle-class urban professionals, the leadership coming from the latter group. Organized labour and the working class play only a minor role, if indeed they were involved at all. For example, Catherine Cleverdon, author of the

first comprehensive study of the campaign for suffrage in Canada, dismisses labour's endorsement of suffrage and praises that of the Grain Growers' Association, despite the fact that organized labour's support precedes that of the farmers by 17 years. She did not consult The Voice.¹⁸ In her study of the ideology of the English Canadian suffrage movement, Carol Bacchi cannot identify a single working-class member of a Manitoba suffrage society, and points to the hostility of The Voice. She only looked at the paper from 1909 and thus missed the fact that The Voice had endorsed suffrage fourteen years earlier.¹⁹ Susan Jackel has studied the middle-class Canadian Women's Press Club²⁰, and other studies have focussed on the middle-class star of the Manitoba suffrage movement, Nellie McClung.²¹ Mary Kinnear has begun to challenge the perception of Manitoba suffragists as uniformly Anglo-Saxon by addressing the participation of Icelandic women in the suffrage movement.²² Labour, however, remains invisible in histories of the suffrage movement.

Until recently, the only working-class women to figure in the historiography were prostitutes.²³ This is beginning to change. Recent work by Linda Kealey has examined the minimum wage for working women in Manitoba, and Marilyn Barber has looked at the servant problem.²⁴ There have been studies of the participation of women in the Canadian left and the Left's stand on the "woman question" though, as is

the case with studies of national scope, Manitoba does not attract a great deal of attention.²⁵ All of these studies have in common their focus on responses to the problem of working women, and not on the women themselves. There is little information on working-class women, those in the paid labour force and even less those in the home. This thesis, while sharing its predecessors' focus on the responses of men to women's increasing participation in public life, will endeavour to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge of the lives of working women.

Besides the dearth of information and the historiographical bias, The Voice itself presents a problem to the historian. Begun as The People's Voice in 1894, it continued as The Voice for more than twenty years before being taken over by new management and becoming the Western Labor News from 1918 to 1923. This thesis originally intended to cover the entire period, and the research was done accordingly: over 1500 issues of the paper were read, as was the relevant secondary material, particularly on the Winnipeg General Strike. It became clear, however, that the change of editors in 1918 had meant a substantial change in the paper's editorial policy, and that it would be inaccurate to treat what were in fact two papers as a single entity. Regrettably this has meant deleting some very interesting material covering the participation of women in the General Strike of 1919. Though further exploration of

that topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is one that merits the attention of historians.

The thesis will begin with a brief account of the history and format of The Voice and its place in the organized labour movement in Winnipeg. It will then address The Voice's attitude to working women, the paper's support for their efforts to organize and its calls for state regulation of women's wages. It will then turn its attention to The Voice's involvement in the woman suffrage movement and the participation of working-class men and women in that movement. Finally, the thesis will consider those parts of The Voice aimed at a female audience: the woman's column, the advertising, the fiction and the humour. Through it all, some working women will come alive and much male ambiguity to them will be revealed.

ENDNOTES

1. My sincere thanks to Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, Nancy Adamson, my friends and family for their patience, encouragement, and support throughout this lengthy project.
2. Unless otherwise specified or made clear by the context, the name The Voice refers to both The People's Voice and The Voice, published from 16 June 1894 to 1 May 1897, and from 8 May 1897 to 26 July 1918 respectively. For a discussion of this change, see Chapter 1.
3. Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement in Canada, 1827-1959, Toronto: NC Press, 1959, p. 226.
4. Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People, Ottawa: Deneau, 1980, p. 62.
5. One exception is the Dominion Labor Party, Winnipeg and District, some of whose minutes are in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, R. B. Russell papers.
6. Susan Jackel, "First Days, Fighting Days: Prairie Press Women and Suffrage Activism, 1906-1916", in Mary Kinnear, ed., First Days Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987, p. 74, fn. 36.
7. W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957.
8. James A. Jackson, The Centennial History of Manitoba, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. The absence of footnotes or a bibliography makes it difficult to be certain, but it appears that Jackson used secondary sources. There is no indication that he consulted The Voice.
9. Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984. Friesen does address at some length labour's contribution to Prairie history.

10. Alan P. J. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975.
11. Ruben Bellan, Winnipeg First Century: An Economic History, Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing Co., 1978.
12. See, for example, H. A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, Toronto: MacMillan, 1948; Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982; Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People, Ottawa: Deneau, 1980; Doug Smith, Let Us Rise: An Illustrated History of the Manitoba Labour Movement, Vancouver: New Star Books, 1985; Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement.
13. Morton and Copp, Working People.
14. Smith, Let Us Rise.
15. See, for example, D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950; J. E. Rea, The Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973; David Jay Bercuson and Kenneth McNaught, The Winnipeg Strike: 1919, Don Mills: Longman Canada, 1974; David Jay Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974.
16. Bercuson, Confrontation, p.141. See Norman Penner, ed., Winnipeg 1919, Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1975; Mary Horodyski, "Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919", Manitoba History, No. 11, Spring 1986, pp. 28-37; also the Western Labor News during the strike.
17. See Susan Jackel, "Canadian Prairie Women's Historiography: A Bibliographic Survey", The CRIAW Papers/Les Documents de l'ICREF, no. 14, Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF. See also Beth Light and Veronica Stong-Boag, True Daughters of the North: Canadian Women's History, An Annotated Bibliography, Toronto: OISE Press, 1980.
18. Catherine Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950. See pp. 46-83 for the Prairie provinces.
19. Carol Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.
20. Jackel, "First Days, Fighting Days".
21. See, for example, Candace Savage, Our Nell: A Scrapbook Biography of Nellie McClung, Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Ever a

Crusader': Nellie McClung, First Wave Feminist", in Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1985, pp. 178-190; Veronica Strong-Boag, introduction to the reprint of Nellie McClung, In Times Like These, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

22. Mary Kinnear, "The Icelandic Connection: Freyja and The Manitoba Women Suffrage Movement", Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la femme, vol. 7, no. 4, Winter 1985, pp. 25-28.

23. See Alan Artibise, Winnipeg, chapter 14, pp. 246-264; Joy Cooper, "Red Lights in Winnipeg", Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society, Transactions, February 1971, pp. 61-74; James Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, Toronto: Signet, 1971.

24. Linda Kealey, "Women and Labour during World War 1: Women Workers and the Minimum Wage in Manitoba", and Marilyn Barber, "The Servant Problem in Manitoba, 1896-1930", in Mary Kinnear, First Days, pp. 76-99, 100-119.

25. See Linda Kealey, "Canadian Socialism and the Woman Question", Labour/Le Travail, no. 13, Spring 1984, pp. 77-100; Joan Sangster, "Canadian Women in Radical Politics and Labour, 1920-1950", Ph.D. Thesis, McMaster University, 1984; Janice Newton, "'Enough of Exclusive Masculine Thinking': The Feminist Challenge to the Early Canadian Left, 1900-1918", Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1987.

CHAPTER 1

The Paper and its Editor

On 16 June 1894, an English language labour press was launched in Winnipeg. The People's Voice was the city's second venture in working-class publishing.¹ It was to be the most successful, printing over 1250 weekly issues over the next twenty-four years. In the summer of 1918 the paper folded and was immediately replaced by the Western Labor News.² Throughout this period The People's Voice, shortened to The Voice in 1897, spoke to and for the working men and women of Winnipeg. As the official organ of the Trades Council, it may be considered to represent the opinions of the majority of working people on the issues of the day. It reported on questions of concern to the working class, and no doubt helped to shape their views.

The first editors were a trio of printers, C. C. Stewart, the editor-in-chief, and his colleagues, O. Partington and O. Anderson of the typographers' union.³ Looking back on its origins in its twentieth anniversary issue, The Voice remarked that "of course no others could be

found foolish enough and at the same time with enough ability to start the sheet off as they did."⁴ Despite supportive unions' purchasing of subscriptions for each of their members, within three years the paper was in financial trouble. Three more printers, H. Cowan, Gus Pingle and A. W. Puttee then took over.⁵ Cowan, the editor, was the president of the Trades Council, Pingle the Typographical Union delegate to the Trades Council, and Puttee the union's financial secretary. During this period the name was shortened to The Voice. By 1898 the paper was again in trouble, and Puttee became its sole editor, remaining so until 1918. In the early 1900s the local manufacturers' association attempted to put The Voice out of business by cutting off their advertising, a sure sign from the workers' point of view that their voice was in fact being heard. Though the boycott was unsuccessful, The Voice never paid for itself and had to maintain some semblance of financial stability by having a job printing business on the side.⁶

Over the years the format varied. Originally eight pages, in mid-1895 it shrank to four large pages.⁷ In the autumn of 1896, it began including syndicated material⁸, easily distinguished from the rest of the paper by tone and a different type and layout. The syndicated pages tended to include humour, anecdotes, advertisements for products manufactured in the United States, fiction, fashion advice to women and various articles from American publications.

The content of these pages does not appear to have been geared specifically to a working-class audience. With the addition of the syndicated material, the paper grew to eight pages, the length it was to be throughout most of its life. The syndicated material gradually became less obvious and appeared to be spread throughout the paper, though it was concentrated primarily on pages 2, 3, 6 and 7. In April 1906 The Voice replaced the company hired to provide syndicated material in favour of one with unionized employees, but there was no appreciable change to the content. Indeed, that content remained substantially the same until the paper folded. Women's columns came and went, as did columns by the Political Equality League, the Health League, the Single Tax League, the Direct Legislation League, the Socialist Party of Canada, and various other groups. Editorials were usually on page one or four, but the editors did not hesitate to make their feelings known elsewhere in the paper, and editorial comment could be found virtually anywhere.

The Voice's mandate was explicitly political. In the inaugural issues the editors indicated their intention "to promote the best interests of the class we represent - the organized working men of the City of Winnipeg."⁹ Making no pretense of objectivity, the paper would inform, educate, and entertain its readership. As the official organ of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, The Voice gave front page

coverage to the Council's activities, printed minutes of its meetings, and outlined some of the activities of various member unions. It reported on the local labour scene, from union organizing to strikes and political activities. Editorially the paper took on its constituency's many enemies: city council, local business, the provincial and federal governments, corporate wealth, capitalism, and the monied classes. Although it never said so directly, The Voice appears to have considered itself a foil to the more information-oriented media: people read the Free Press for the story, and The Voice for the truth. The latter clearly expected workers would be reading the daily press; The Voice provided commentary or another version of the facts. If the Free Press told the public what had happened at the last meeting of city council, The Voice pointed out the class bias of the councillors and addressed the likely negative impact of their decisions on the workers. It reported immediate issues affecting workers' everyday lives; it commented upon debates in the provincial legislature and the House of Commons; it discussed socialist theory and labour strategy and noted the condition of the workers in other parts of the world.

The Voice was edited for nearly twenty years by one man, Arthur Puttee. Thus an examination of the paper requires some understanding of the man. Born in Britain in 1868, Puttee emigrated to Brandon, Manitoba in 1888, and

lived briefly in the United States before settling in Winnipeg in 1891. Trained as a printer and introduced to the trade union movement in Britain, he became active in the Winnipeg local of the International Typographical Union, and was instrumental in founding the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council and the Winnipeg Labor Party. When the Member of Parliament for Winnipeg died in early 1899, Puttee immediately called on labour to run a candidate. In the succeeding months the Labor Party and the Trades Council met, and by June had nominated Puttee himself. Puttee did not expect to win the by-election set for January 1900, and labour seems to have considered the campaign an educational exercise rather than a serious attempt to send a labour member to the House of Commons. However, a split in the local branch of the Liberal Party led to a surprise ten-vote victory for Puttee. He became the first representative of labour to sit in the Canadian Parliament. In the months that followed he was courted by the Liberals, and with their support was returned to the House in the general election of November 1900 with a 1200 vote plurality. By 1904, however, Puttee was no longer an attractive candidate for either Liberals or labour supporters. His association with labour had alienated the business community, and his collaboration with the Liberals combined with a shift to the left in the leadership of Winnipeg's labour movement had cost him the support of much of his natural constituency. Puttee was

resoundingly defeated.¹⁰

In the years that followed Puttee remained involved with organized labour in Winnipeg. He was appointed the Independent Labor Party's first chairman in 1906¹¹ and participated in the formation of the Manitoba Labor Party in 1910.¹² In 1916 Puttee was elected to the city of Winnipeg's Board of Control. In the 1917 federal election he campaigned actively for two labour candidates who, despite support from the Liberals, were defeated. He promptly began a campaign to establish a new labour party, and in March 1918, with the executive of the Trades Council, was instrumental in launching a Winnipeg local of the Dominion Labor Party. The local's membership was mixed and included labourites, social democrats, and reformers.¹³ That spring Winnipeg's civic workers went on strike. Puttee opposed the strike, though in his capacity as a member of the Board of Control he was largely responsible for the report that ultimately led to a resolution of the strike.¹⁴ He had by then been actively involved in the Winnipeg labour movement for over twenty years, nineteen of them as editor of The Voice. When more radical members of the Trades Council whom Puttee had alienated over the years with his moderation offered to purchase the paper, he agreed, and on 26 July 1918 the final issue of The Voice appeared.¹⁵

Arthur Puttee was a labourite. He believed in class oriented political action by working men, and in the

formation of parties open to a wide range of opinion. His model was Britain's similarly inclusive Independent Labor Party.¹⁶ Over the years Puttee founded or participated in a number of labour parties open to a variety of progressive views. His ultimate aim was a classless society, and he was prepared to work with various elements on the left as well as middle-class reformers in an effort to achieve this objective. He saw no reason to refuse reforms made by capitalists, providing they were for the good of the workers. Though he considered himself a socialist¹⁷, Puttee was bitterly opposed to the more doctrinaire socialists who believed in the impossibility of reforming capitalism and the inappropriateness of participating in any political action not designed to wipe out the wage system. His open dislike of these "impossibilists" and their tactics, his deeply held belief in reform and consequent occasional collaboration with Liberals and middle-class reformers earned him the enmity of members of the Socialist Party of Canada and other radicals.¹⁸ The animosity had been building for years and Puttee's opposition to the civic workers' strike of 1918 proved to be the final straw. He was branded a traitor to his class. Said the Western Labor News in its inaugural issue, "[i]t was a real war, and while the master class was attacking us in front we found the labor paper at our back attacking us to such an extent that the daily press used whole editorials from The Voice in

their own press to attack us."¹⁹ Winnipeg's labour movement had moved to the left, and Arthur Puttee and his reformism were left behind.

Like other working-class reformers, Puttee was a supporter of woman suffrage. His paper had endorsed the measure in 1895, and continued to do so until full adult suffrage was granted in 1916. Puttee himself included the franchise for women in his electoral platform in 1900 and in 1904.²⁰ He also encouraged women to canvass for him, reminding them that canvassing required "tact, judgment, honesty and some courage", all womanly virtues.²¹ His wife Gertrude shared his interest in woman suffrage and was involved in both the Equal Suffrage Club and the Political Equality League.²² In addition, she was a labour appointee to the Royal Commission on Technical Education, and a prominent member of both Woman's Labor Leagues.²³ Mrs. Puttee shared her husband's willingness to form coalitions that cut across class lines.

For most of its life The Voice was endorsed and sponsored by the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council²⁴, and during most of that time Puttee himself sat on the Council. The paper was thus the official voice of Winnipeg's working men and women. Its editorial policy was very much a reflection of Puttee's politics. His penchant for creating coalitions in the political arena was matched by his paper's inclusive publishing policy. Groups with a variety of views

were invited to express themselves in the pages of The Voice, and a number of them had, at various times, their own columns in the paper. Even the Socialists, with whom Puttee had always disagreed, had a column. The paper thus appealed to a wide readership and exposed its readers to a broad range of issues and perspectives: the nature of Puttee's politics prevented it from being narrow or polemical. The Voice's lengthy endorsement by the Trades and Labor Council, its varied content and its openness to different points of view make it, more than any sectarian paper, the legitimate voice of Winnipeg's working people. Hence its usefulness for a look at working women.

ENDNOTES

1. The first, the short-lived Winnipeg Labor Call, had been published in the mid-1880s by the city's first Trade and Labor Council. David Jay Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike, Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1974, p. 7.
2. The Western Labor News published until 13 August 1923.
3. The People's Voice, 3 October 1896. Stewart was soon appointed the AFL's Winnipeg organizer.
4. The Voice, 12 June 1914, p. 1.
5. Stewart and Partington later left the printing business, Stewart becoming a customs broker and Partington a businessman in Kenora. Anderson remained in the printing business. The People's Voice, 1 May 1897, 8 May 1897.
6. The People's Voice, 5 September 1896.
7. See The People's Voice, 31 August 1895.
8. Ibid., 24 October 1896.
9. Ibid., 16 June 1894, p. 1.
10. A. Ross McCormack, "Arthur Puttee and the Liberal Party: 1899-1904", Canadian Historical Review, vol. 51, no. 2, June 1970, pp. 141-163.
11. The Party folded in 1908.
12. A. Ross McCormack, "Radical Politics in Winnipeg: 1899-1915", Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society, Transactions, series 3, no. 29, 1972/73, pp. 87-88.
13. A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1894-1919, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.
14. Bercuson, Confrontation, p. 59.
15. Western Labor News, 2 August 1918.

16. His sympathy for the British ILP is reflected in The Voice's content; there were a number of articles about the party and its leaders.
17. McCormack, Reformers, p. 85. There is no consensus among historians about Puttee's politics. Ross McCormack has described Puttee's political philosophy as "an amalgam of Marxism and Christianity, populism and liberalism". (McCormack, Reformers, p. 64.) Allan Seager has called Puttee "an advanced Liberal, not a socialist". (Allan Seager, "Puttee, Arthur", Canadian Encyclopedia, Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985, p. 1513.)
18. See, for example, The Voice, 17 July 1914, p. 1.
19. Western Labor News, 2 August 1918, p. 6.
20. The Voice, 19 January 1900, p. 1; 14 October 1904, p. 4.
21. Ibid., 19 January 1900, p. 1.
22. PAM, Political Equality League Minutes.
23. See Chapter 2.
24. It was dropped as the Council's official organ in 1917.

CHAPTER 2

THE VOICE SPEAKS ABOUT WOMEN AND WORK

The Voice's mandate was to promote the union principle among all workers. Throughout its life it encouraged, and sometimes actively supported, organizing attempts by working women and by working-class women not in the paid labour force. Its involvement ranged from simple reporting on organizing drives, to editorial encouragement, to offers of speakers and meeting space. On one occasion, it printed a special strike issue. At the same time, however, The Voice printed disparaging articles about women workers. More insidiously, it endorsed the actions of the government body charged with implementing minimum wage legislation for women, despite the vociferous opposition of the Woman's Labour League. The Voice's attitude to working women is a bit ambiguous: while on the whole it was positive and supportive, The Voice does not appear to have been entirely comfortable with the presence of women in the paid labour force.

By 1891, there were over 300 industrial establishments in Winnipeg, some 405 or 16% of whose employees were women and girls. Seventy percent of them were in the dressmaking and millinery, and tailors and clothiers sectors. The rest were concentrated in printing and bookbinding, and various

aspects of the confectionery, beverage and sewing trades.¹ Few, if any, were members of trade unions.²

A number of explanations have been put forward for this low rate of unionization among women workers. The most popular one at the turn of the century was, as The Voice put it, that it was difficult to "get the women into line"³: women were thought to be passive and lacking the class consciousness necessary to form unions. Others claimed that the problem was organized labour's lack of interest in women workers.⁴ Some historians have suggested that the explanation might lie in women's image of themselves and their belief that it was women's lot to bear a heavy burden without complaint.⁵ A more likely explanation is one put forward by Wayne Roberts. He argues that the answer lies in part in the perception of women's work as temporary or transitory, in part in the youth of most female workers⁶, and in part the isolated character of much of women's work.⁷

The first evidence of female involvement in a trade union was in 1895 when a woman's name appeared in a new list of officers of the Journeymen Tailor's Union No. 170.⁸ Despite numerous early calls for women to organize⁹, the first report of such activity actually taking place came in the summer of 1897 when a group of laundry workers unsuccessfully attempted to establish a union.¹⁰ Winnipeg's first union of women workers was finally established in 1899 when fifty women walked out from the Emerson and Hague garment factory over a wage dispute and the firing of three

of their number.¹¹ Local 35 of the United Garment Workers of America had been launched.

The male labour movement immediately and vigorously supported the strike. The Trades Council was deeply involved from the beginning: it helped the women form the union; it had The Voice issue a special strike edition¹²; it formed a negotiating committee and another to find other work for the striking women, and then a third to look for another city factory willing to work with the union¹³; it set up a strike fund that eventually collected \$688.10¹⁴; it wrote to "Organized Labor Everywhere" explaining the circumstances of the strike and urging workers to buy only union-made garments.¹⁵ With the encouragement of the Trades Council, the Hoover Manufacturing Company was established.¹⁶ Hoover hired twelve employees, among them the union leaders whom Emerson and Hague had refused to rehire.¹⁷ The majority of the union remained on strike and the Trades Council continued to administer the strike fund¹⁸. The Emerson and Hague strike was never officially settled, and eventually petered out when all of the striking employees found other work. In tribute to the courage of the "girl workers", the Garment Workers' Union led the 1899 Labor Day parade¹⁹, a position of honour it was to occupy for many years. It remained the city's strongest and most active women's union. A decade after Winnipeg's first union of women workers was formed, The Voice commented that "if one were to search the records of the Trades Council and

organized labor movement in Winnipeg in order to decide what particular action or accomplishment had resulted in the most general benefit to the working class in this country, the verdict would be the organization of the Garment Workers' union in the 90's."²⁰

The garment workers' union continued to grow, and by the spring of 1905 all but one of the city's garment factories were unionized. The Voice's support for the union had not flagged and it expressed delight at this development, adding that "[t]his result surely should spur on the workers to seek the organization of other women workers."²¹ Strong as it was, though, the garment workers' union still suffered from organizational difficulties. Inexperience was a major problem, as was an unstable union leadership. The membership was young, with little experience in the workforce and none in labour organizing. Most were recruited from the city, and because of the low rate of unionization among women, had never been members of a union. This complicated recruitment of both general members and union officers.²² Compounding the problem was the turnover among union leaders. In its first few years the garment workers' union lost a number of its leaders to marriage; in one seven-year period, no fewer than four current or former presidents left the union to marry.²³ Others left because of illness or family commitments. Many of the problems experienced by the garment workers' union are peculiar to women's unions, and may help to explain the early

disappearance of other such unions.

The union nonetheless sought solutions to its organizational problems. It considered amalgamating with the Journeymen Tailors' Union. A vote was held, but the results were never announced in The Voice.²⁴ The proposal appears to have been rejected since the two unions continued to figure separately in The Voice's list of local unions. In the spring of 1906, an officer of the International union visited Winnipeg to put the union on a "proper working basis." While in Winnipeg, Miss Daly addressed the Trades Council and promised that the heretofore dismal attendance of Garment Workers' delegates would be improved. She thanked the Council for its help in the past and expressed the hope that the garment workers could count on it in the years to come.²⁵ Representatives of the union became involved in the Label League, encouraging working men and women to purchase only union made goods and trying to convince shopkeepers to sell only products made by union labour.²⁶

By the fall of 1906 union membership had increased and a new local was founded. Local 153, generally referred to as the special order branch of the garment workers union, began with some 100 members, including tailors engaged in wholesale work.²⁷ Unlike local 35, the majority of whose members were reported to have been of Icelandic origin²⁸, local 153 had a more varied membership. At one union meeting, speeches were made in English, Yiddish and German,

and by "representatives of the foreign socialistic societies" as well as Trades and Labor Council and Labor Party representatives.²⁹ The new local was quick to assert itself: less than two weeks after it was first mentioned in The Voice, the entire staff of B. Gardner & Company clothing manufacturers walked out when their wages were lowered and experienced employees were fired to make room for new and cheaper hands. The Voice once again pledged its support to a union of garment workers.³⁰ The outcome of the strike was not recorded, though the firm is reported to have been planning to move its stock to Montreal.³¹

Shortly thereafter local 153 found itself faced with its second strike in as many months, prompted by an attempt by management at the Scotland Woolen Mills factory to fire several employees active in the union. The matter was resolved through the intervention of the Trades Council's arbitration committee³², and the firm was soon granted the use of the union label.³³ The peace at Scotland Woolen Mills was shortlived, and within six months 60 employees, half of them women, and all of them union members were fired without explanation.³⁴ The dispute turned ugly and twelve men were arrested on a variety of charges: though most garment workers and half the fired Scotland Woolen Mills employees were women, no women were arrested.³⁵ It was eventually resolved and charges were dropped when a member of the executive of the International union came from Hamilton to assist the local garment workers.³⁶ The

company, which had been battling the union for months, then changed its name to the Union Tailoring Company³⁷, and promptly wrote to the Trades Council expressing its desire to become a union shop, in fact as well as in name.³⁸ Labour difficulties persisted until in 1908 the company was sold and a new manager, a former president of the union, was hired.³⁹

The garment workers' unions remained the city's most active unions of women workers⁴⁰ and they were soon in the headlines again. This time the trouble was at the King of the Road Overall factory, a factory employing an almost exclusively female workforce of about one hundred, all of whom were members of Local 35. The employees arrived at work one morning to find a notice posted informing them that the factory was an open shop, effective immediately. They promptly walked out. The Trades Council appointed a conciliation committee. The union's international headquarters eventually called in an A.F.L. organizer to take charge. Labour once again rallied behind women workers. A benefit concert and "boxing contest" were organized to raise funds for the striking workers.⁴¹ Since the company was not interested in negotiating with the union other positions were found for the women. Though the union was defeated The Voice confidently predicted that within a year the membership of local 35 would double, making it the largest garment workers' union in Canada.⁴²

Another fifty women joined local 153 following a brief

strike in June 1910⁴³ and two months later the union again found itself on strike. When the Manitoba Clothing Company decided to run an open shop, union members walked out. This dispute was temporarily resolved with the intervention of UGWA general organizer Sam Landers, but resurfaced when employees refused to make uniforms for workers hired to replace striking street railway employees. A previously unorganized group of capmakers joined the walk out. The garment workers ended their strike when the street railway workers' strike was settled.⁴⁴

The garment workers' union continued to grow and in January 1911 The Voice estimated that there were approximately 400 workers employed in Winnipeg's six overall factories, all of which were unionized. Local 35 decided that the time had come to appoint a full-time, permanent business agent. Elections were held and president Maggie Tweedy was chosen to occupy the position.⁴⁵ Another local, number 208, was founded in this period with the assistance of the Social Democratic Party and was composed, it appears, largely of male workers.⁴⁶ Two years later it faced its first labour dispute when the Hadden Company dropped its piecework rates dramatically: the average weekly wage for women fell to \$5.00 from \$7.00, and men's wages went to \$15.00 from \$17.00.⁴⁷ It is not known how the strike was resolved. Recruitment of new members continued, and by 1915 local 35 had 450 members, 435 of them women, employed in Winnipeg's eight shirt and overall factories.⁴⁸ Some time

that year a local of the Ladies' Garment Workers' union was formed⁴⁹, and in the summer of 1916 it went on strike over the issues of union recognition. The garment workers' attendance at Trades Council meetings remained poor.⁵⁰ Except for a brief period of tension in early 1917⁵¹, industrial relations were calm. The garment workers' union continued to expand as other branches of the clothing trades were organized⁵², and in the spring of 1919 it strongly endorsed the general strike.⁵³

The Voice and the Trades Council consistently supported garment workers' efforts to organize women in the clothing trades. In the early years their support was in the form of offers of speakers and meeting space, and encouraging editorials; as the union gained strength, the paper settled for reporting its activities. While The Voice agreed that one of the benefits of organizing women workers was that it would lead to an increase in women's wages and that such an increase might in fact remove women from sectors of the labour market where they were in competition with men, it was careful to point out to readers that this was not the case with the garment workers. Most workers in the garment trades were women. The manufacture of clothing was quite properly in the women's sphere, and their dominance of that industry was natural. Moreover, in the case of the Emerson and Hague strikers, "careful inquiry" had shown that all were self-supporting, and indeed a great number of them were the breadwinners of a household. Poor wages and bad working

conditions threatened the health of these "mothers of the coming generation", and it was the duty of working men to support women workers in their attempt to improve their situation.⁵⁴ Though in this instance they acknowledged that a woman's wages were sometimes a family's major source of income, the idea of a family wage earned by a male breadwinner dominated their thinking, as did the notion of a labour movement run by men. The Voice never objected to women garment workers earning less than men, nor did it complain when the Hadden Company further increased an already large wage gap. It said nothing about the fact that despite an overwhelmingly female membership, most garment workers' leaders were men, nor did it express concern about the low rate of attendance of garment workers' delegates at Trades Council meetings. It never challenged the traditional gendered division of labour.

The garment workers were not the only women workers to receive the support and encouragement of organized labour. When a Winnipeg teacher was unfairly treated by the School Board, her case was taken up by members of the Trades Council and the Labour Party who met several times with the Board and unsuccessfully lobbied the Premier on her behalf.⁵⁵ When women were invited to join the Retail Clerks' union in the spring of 1902, The Voice expressed its delight.⁵⁶ A visit to the Trades Council by fifty locked out biscuit makers was described by The Voice as the most inspiring scene ever witnessed in the Council chamber. As

it had done with the garment workers, the Trades Council established a strike fund and wrote to unions across the country telling them of the company's unfair labour practices. The dispute was never resolved and the employees found work elsewhere, many of them at the Hoover garment factory.⁵⁷ The Voice welcomed the formation of a union of domestics, and offered its assistance. The women met in the paper's offices, and members of the Trades Council attended one of the union's inaugural meetings to wish them well. In gratitude for the support of organized labour, a member of the Woman's Protective Union made a "wondrous cushion" for The Voice's editorial chair. The union was shortlived, and years later The Voice referred to domestic workers as "the toughest organization proposition that has been met with in trades unionism."⁵⁸ There were Trades Council supported attempts to launch unions of cloakmakers⁵⁹, capmakers⁶⁰ and gloveworkers⁶¹, and The Voice encouraged the formation of a union of cooks, waiters and waitresses.⁶² It supported the organizing activities of all the female telephone operators union⁶³, and actively encouraged striking women clerks in their 1917 battle with Woolworth's department store.⁶⁴ Though The Voice and the Trades Council encouraged women to join existing unions or form new ones, it never suggested that they should play a greater role in labour leadership.

The Voice's calls on women to organize were not limited to women in the paid labour force: other working-class women were encouraged to form associations to work for

improvements in the lives of all working-class people. The first such call came in the fall of 1894 following an article about the formation of a Ladies' Auxiliary to the Central Labor Union in Cleveland. The Voice suggested that "Winnipeg ladies" form a similar organization, and that "[w]hen their sympathies are once enlisted, ladies make better and more earnest workers in a good cause than men."⁶⁵ In 1902 the president of the Trades Council told delegates about the good work being done by the Women's International Labor League, and expressed the hope that such an organization would be established in Winnipeg.⁶⁶ Four years later Ada Muir raised the issue in her woman's column in The Voice when she called on already organized women to hold an open meeting and invite other women to attend. A women's league could then be formed and other women's trade unions organized. Such a league was necessary, she said, because industrial conditions for women could not be improved until women joined together and fought as one.⁶⁷

The Women's Labor Association, soon renamed the Woman's Labor League, was endorsed by the Trades Council in late 1909⁶⁸ and was invited to send delegates to the Council.⁶⁹ It had six objectives: to help members to understand issues affecting "the industrial struggle for existence"; to inspire women to advance the cause of trade unionism and the label movement, particularly among other women; to work for the objective of equal pay for equal work; "to abolish the evils that promote woman's degradation"; to work for woman

suffrage "as a political necessity to secure the other objects of the League'; and to encourage women to become more knowledgeable about household management, hygiene, health, nutrition, maternity and childrearing.⁷⁰

Most of the work of the League, however, was concentrated in three areas: vice and morality, suffrage, and the reform of dower and property laws affecting women. While there was some difference of opinion about the usefulness and appropriateness of a segregated district for prostitution, all League members agreed on the injustice of the prevailing double standard by which only women were arrested.⁷¹ They suggested that "women policemen" might apply the law more justly⁷², and attempted to have a city man charged with procuring.⁷³ The League also worked for suffrage. It collaborated with the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association in an attempt to form a citywide suffrage association⁷⁴ and appointed delegates to represent the League in a joint delegation to the Legislature.⁷⁵ It also held public meetings on the subject.⁷⁶ The most important issues for the Woman's Labor League appear to have been the need for changes in the Dower Law and the Married Women's Property Act. With the support of the Trades Council the League participated in a delegation that met with the Premier and other members of the government to discuss the passage of a law protecting married women's property rights.⁷⁷ The same coalition of women's groups, with the active participation of the League, later circulated a petition calling on the

government to grant homesteading rights to women of British birth resident in Canada for over one year.⁷⁸ At the request of the Trades Council the League nominated one of its members to sit on the Royal Commission on Technical Education, and made a presentation to the Commission.⁷⁹

The League did not campaign, as it had promised, for equal pay, nor did it devote a great deal of energy to advancing the cause of trade unionism among women. It was occasionally involved with the garment workers' union⁸⁰ and discussed participating in the Label League, though it is not clear whether it actually did so.⁸¹ At one meeting it debated means of encouraging women to join or form unions, but decided that there were insurmountable difficulties preventing further action.⁸² Instead, the League worked in conjunction with middle-class women to fight for legal reforms which, while they were of some concern to working women, had little immediate impact on them. Though the League attempted to be open to women in the paid labour force⁸³, it appears to have been dominated by the wives of prominent labour men.⁸⁴ It may be that as the wives of such men League members felt they had more in common with the middle-class woman reformer than the factory girl. While they may have shared their husband's commitment to organizing women workers, they appear also to have shared their belief that the initiative and leadership should come from men. The Woman's Labor League failed to live up to its promise as an organization actively concerned with the

welfare of working women.

The Woman's Labor League appears to have folded or become inactive some time in the late fall or winter of 1911.⁸⁵ It was revived in early 1917 under the leadership of Helen Armstrong⁸⁶, wife of well known socialist and Carpenters' Union business agent George Armstrong, and Gertrude Puttee, member of the previous League⁸⁷, and like its predecessor had delegates to the Trades Council.⁸⁸ The new Woman's Labor League had five objectives: to improve the lives of working women through unionization and the passage of protective legislation; to foster cooperation among working women; to educate the public about the labour movement; to provide assistance to wage earners trying to resolve their "industrial difficulties"; to research and make available accurate information leading to legislation governing the wages and working conditions of women and children.⁸⁹

As its objectives indicate, the second League worked much more closely with women in the paid labor force than had its predecessor. The League conducted investigations into the working conditions of female employees and reported its findings to the provincial Bureau of Labor.⁹⁰ When female clerks at Woolworth's department store grew impatient with the slowness of the Retail Clerks' union to deal with their problems, they walked out and turned to the Woman's Labor League for help. The League responded by helping them present their demands to the company and by joining them on the picket line.⁹¹ It was involved in organizing a

housemaids' union, a union of city stenographers, and the "Laundry and Knitting Girls"⁹² and in 1918 League president Helen Armstrong travelled to Fort William to help women in the twin cities organize a Labor League.⁹³ During the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, the Woman's Labor League ran a restaurant for striking women, feeding hundreds of women each day.⁹⁴ In keeping with its mandate to educate all wage earners, the League participated in the Trades Council's Labor League and on occasion provided support to the families of striking men.⁹⁵

The Woman's Labor League campaigned actively for legislative changes to improve the lives of Winnipeg's wage earning women and sought to make all workers aware of laws affecting them. It campaigned against conscription⁹⁶ and protested the proposed disenfranchisement of women under the War Time Election Act.⁹⁷ In addition, the League worked for the passage of legislation governing the conditions and hours of work of women and children and guaranteeing a minimum wage for women. Knowledgeable speakers were invited to address League meetings on the subject⁹⁸ and it urged pastors to address the issue from the pulpit.⁹⁹ When, at the request of the Bureau of Labor, the Trades Council elected a committee to meet with representatives of the Manufacturers' Association to discuss a minimum wage for women, two of the five labour members were from the Woman's Labor League.¹⁰⁰ When the government appointed a Minimum Wage Board, League business agent Lynn Flett was chosen to

represent working women.¹⁰¹ The League continued to fight for a minimum wage for women, at times coming into conflict with the Trades Council.¹⁰²

The time frame of this thesis precludes a more detailed study of the League's activities, but it is clear even from this brief survey that the second Woman's Labor League was more actively involved in the lives of working women than was its predecessor. The difference is difficult to explain. While little is known about the general membership of the Leagues, in both cases most leaders seem to have been the wives of labour men. Both Leagues received the same treatment from the Trades Council and The Voice. It may be that the explanation lies in the increase in female participation in the labour force and the general increase in labour organizing in the latter period. Another possibility is that the Leagues bore the stamp of the individual women who led them. The first League's most active members were Ada Muir and Gertrude Puttee; the second League was led by Helen Armstrong and to a lesser degree Gertrude Puttee. Muir was a British born nurse and editor of The Voice's woman's column.¹⁰³ Nothing is known of Gertrude Puttee, except that she was married to Voice editor A.W. Puttee. Helen Armstrong, however, had been exposed to labour politics since childhood. Her experience as a tailoress had made her particularly sensitive to issues of concern to working women. It is probably no coincidence that she led a League whose mandate was to address those

issues.

At the same time that The Voice was encouraging women to join the trade union movement, it was also printing disparaging articles about women workers. Interspersed with its calls for the organization of working women were articles detailing the negative results of female participation in industrial life. In one early editorial it was suggested that women would have "better homes, better chances for marrying, and could obtain better education" if they did not compete with men for jobs.¹⁰⁴ An article reprinted from a Toronto paper attributed the declining birth rate to working women¹⁰⁵ and another from a Minneapolis paper claimed that the employment of women had led to a drop in men's wages, the perversion of "the mission of women", "old maidenhood" and "general pessimism relative to female chastity".¹⁰⁶ Working women were "a blight on civilization"¹⁰⁷ whose participation in the labour force meant "the total destruction of the family life of the working man".¹⁰⁸

As women entered the labour force in greater numbers the focus shifted from prevention to control. It might not be possible to keep women out of the labour force entirely, but through organization they might be controlled and through the passing of restrictive legislation some of the deleterious effects of their presence might be reduced. The Voice consistently called for state regulation of wages and hours of work for women and minors, and for strict

enforcement of such laws. When the Manitoba Factories Act came into effect in July 1900, making it illegal to employ girls or women for over 48 hours in any one week, The Voice applauded, though it described the Act as being as useful as an electric car minus the electric current since no inspector had been appointed to enforce the Act.¹⁰⁹ A decision to appoint a female factory inspector in Winnipeg was not made until 1913.¹¹⁰ In the intervening years The Voice frequently complained about poor wages and working conditions for women¹¹¹ and advocated the appointment of such an inspector.¹¹²

In March 1917 The Voice reported that the provincial Board of Labor was going to undertake an investigation into the conditions of work and wages of female employees with a view to exploring the need for a minimum wage.¹¹³ The report was completed in February 1918, and provided evidence of the low salaries and appalling conditions under which Winnipeg's female factory workers laboured.¹¹⁴ In the meantime, representatives of the Manufacturers' Association and the Trades Council began meeting, at the request of the government, to come up with a minimum wage figure for women to be incorporated into a bill.¹¹⁵ Throughout this period organized working men continued to call for a set minimum wage for women, in addresses at the People's Forum and in editorials in The Voice, and encouraged women to join and form trade unions.¹¹⁶ Finally, in March 1918 the bill was tabled. Labour had wanted and expected a minimum wage act

guaranteeing women \$10 per week. Instead, a bill was passed setting up a five person Minimum Wage Board, with two representatives from labour, one of them to be a woman, and two from the manufacturers, also one a woman, and presided over by an impartial chair. The Board was to set minimum wages industry by industry.¹¹⁷ The government selected Board members from two lists of six candidates nominated by the Trades Council and the Manufacturers' Association. Working women were represented by Lynn Flett, member of the Woman's Labor League, former active member of the Political Equality League, and sister-in-law of MLA Fred Dixon.¹¹⁸ Two months later the Board released its first decision: experienced adult female laundry workers were to be paid a minimum of \$9.50 per week.¹¹⁹ When other roughly similar awards were made, tension began to grow in the ranks of labour. While the Trades Council adopted a wait-and-see position and was willing to give the Minimum Wage Board a chance, the Woman's Labor League, led by Helen Armstrong, was adamant that the Board's settlements were inadequate and that the only just measure was the implementation of a flat minimum wage. The dispute continued for a time, though the Trades Council eventually endorsed the Woman's Labor League's demand for a flat rate.¹²⁰

Organized labour's demands for a minimum wage for women¹²¹, though couched in the rhetoric of justice and fair play, stem primarily from other related concerns. The first was a preoccupation with women's morality: reports of low

wages being paid to women were always accompanied by veiled, and sometimes not so veiled, references to the temptations women might fall prey to if they were not paid a living wage. The second was a desire to protect and reinforce women's primary roles as wife and mother: there were frequent references to the potential effects of low wages and unhealthy working conditions on women's ability to bear children. Finally, demands for a minimum wage for women did not call into question, and indeed reinforced, the male role of breadwinner and the notion of the family wage. Any minimum wage figure arrived at was based on a so-called "living wage", an income level below which no unmarried, self-supporting woman could maintain herself; working women were assumed to have no dependents. In addition, since the minimum wage figures were even lower for minors or women on probation, the assumption clearly was that these women were not supporting themselves, let alone dependents. Since, as Helen Armstrong pointed out, the minimum wage was frequently the maximum wage¹²², the passing of minimum wage legislation ensured that the vast majority of women, even if they wanted to, could not be family breadwinners. That remained a masculine preserve. Thus, while male support for a minimum wage for women may have seemed to stem from a genuine concern for women's well being, it was also self-serving; while on the surface it denoted acceptance of women in the paid labour force, it grew out of very traditional views of women's place.

Working men were clearly struggling to come to terms with women's presence in the paid labour force. The spectre of women suddenly appearing in factories and selling their labour much more cheaply than would men clearly frightened them. Suddenly all their hard-won gains were jeopardized; as the primary, and often sole, breadwinners in a household, men could ill afford the drop in wages or the unemployment that might follow this female invasion. Yet at the same time since their own arguments for better wages and tolerable working conditions were based on fairness and justice, it was difficult to deny similar treatment to women. This ambivalence is reflected in the pages of The Voice. It encouraged women to join and form unions and supported them when they did. It called for the creation of an umbrella organization of working women and female family members of working men, and its parent body welcomed them to its Council table. At the same time it bemoaned the detrimental effects on women and on society of increased female participation in the workforce; it never questioned the right of men to organize and lead working women; and it sought, through minimum wage legislation, to preserve the status quo. The Voice and the labour movement it represented, cast themselves as defenders and protectors of women without acknowledging, at least not publicly, that he who protects also controls.

ENDNOTES

1. Third Census of Canada, 1891.
2. When the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council was formed in 1894, there were ten member unions: Hod Carriers, Icelandic Laborers, Tinsmiths, English-speaking Laborers, Painters, Freight Handlers, Butchers, Lathers, Plumbers, and Bakers. Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982, pp. 338-339. It is unlikely that any women were members of these unions. It is not known whether there were other unions in the city who chose not to affiliate with the Trades Council.
3. The Voice, 13 February 1899, p. 4.
4. Ibid.
5. Janice Acton et al, Women at Work, 1850-1930, Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974, cited in Wayne Roberts, Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women, 1893 to 1914, Toronto: New Star Books, 1974.
6. Roberts' observations of Toronto are true for Winnipeg, where in 1921 most working women were between 17 and 24 years of age. See Linda Kealey, "Women and Labour During World War I: Women Workers and the Minimum Wage in Manitoba", in Mary Kinnear, ed., First Days Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987, p. 80.
7. The situation in Winnipeg supports Roberts hypothesis. Over one quarter of Winnipeg's industrial establishments employing women had fewer than 5 female employees. In dressmaking and millinery, the sector with the greatest number of women employees, 173 were employed in 31 different businesses, an average of 5.6 women per shop. Compare this with the sector employing the greatest number of men: seven foundries and machine shops employed 240 men, an average of 34.3 men per shop. Third Census of Canada, 1891. Star Rosenthal has also pointed to the isolated character of women's work as an explanation for their low rate of unionization. See Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver 1900-1915" B.C. Studies, no. 41, Spring 1979, pp. 36-55.

8. The People's Voice, 13 July 1895, p. 8. There was almost constant female representation on the executive of the union.

9. In October 1894 the Trades Council offered to help the clerks organize. In the same month, The People's Voice recommended the unionization of "respectable" laundries as a means of dealing with the "Chinese threat". (The People's Voice, 13 October 1894, p. 1) In December the paper offered to help the telephone operators form a union. (Ibid., 22 December 1894, p. 3) It was also willing to help the "typewriting girls" organize. (Ibid., 12 January 1895, p. 7) When a servant called for the creation of a domestics' union, she was told that such a thing existed under the auspices of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. (Ibid., 19 January 1895, p. 7)

10. The Voice, 19 June 1897, p. 8. The laundry workers were not successfully unionized until 1917. (Ibid., 25 May 1917, p. 8)

11. Ibid., 13 February 1899; 17 February 1899.

12. Ibid., 13 February 1899.

13. Ibid., 17 February 1899, p. 1.

14. Ibid., 17 March 1899, p. 1.

15. Ibid., 3 March 1899, p. 5.

16. Ibid., 17 March 1899, p. 1.

17. Ibid., 24 March 1899, p. 8. In November Hoover added another ten machines and hired more employees, bringing the total to 29.

18. In late March, 27 women were still receiving strike pay. (Ibid., 31 March 1899, p. 1) In late April, 17 women were being paid a strike allowance. (Ibid., 21 April 1899, p. 8)

19. Ibid., 1 September 1899.

20. Ibid., 16 April 1909, p. 1.

21. Ibid., 12 May 1905.

22. Ibid., 29 December 1905, p. 1.

23. In September 1900, former president and founding member Isabel Bilsland married an active member of the Typographical union. (Ibid., 31 August 1900) The following May, vice-president Minnie Wood, a member of the union since

the Emerson and Hague days, left to get married. (Ibid., 24 May 1901, p. 10) In the spring of 1905, president Emma Norton was married. (Ibid., 24 March 1905, p. 1) Two years later, president and longtime active union member Kate Mann was married. The Voice referred to her as "one of the most efficient and energetic workers of the local." (Ibid., 7 June 1907, p. 10)

24. Ibid., 15 December 1905, p. 1.

25. Ibid., 4 May 1906, p. 1.

26. Ibid., 22 June 1906, p. 1.

27. Ibid., 23 November 1906, p. 1.

28. Ibid., 19 October 1906, p. 1.

29. Ibid., 18 January 1907, p. 1.

30. Ibid., 11 January 1907, p. 1.

31. Ibid., 18 January 1907, p. 1.

32. Ibid., 15 February 1907, p. 1.

33. Ibid., 23 August 1907, p. 1.

34. Ibid., 23 August 1907, p. 1.

35. Though women participated in strikes and picketed, they were almost never arrested. A partial explanation no doubt lies in their smaller numbers. Fewer women than men participated in labour disputes, and even in cases where women were the majority of striking workers, they tended not to provide strike leadership. In the beginning it was provided by various members of the Trades Council, and later by them and men in positions of leadership within the striking unions. Women simply were not often engaged in activities that left them open to arrest. They were organizing with the support and guidance of men. Presumably they were also being protected by their male colleagues in the union halls and on the picket lines, and possibly by the police force. One of the few women arrested in picket line incidents, and the only one arrested more than once, was Helen Armstrong, a leader of the Woman's Labour League.

36. Ibid., 13 September 1907, p. 1.

37. Ibid., 25 October 1907, p. 12.

38. Ibid., 8 November 1907, p. 1.

39. Ibid., 24 January 1908, p. 1.

40. The garment workers' union was consistently referred to as a women's union though there were male members, many of them in positions of leadership.
41. Ibid., 16 April 1909, p. 1; 30 April 1909, p. 1.
42. Ibid., 21 May 1909, p. 1.
43. Ibid., 24 June 1910, p. 1.
44. Ibid., 9 September 1910, p. 1; 16 September 1910, p. 1; 23 September 1910; 30 September 1910; 7 October 1910; 23 December 1910, p. 1; 30 December 1910, p. 1; 6 January 1911, p. 1; 13 January 1911, p. 12.
45. Ibid., 22 December 1911, p. 12.
46. Ibid., 14 February 1913, p. 8; The Voice did not always differentiate between locals when writing about the garment workers. The two older locals, 35 and 153, can sometimes be fairly easily distinguished from one another, the former being concentrated in the manufacture of overalls, and the latter in special order clothing. The Voice, however, did not always specify what type of clothing was being made in a striking factory. It is not known what branch of the trade the new local was involved in.
47. Though The Voice did not point it out, this reduction affected women much more seriously than it did men. Women's wages fell by almost 29%, while men's dropped by just under 12%. Before wages were reduced women earned 41% of what men earned. After the reduction, their wages fell to one third of men's. Although it was not specified, this seems to be the local established by the Social Democratic Party earlier in the year. (Ibid., 30 May 1913)
48. Ibid., 12 February 1915, p. 8; 24 September 1915, p. 8. While 435 of the local's 450 members were women, there were only three women on the six person executive. The two most important positions, president and business agent, were occupied by men. While in the earlier years most women actively involved in the union were unmarried, two of the three women on the executive were married. (Ibid., 25 June 1916, p. 2) The two delegates to the Trades Council, not considered members of the executive, were men. (Ibid., 17 December 1915, p. 8)
49. It is not clear when this happened. The first reference to it seems to be in the 1915 Annual Report of the Trades Council. Ibid., 21 January 1916, p. 5.
50. Quarterly attendance figures released in July 1915 revealed that the union's representatives had attended only 4 of 22 meetings. Their attendance in the next quarter

improved to 11 of 18 meetings, but when figures for the year were tallied, garment workers had been at fewer than half the meetings of the Trades Council. Ibid., 9 July 1915, 5 November 1915, p. 5, 21 January 1916.

51. See Ibid., 2 February 1917, p. 1; 23 February 1917, p. 8; 2 March 1917, p. 8.

52. In June 1917 the "sweater workers" joined the garment workers' organization, and the tent and awning and bag workers were said to be planning similar action. Ibid., 29 June 1917, p. 8.

53. Western Labor News, 16 May 1919, p. 8.

54. The Voice, 13 February 1899, p. 1.

55. Ibid., 16 November 1900, p. 1; 14 December 1900, p. 7; 11 January 1901, p. 1; 25 January 1901, p. 1.

56. Ibid., 9 May 1902, p. 4.

57. Ibid., 23 May 1902, p. 1; 20 June 1902, p. 1; 27 June 1902, p. 8; 4 July 1902, p. 9; 15 August 1902, p. 1.

58. Ibid., 24 October 1902, p. 9; 23 January 1903, p. 1; 27 February 1903, p. 1; 24 April 1903, p. 1; 19 April 1918, p. 8.

59. Ibid., 26 May 1911, p. 12; 23 June 1911, p. 12.

60. Ibid., 3 May 1912, p. 1.

61. Ibid., 6 March 1914.

62. The union was founded in the early summer of 1911, but appears to have faded away in the fall. It was revived in early 1914, but again collapsed in the autumn of 1915. There was another attempt to start a union of restaurant employees in 1917, and it was finally established on firm footing in 1919. The cooks, waiters and waitresses' union unanimously endorsed the general strike in 1919. (Ibid., 7 July 1911, p. 12; 28 July 1911, p. 1.; 7 November 1911, p. 12; 16 January 1914, p. 8; 30 January 1914, p. 8; 13 March 1914; 15 January 1915, p. 1.; 29 January 1915, p. 8; 2 April 1915, p. 8; 16 April 1915, p. 5; 23 April 1915, p. 8; 10 September 1915; 24 September 1915, p. 8; 8 October 1915, p. 5; 15 June 1917; 16 May 1919, p. 8) The Voice consistently referred to this organization as the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses union, though the waitresses were not always included in the union's official name.

63. Ibid., 9 February 1917, p. 1.

64. Ibid., 1 June 1917, p. 8; 8 June 1917, pp. 1, 4, 8.
65. The People's Voice, 13 October 1894, p. 4.
66. The Voice, 24 October 1902, p. 1.
67. Ibid., 5 October 1906, p. 6.
68. Ibid., 19 November 1909, p. 1.
69. Ibid., 25 March 1910, p. 12.
70. Ibid., 15 July 1910, p. 3.
71. Ibid., 16 December 1910, p. 3.
72. Ibid., 4 November 1910, p. 3.
73. Ibid., 27 January 1911.
74. Ibid., 13 January 1911.
75. Ibid., 10 February 1911, p. 6.
76. Ibid., 3 March 1911, p. 12.
77. Ibid., 2 December 1910; 17 February 1911, p. 1; 17 March 1911, p. 11. In addition to League representative Ada Muir, the delegation to the Legislature consisted of Dr. Mary Crawford of the University Women's Club, Mrs. McClung and Mrs. Duff Smith of the National Council of Women and the Women's Christian Temperance Union.
78. For the complete text, see Ibid., 4 August 1911, p. 1. When The Voice was critical of the petition's singling out of women of British birth, the League explained that the focus on British born women was in order that the bill might pass more easily and in order to protect Eastern and Southern European women from exploitation by their countrymen. (Ibid., 15 September 1911, p. 6; 20 October 1911, p. 3)
79. Ibid., 10 June 1910, p. 4; 23 September 1910, p. 1; 13 January 1911, p. 1.
80. Garment workers' organizer Sam Landers addressed a meeting of the League, and Ada Muir once spoke at a social evening organized by the garment workers. Ibid., 4 March 1910, p. 1; 23 September 1910; 30 September 1910.
81. Ibid., 3 June 1910, p. 4.
82. Ibid., 25 November 1910, p. 3.

83. After considerable discussion the League decided to hold its meetings in the evenings in order to be accessible to "those in business during the day", despite complaints from some members that such meetings were inconvenient for women with domestic responsibilities. (Ibid., 6 May 1910, p. 4; 13 May 1910) It also eliminated membership dues for women already paying dues to a trade union. (Ibid., 5 August 1910, p. 3)

84. The three identifiable members of the League's first executive were the wives of men well known in the labour movement. Gertrude Puttee was the wife of Voice editor A.W. Puttee; Mrs. Trotter was married to W.A. Trotter, the Typographical Union's delegate to the Trades Council; William Hoop, husband of the League's treasurer, was a letter carrier, president of the Trades Council, and leading member of the local Socialist Party. (Ibid., 25 March 1910; A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement 1899-1919, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) Another high profile League member was Ada Muir, editor of The Voice's woman's column.

85. The League notes that frequently followed the Woman's Column disappeared. Delegates stopped attending Trades Council meetings though the League figured in The Voice's list of local labour organizations well into the summer. Cf. The Voice, 2 August 1912, p. 10.

86. Daughter of well known Toronto labour man and tailor Alfred F. Jury (The Voice, 13 October 1916, p. 8), she was born in Toronto in 1895. She was trained as a tailoress in her father's shop, where as a child she was exposed to discussions of trade union politics. The Armstrongs moved to Winnipeg in 1905 after several years in the United States. Mrs. Armstrong does not appear to have been involved in the first Woman's Labor League, perhaps not surprisingly as she had four young children at the time and no household help, but was involved in reviving the League in 1917 and was its first president. In 1918 she was involved in founding the Winnipeg and District branch of the Dominion Labor party. (PAM, R.B. Russell Papers, Dominion Labor Party, Winnipeg and District Minutes.) She was known as an ardent defender of the underprivileged, and particularly of young, unmarried working women. She took an active role in the General Strike of 1919 and that summer embarked on a very successful speaking tour of southern Ontario to raise money for the strikers' defence fund. (Interview with Frank and Catherine Armstrong, 6 September 1984, St. Vital, Manitoba; Western Labor News, 22 August 1919, p. 1) In 1922 she ran unsuccessfully for city council (Ibid., 24 November 1911, p. 1) and the following year moved to the United States. She died in California in 1947 (Interview with Frank and Catherine Armstrong).

87. The Voice, 23 February 1917, p. 8; 23 March 1917.
88. Ibid., 4 May 1917, p. 4.
89. Ibid., 23 March 1917.
90. Interview with Frank and Catherine Armstrong.
91. The Voice, 1 June 1917, p. 8.
92. Ibid., 28 June 1918, p. 3; Western Labor News, 24 January 1919, p. 5; 16 May 1919, p. 8.
93. The Voice, 7 June 1918, p. 8.
94. Western Labor News, 23 May 1919; 24 May 1919; 26 May 1919; 31 May 1919; 2 June 1919; 3 June 1919; 9 June 1919; 11 June 1919; 14 June 1919; 17 June 1919. League involvement has been ignored or misrepresented by virtually all historians of the Strike. See D.C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950; J.E. Rea, The Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973; and David Bercuson and Kenneth McNaught The Winnipeg Strike 1919, Don Mills: Longman Canada, 1974; all ignored women entirely. Bercuson's Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations and the General Strike (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1974) misrepresented the Woman's Labor League's activities, suggesting that the restaurant was to feed striking men. Only Mary Horodyski ("Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919", Manitoba History, No. 11, Spring 1986, pp. 28-37) has attempted to put women in their rightful place in the history of the strike.
95. The Voice, 2 November 1917, p. 4; 3 August 1917, p. 8.
96. Cf. Ibid., 31 August 1917, p. 8; 15 March 1918, p. 8. Helen Armstrong's first arrest was for "distributing rubbish" (anti-conscription literature) at a public meeting. (Ibid., 21 December 1917, p. 5)
97. Ibid., 14 September 1917, p. 8; 21 September 1917, p. 8.
98. Cf. Ibid., 18 January 1918, p. 8.
99. Ibid., 25 January 1918, p. 8.
100. Ibid., 7 December 1917, p. 1.
101. Ibid., 29 March 1918, p. 8.
102. Cf. Ibid., Western Labor News, 7 February 1919, p. 1; 24 March 1919, p. 1.

103. For more on Muir, see chapter 4.
104. The People's Voice, 26 December 1896, p. 1.
105. The Voice, 4 November 1898, p. 1.
106. Ibid., 6 January 1899, p. 8.
107. Ibid., 29 December 1899, p. 5.
108. Ibid., 28 March 1902, p. 5.
109. Ibid., 5 October 1900, p. 4.
110. Ibid., 7 February 1913, p. 4.
111. Cf. Ibid., 27 June 1902, p. 8; 22 November 1912, p. 4.
112. When Ida Bauslaugh was finally appointed inspector in June 1914, The Voice commented that it had been pushing for a female factory inspector for 7 years. Ibid., 26 June 1914.
113. Ibid., 9 March 1917, p. 8; 16 March 1917, p. 1.
114. Ibid., 8 February 1918, p. 8. The report itself can be found in PAM, Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Deputy Minister's Files, RG18B2, Box 5.
115. Ibid., 4 January 1918, p. 8.
116. Ibid., 4 January 1918, p. 8; 18 January 1918, p. 5; 1 February 1918, p. 1; 8 February 1918, pp. 1 and 4.
117. Ibid., 8 March 1918, p. 1.
118. Ibid., 12 April 1918, p. 8; Linda Kealey, "Women and Labour during World War I: Women Workers and the Minimum Wage in Manitoba", in Mary Kinnear, ed., First Days Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987, pp. 76-99; PAM, Political Equality League Papers.
119. The Voice, 14 June 1918, p. 3.
120. Western Labor News, 7 February 1919, p. 1; 14 February 1919, p. 1; 14 March 1919, p. 1; 21 March 1919, p. 1. Kealey, "Women and Labor", pp. 91-92.
121. For a discussion of protective legislation in Ontario as well as a review of the international literature on this topic, see Margaret Hobbs, "'Dead Horses' and 'Muffled Voices': Protective Legislation, Education and the Minimum Wage for Women in Ontario", M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1985.

122. The writers of The Voice's humour agreed: "Do you believe in a minimum wage for girls?" "Sure. I pay it." 6 June 1913, p. 3.

CHAPTER 3

THE VOICE SPEAKS FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE

Though much has been written about the woman suffrage movement in Canada, the focus has been almost exclusively on the middle-class character of the movement and the way in which suffragists sought and obtained the endorsement of farmers' groups. Little attention has been paid to the involvement of the working class and organized labour, and historians of the suffrage movement have largely overlooked The Voice as a source. Catherine Cleverdon, author of the first comprehensive account of the struggle for woman suffrage in Canada, made much of the "contagious enthusiasm" of the Grain Growers' Guide for suffrage beginning in 1910 and the official endorsement of the Grain Growers' Association in 1912.¹ The support of the Grain Growers, she claimed, was "more important by far" than that of the Woman's Labor League the previous year or that of the Labor Party of Manitoba in 1902, though she offered no evidence to support her claim. Cleverdon did not consult The Voice. In her study of the ideology of the English-Canadian suffrage movement, Carol Bacchi did look at The Voice between 1909 and 1917, and declared that in all of Canada there was only one "identified working-class member of a suffrage

association."² Had these historians consulted The Voice or consulted it over a longer period, a different picture would have emerged.

Since little is known about the early years of the Manitoba suffrage movement, and still less is known about labour's involvement, it is necessary to go into some detail. A thorough reading of The Voice reveals a very early interest in woman suffrage on the part of labour. From its beginning in 1894 the paper reported on the world wide campaign for woman suffrage, frequently in the form of brief international notes. In February 1895, barely three months after the founding of the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council received a letter from its president, Dr. Amelia Yeomans, asking that she be permitted to address the Council.³

Dr. Yeomans' request to address the Trades Council was referred to a special committee and at the next meeting was approved.⁴ The following issue of The People's Voice contained a letter to the editor from Gideon, an English Conservative and a regular contributor, expressing his opposition to the Trades Council's decision. He argued that woman suffrage was a divisive issue and should therefore be avoided. The only truly important question was the election of labour supporters to every representative body; those people could be counted on to do what was best on other issues. He called on the Equal Suffrage Club to organize working women into unions, once organized they could demand

and no doubt obtain the vote.⁵ William Small, chairman of the Trades Council, disagreed and said so in The People's Voice. According to him, it might be important to organize women into unions, but that was of limited use because without the vote women had no means of enforcing their demands.⁶

On 12 March 1895 a delegation of three women from the Equal Suffrage Club addressed the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council. Mrs. Charles Hislop, Mrs. Mills and Dr. Yeomans delivered papers to a small but supportive audience, and then answered questions. In thanking the women the chairman said that the movement had the sympathies of the majority of working men.⁷ Twenty years before the granting of woman suffrage in Manitoba and some 16 years before the much vaunted endorsement from the Grain Growers' Association, the Trades and Labor Council had expressed support for equal suffrage.

In an unusual move The Voice devoted considerable space in the next four issues to printing the Equal Suffrage Club's addresses. Since very little is known about the Equal Suffrage Club beyond its founding, and there are differences of opinion about when it folded⁸, the addresses to the Trades Council are among the only remaining records of the Club. They shed light on the early movement for suffrage in Manitoba and the way in which the suffragists almost immediately sought the support of working people.

The first address published was that of Mrs. Hislop, wife

of prominent labour man Charles Hislop. Her speech was clearly designed for a working-class audience. She argued the value of the franchise to wage earners, male and female, and pointed out how working men could use the ballot, "the modern revolutionary bullet", to force the passage of legislation to improve their lot. She discussed the unequal wages paid to men and women and their inability to redress the situation, and addressed Gideon's concerns, saying that the suffrage women were organizing themselves and that labour men in Europe and the United States were supporting them. She spoke of suffrage in terms of duty, moral uplift and responsibility, arguing that though different, men and women were equal. When given the vote women would not take away the jobs of men for they had work of their own to do, but they would share with men the burden of government. Given that women suffered as much as men in peace and war, they deserved to participate equally in decision making.⁹

The following week Mrs. Mills' paper was published. She outlined five ways in which the vote could be helpful to women, beginning with its educational value. Women were ignorant of the laws affecting them because they were powerless to make, change or implement those laws; given the vote with its attendant political responsibility, they would take a greater interest in public life. Woman was man's equal (although Mrs. Mills acknowledged that as punishment for "her sin" woman was subordinate to her own husband) and accountable for her misdeeds, thus it was only fair that she

participate equally in the legislative process. The vote would "invest her with self-respect". Indeed, woman could not expect true respect from men as long as she was legally an inferior, nor would her opinions and teachings be given the value they deserved if she did not have the vote. Finally, society would derive greater benefit from the socially purifying, morally uplifting influence of women if they could vote. Mrs. Mills attacked the characterization of suffragists as unfulfilled, mannish spinsters with unfeminine ambitions, and insisted throughout her speech that men really had nothing to fear from woman suffrage; it could have only positive results.¹⁰

The last of the three suffragists to speak to the Trades Council was Dr. Amelia Yeomans. Dr. Yeomans began by questioning the right of men to govern women. If man insisted on speaking for woman at the ballot box, should he not also take her place at the prisoners' dock and at the gallows? If woman was to be treated as a child, should she not at least have the privileges of a child? Yeomans too tailored her remarks to an audience of working men, pointing out that like them women wanted fair play. She spoke in glowing terms of labour and the labour movement's commitment to equal suffrage, citing examples of unions in the United States and South Australia. She described the deplorable salaries paid to working women, and suggested that women were undercutting men because they lacked the political clout to insist on better wages. She listed the advantages

of the ballot to the working woman: an increased sense of self-respect, recognition as a "unit of force", the development of a sense of power, more influence on those in power, an added sense of responsibility, and the motivation to work to improve the world around her. In their political action, she said, women would not forget their fellow labourers. She pointed out the absurdity of calling a government representative when women were disenfranchised, and the unfairness of taxing unrepresented women, a situation she likened to working men being represented by their employers. Dr. Yeomans also attacked Gideon's argument that suffragists could better assist working women by organizing them into unions. It was unfair, she remarked, to "compel [women] to make themselves obnoxious to their employers" and then ignore the opinions of those women when laws affecting them were drafted. Organized labour would be strengthened if women could cast a ballot. Indeed unions would be weakened if they took in disenfranchised women, but if they fought with women for equal suffrage the entire working class would benefit.¹¹

In their speeches to the Trades Council, the three women repeated many of the by then familiar arguments in favour of woman suffrage. They made numerous references to the Creator, His creation of men and women and His Divine Plan in which they were different but equal. The crux of their argument, though, was the fairness of equal suffrage. They spoke of logic, fair play, responsibility, and how working

people would benefit from an enfranchised womanhood. Only Mrs. Mills spoke of the morally uplifting influence of women, and it was not central to her argument. While it was true that the world would be a better place if women were given the vote, the benefit was to be derived not so much from the moral superiority of women, as from the blending of the distinct qualities that men and women would bring to public life. The three speeches were clearly tailored to a working-class audience, but they used many of the same arguments that could be heard in middle-class gatherings at the same time. Clearly they expected that organized working men would be susceptible to such arguments.

They were right. The three women appear to have been fairly successful in seeking union support. Judging by the length of the texts printed in The People's Voice, the Trades Council spent several hours listening to the presentations of the suffragists. Despite reports of some dissension at the meeting, the sympathetic chairman William Small assured his three guests that woman suffrage had the support of working men.¹² More important, perhaps, is The Voice's own endorsement of female suffrage. Though it was not the first time a delegation had appeared before the Trades Council, it was the first time The Voice took such an interest in the presentations. Never before had The Voice devoted so much space to a single issue. Regardless of whether this can be interpreted as actual editorial support for woman suffrage, it certainly indicates sympathy on the

part of the editors¹³ and an expectation that readers would share that sympathy.

In November 1897 a delegation from the Equal Suffrage Club returned to the Trades Council. The Dominion Trades and Labor Congress had adopted a resolution favouring suffrage, and Mrs. Hislop and E. Cora Hind wanted to know where the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council stood. The visitors added that the Equal Suffrage Club was "willing to cooperate with organized labour in the promotion of economic and social reforms", though they did not elaborate. One delegate replied that he did not know enough about the issue to decide, and another favoured endorsing suffrage. The chairman thanked the women and the council moved on to other business, leaving the matter unresolved.¹⁴ The question appears to have been debated some time in 1898; by that winter the Trades Council had adult suffrage on its municipal platform.¹⁵

The Voice continued its quiet support for suffrage, printing several favorable articles and very few in opposition. In a piece reprinted from the Firemen's Magazine, well-known suffrage advocate and Equal Suffrage Club member E. Cora Hind¹⁶ discussed the entry of women into the paid labour force and the question of equal pay. Once women obtained the vote they would seek equal pay for equal work, and demand female factory inspectors. Once employers had to pay equal wages to women, they would let them go from such occupations as watchmaking and cigarmaking; Hind

thought these were male fields anyway and moreover were injurious to women's reproductive health. Her message to male workers seems to have been that woman suffrage would lead to an improvement in men's wages by forcing women out of some types of factory jobs and back into their homes. Those women who did remain in the workforce would be easier to organize and unite into trade unions. Unlike her colleagues in the Equal Suffrage Club, Hind made no mention of justice and fair play as reasons for men to support women's right to vote nor did she demonstrate concern for the welfare of working women.¹⁷

The paper also printed the entire text of an address to the Winnipeg Labor Party in 1901 by local labour man Charles Hislop, the husband of the Equal Suffrage Club activist, and the city's first labour alderman.¹⁸ The Party had had full adult suffrage on its platform as early as September 1900, and advocated "[e]qual civil and political rights for women and men, and the abolition of all laws discriminating against women".¹⁹ Not all Party members supported this position: one complained in a letter to the editor that if women truly wanted to serve mankind they would remain in their families and make happy homes for their husbands and their children.²⁰ Hislop's spirited defense of women's equality took up almost four columns of a six column page. He argued on the grounds of fairness. If women were granted equal rights of citizenship, human relationships would be governed by justice instead of injustice. Increased

competition between men and women in the workplace would encourage both to display their finer qualities, to everyone's benefit. He spoke of the injustice of women being governed by laws they had no say in making, and added that if they were to be expected to take their share of the responsibilities of life, then they ought to be given equal rights, equal opportunities, and the ballot.²¹ His address was remarkably similar, in both content and tone, to the presentations made to the Trades Council in 1895 by members of the Equal Suffrage Club.

Most letters and articles supporting suffrage in The Voice did so on the grounds of fairness and justice. One correspondent thought that women ought not only to be granted the ballot, but the right to run for election; women were needed in such places as the school board. Women teachers outnumbered men by 12 to 1, and it was incongruous to entrust children to women teachers while refusing women administrative power in schools. This correspondent even suggested that the local suffrage club was prepared to test the right of any 'person' to run for municipal office to see if 'person' included women, and called on The Voice to support the challenge.²² Another correspondent, 'Stonehenge', wrote at length about the justice of suffrage for women. He claimed that the issue had not been endorsed by politicians because those politicians were men. For him, "[t]o conserve to the male sex and one half the race all supreme control gives us a civilization if not inhuman at

the best lopsided and semi-human."²³ Like the majority of those who wrote letters to the editor or published articles in The Voice, Stonehenge supported woman suffrage because it was just. Like the others, he referred only in passing to the moral superiority of women.

Labour involvement with the organized suffrage movement continued. On 22 March 1901 The Voice published an article by Dr. Amelia Yeomans, the "much and deservedly esteemed president" of the Club, and prefaced it with a very complimentary introduction by the editors. Dr. Yeomans outlined the history and activities of the Equal Suffrage Club, and explained its membership criteria and the provision that active officers of the Club be women.²⁴ In the same issue The Voice reported on the first open meeting of the Club. Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council chairman William Scott attended, representing the Labor Party, spoke a few words of encouragement, and reminded the audience that equal suffrage had always been a plank in the Labor Party platform.²⁵ That fall the Equal Suffrage Club repealed its by-law stipulating that only women be members of the executive, and held elections. Dr. Yeomans was re-elected president, William Scott was elected first vice-president, the second vice-president was Mrs. Charles Hislop, and Voice editor Arthur Puttee²⁶ was elected third vice-president. The corresponding secretary was Miss H. Hislop, and the recording secretary a Mr. Winckler. Rounding out the executive were six district superintendents.²⁷ Assuming

that Miss Hislop was the daughter of Charles and Mrs. Hislop, then three of the six senior positions on the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club executive were occupied by persons closely affiliated with organized labour.

In July 1901 The Voice began publishing a pro-suffrage column, "Echoes from the Equal Suffrage Club."²⁸ The column appeared regularly until the spring of 1902. Its authors printed suffrage notes from other countries and repeated the usual arguments in favour of full adult suffrage. They also outlined the many benefits of suffrage. It would discourage prostitution since that social scourge was "fostered by woman's disenfranchisement."²⁹ It would ensure equal pay, and until women obtained it they would remain "an incubus on [men] in the labor market." As for the Equal Suffrage Club itself, it would be satisfied "in making women just as free in every way as men, and investing them with the ballot then demanding from them as full responsible beings compliance with all conditions found necessary for communal welfare."³⁰

Most references to suffrage in The Voice appeared in the context of reports on Club activities or in the Club's column. This latter disappeared in the spring of 1902 and at that time there was a corresponding decline in The Voice's coverage of suffrage. This suggests that the Club itself may have disappeared in spite of Catherine Cleverdon's unsupported claim that the Equal Suffrage Club remained active "for about a decade" after it was formed in 1895.³¹ The paper did, however, remain committed to the cause.

During the provincial election campaign of 1903, for example, The Voice spoke out editorially in favour of woman suffrage and urged readers to vote only for those candidates who supported it. The arguments against woman suffrage, opined the editors, could as easily be used to disenfranchise many men: "The working man who gives his vote to any candidate who is against woman suffrage is placing in the hands of opponents a whip which may some day be used against himself."³² In the apparent absence of organized local activity in favour of suffrage, The Voice reported on and editorialized about the suffrage contest in other countries³³ and printed pro-suffrage articles from other publications.³⁴ Beginning in 1906 The Voice published a woman's column edited by an ardent suffragist, and readers interested in the question could turn to Ada Muir's column. Muir's successor, Mary Ford, was also a proponent of suffrage.

The next report of suffrage related activity in Manitoba came in the spring of 1909.³⁵ In March, R. A. Rigg spoke on woman suffrage, under the auspices of the Winnipeg Federation for District Legislation, a group later involved in founding the Winnipeg Political Equality League.³⁶ Sharing the platform with Rigg was Mrs. Margret Benedictsson of the Winnipeg Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association.³⁷ Rigg spoke of how economic conditions were forcing women into the workforce in ever increasing numbers. There were social problems of particular interest to women: the liquor

question, the education of children, the social evil (prostitution), and the condition of women wage earners, and women deserved to participate in solving them. He claimed that women would wipe out poverty, and that men in power were afraid of giving women the vote because women were not "hide bound party slaves".³⁸ When, the following year, the Icelandic women petitioned the provincial government for suffrage, The Voice printed a copy of the petition on page one and encouraged women to sign it.³⁹

In February 1910, The Voice reported that working class women had formed the Woman's Labor League. At the League's May meeting its members endorsed suffrage as a means of accomplishing other desired reforms⁴⁰ and a month later the Rev. J. L. Gordon spoke to the League on suffrage. His address was followed by a brief speech by the president of the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association who had brought along copies of their petition for endorsement by the League.⁴¹ Following the speeches a number of people not already involved with the Woman's Labor League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union or the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association expressed an interest in forming a Winnipeg Woman Suffrage Association.⁴² The organizing meeting took place on 10 January 1911 in the Trades Hall in the midst of the worst blizzard of the season. The Woman's Labor League provided the space and arrangements were made by the IWSA. Those present decided to revive the petition idea and present the document to the legislature the following year.

In the interim they would send a delegation to meet with members of the provincial legislature to explain why women were entitled to the vote. Those in attendance at the January meeting agreed to hold an organizing meeting in the near future, but the meeting appears not to have taken place and there is no record of further communication between the Woman's Labour League and the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Association.⁴³

The next recorded attempt to organize a broadly-based pro-suffrage association came in the early months of 1912. There are differences of opinion about the circumstances leading to the formation of the Political Equality League. Catherine Cleverdon cites a letter from Lillian Beynon Thomas in attributing the League's establishment to a failed attempt by a group of Winnipeg women to get better provincial legislation governing the rights of women.⁴⁴ The papers of the Political Equality League are prefaced by the statement that Mrs. A. Vernon Thomas organized the League at the suggestion of her husband.⁴⁵ When Nellie McClung, probably the most prominent of the Manitoba suffragists, recounted the events leading to the founding of the Political Equality League, she said that the idea of organizing a suffrage association had been discussed at a meeting of the Canadian Women's Press Club. McClung herself had become convinced of the need for a new, autonomous suffrage association when it became clear to her that the Local Council of Women was unwilling to "associate...with

any controversial subject".⁴⁶

If frequency of mention is any indication, The Voice's support for the Political Equality League developed slowly. The first reference to the League did not appear until September 1912, in the form of an announcement of an open meeting of the League.⁴⁷ Like the Equal Suffrage Club before it, the Political Equality League sought the support of labour, and in November 1912 wrote to the Trades and Labor Council asking that a meeting of organized labour be called.⁴⁸ The League approached the Council seeking signatures for a petition to the provincial government. A motion to debate the whole subject of woman suffrage was defeated by members who felt that "[t]he council had too long had the demand in its platform to throw away any doubts on its adherence to the principles at the present time."⁴⁹ When the League obtained an interview with Manitoba Premier Sir Rodmond Roblin in January 1914 and roasted him the following day at a mock parliament in a Winnipeg theatre, The Voice printed a glowing editorial, claiming that the events of the week "may be rightly looked upon as the real launching of [the suffrage] movement in Canada". The women, they said, had "arrived in earnest," and Roblin realized he was beaten. The biggest obstacle to the enfranchisement of women had always been the attitude of women; if appeals like that made by Mrs. McClung to Premier Roblin were made to all women, obtaining equal suffrage was just a matter of time.⁵⁰

Editorial support of the Political Equality League was not

shared by all readers of The Voice. Two weeks before the PEL's audience with Premier Roblin, a reader complained that "the Canadian Women's Suffrage Movement [was] dominated by the wealthy class." He referred to a lecture by Nellie McClung the previous week during which she had spoken of the way the vote would improve the lives of women, without ever mentioning increasing the wages of working women. The writer complained of the hypocrisy of McClung and her colleagues, adding that "everything is lovely between the working class and the wealthy class until the workers ask for better conditions and more pay. At the second of that all faces take on a stern look and friendship ceases." The broadmindedness of Canadian men, of which McClung was so proud, would disappear the moment their women employees went on strike. He drew a parallel between the oratory of the suffragists and that of Borden and Laurier, and lamented that "[i]t seems a pity that the working women of Canada are to be misled for we don't know how many years by the same kind of bunk exactly that the Laurierites and Bordenites have been misleading the workmen with for so many years."⁵¹ There was no response to this letter from the editors or from other readers, and in the months that followed the ties between labour and the organized middle-class suffrage movement were strengthened.

In the spring of 1914, Manitoba was in the grip of election fever, with a provincial vote expected in July. Prospective candidates were making their intentions known,

and campaigns were beginning. F. J. Dixon, a PEL member⁵² and single-tax and direct legislation advocate, announced his candidacy as an independent in Centre Winnipeg. Described by The Voice as holding "advanced views on other subjects", Dixon had the support of the paper. He also had the support of the PEL leadership, among them Nellie McClung, who spoke at a mass meeting organized by his campaign committee and praised him for his stand on the suffrage question.⁵³ The following month Lillian Beynon Thomas addressed a Dixon campaign meeting, also on the suffrage question.⁵⁴

Like Dixon, Labor Representation Committee candidate R. S. Ward had the support of the Political Equality League. PEL president Dr. Mary Crawford was elected "chairwoman" (The Voice's expression) of a public meeting called by Ward's organizers, and former League president Lillian Beynon Thomas spoke. She promised Ward the support of the PEL, and expressed the hope that at least four Labor members would take their seats in the next session of the legislature. When the applause died down and Ward took the podium, he thanked the Political Equality League for its endorsement, but reminded them that no political or moral reform had ever been won without the support of labour. If the women of Manitoba got the vote, it would be because labour had stood steadfastly behind the proposition.⁵⁵

The response of the PEL leadership to Ward's remarks was not recorded, but they must have agreed with him, since two

weeks later they again spoke at one of his campaign meetings. This time Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. McClung came, the latter, as usual, drawing a large crowd. Mrs. Thomas gave a brief history of the Political Equality League, explaining that "they had always had the sympathy and co-operation of the labor men." Working men, she said, "had a grip on the fundamentals of democracy." When Mrs. McClung's turn came, she expressed her happiness at sharing a platform with labour men because they had "always and consistently recognized that labor conditions rendered it just as important that women should have the vote as it was for the men."⁵⁶ The candidate may have enjoyed the support of these well known suffragists, but he was nonetheless badly defeated. Fred Dixon, on the other hand, was elected, and he continued to fight for woman suffrage from within the legislature.⁵⁷

In February 1915, The Voice went further in allowing the Political Equality to speak for itself in the pages of the paper. Like the Equal Suffrage Club before it, the PEL was given its own column. It printed poems, articles, international notes, and even suffrage humour.⁵⁸ Much, if not most, of the material was reprinted from American publications, notably the Woman's Journal.⁵⁹ That magazine had been launched in 1870 as the official paper of the American Woman Suffrage Association. Established following a split in the U.S. suffrage movement, the AWSA was more conservative than the rival National Woman Suffrage

Association, a difference reflected in the titles of their respective papers, the Woman's Journal and The Revolution. The Journal was better financed and more conservatively edited, and drew its readers and contributors from the growing numbers of writers, professionals and club women, many of whom treated the question of suffrage gingerly. The Revolution, on the other hand, spoke for and to the domestic, the sweatshop and factory worker, and the dispossessed, and openly advocated suffrage and other social reforms.⁶⁰ Many of the articles appearing in the Political Equality League column were the work of suffragist Alice Stone Blackwell, daughter of two of the Journal's first editors, Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell.⁶¹ That the PEL should borrow so extensively from the AWSA paper for its column in The Voice is not surprising, given the similarities between the two groups. Like the AWSA, the PEL welcomed men and women members⁶² and drew many of its members from the ranks of the city's journalists and professional women.⁶³ In addition to the American material, the PEL column contained occasional articles on the condition of women in Manitoba, focussing particularly on their lack of legal rights. The column continued until mid-November.⁶⁴

Because the League's column only occasionally addressed suffrage from the point of view of working women⁶⁵, spending more time reporting events in the world-wide battle for woman suffrage and on general articles, The Voice itself had to present suffrage from the vantage point of the working

class. The paper published an article by Eugene V. Debs calling on all good Socialists to work for equal suffrage⁶⁶ and printed a report of a speech he made in Philadelphia on peace and woman suffrage.⁶⁷ It printed another by Anita C. Block in which she tried to explain why, when women in Colorado had the vote, terrible labour problems persisted.⁶⁸

The paper also published excerpts from an official bulletin by American Federation of Labor president Samuel Gompers in which he called on organized labour to join in the fight for woman suffrage.⁶⁹

In addition, it gave extensive coverage to the visit of Miss Barbara Wylie, a British suffragette⁷⁰ and printed a lengthy article on the dispute between the suffragettes and the British Labor Party.⁷¹ It reported at length on addresses by Mrs. W. C. Perry and Nellie McClung at the People's Forum in February 1913⁷², and by Dr. Mary Crawford and Mrs. A. V. Thomas in February 1914.⁷³ It associated woman suffrage with a reform of capitalism and was critical of those who would support one without the other.⁷⁴ It printed international notes. In an editorial it used the example of the re-election of the Labor party in Australia to demonstrate how woman suffrage would not bring about chaos.⁷⁵ It published general articles about suffrage.⁷⁶

As victory neared for the pro-suffrage forces, The Voice began to waver. While reiterating its support for the measure, it warned readers that woman suffrage would not automatically "usher in the millennium", and unless women

used the ballot wisely, no significant changes would occur.⁷⁷ It was critical of those who maintained that the vote would increase women's wages to a level equal to men's: to improve their wages and working conditions, women should look to trade unions and not to the ballot. The only vote which really meant anything was the one "intended to wipe out the wage system".⁷⁸ It expressed concern that women might not appreciate the "supposedly revolutionary possibilities" of a measure that had never been actively opposed in Manitoba⁷⁹: opposition to suffrage would have galvanized public opinion, raised public awareness, and provided an opportunity to educate women about the power of the ballot so that they might use it more effectively.⁸⁰ Women, The Voice said, would "never be made into intelligent voters simply by having the ballot stuck into their hands".⁸¹ It was suspicious of the Norris government, none of whose members believe in suffrage with "fervency and moral passion"⁸², and worried that the government might back out of its promise to bring in a woman suffrage bill.⁸³

It is at first difficult to explain why The Voice, having supported woman suffrage for twenty years, suddenly began in mid-1915 to question it. A close reading of the material shows, however, that the paper's support for the measure itself never wavered: what it began to question was the usefulness of equal suffrage. At no point did The Voice suggest that granting the vote to women was a bad idea, and indeed it reiterated its belief that suffrage would mean

"the decay of some venerable notions about the supposed prerogative of men to boss women, and [would] contribute a good deal to popular education in the principles of democracy".⁸⁴ The Voice had, however, become increasingly doubtful that capitalism could be reformed, and had serious doubts about the power of the ballot. Woman suffrage would not of itself bring about wholesale changes in society. Working men had had the vote for years without its leading to an appreciable improvement in their lives. Furthermore, if the ballot was as powerful as the Political Equality League and others suggested, the Norris government would surely not be bringing in the measure. Granting women the vote was just, though under the present system probably meaningless. When the suffrage bill was given third reading and passed into law on 27 January 1916, The Voice joined other supporters of suffrage in rejoicing. It even celebrated the manner in which such a great change had been accomplished. It gave credit where credit was due and congratulated the Political Equality League on its "sane and practical campaign" and added that while "the Labor men, the Trades and Labor councils and Socialist organizations (who stay like Spartans with an unpopular principle) [had] not taken such a prominent place, [...] they nevertheless recognize[d] that it [was] a real fundamental reform and should be second in their rejoicings on its final attainment".⁸⁵

Most accounts of the campaign for woman suffrage in

Manitoba give sole credit for the eventual victory to the middle-class Anglo-Saxon social reformers of the Political Equality League, and to a much lesser extent to the Equal Suffrage Club. The contributions of the Icelandic women and working-class men and women have largely been ignored, minimized or misrepresented. With regard to the Icelandic women, for example, Catherine Cleverdon and Carol Bacchi mention them only twice, and neither historian consulted Freyja, Canada's only woman suffrage newspaper. Cleverdon cites the Grain Growers' Guide to back her claim that the Icelandic women had been organizing around suffrage since the 1890s⁸⁶, while Bacchi does not substantiate at all her statement that a suffrage movement had existed among Icelandic women in Manitoba since the 1870s.⁸⁷ Both dismiss the Icelandic women's influence, as does Mary Kinnear, author of the most comprehensive article on the participation of Icelandic women in the Manitoba suffrage movement.⁸⁸ According to Kinnear, the Icelandic women "had a minimal effect on the mainstream Manitoba woman suffrage movement."⁸⁹ Kinnear is correct: there is no evidence of Icelandic involvement in either the Equal Suffrage Club or the Political Equality League. Icelandic women did, however, play an important, if not "mainstream", role in the struggle, one not unlike that played by The Voice. It is inaccurate to intimate, as Kinnear does, that only by participating in "mainstream" (ie. middle-class, Anglo-Saxon) organizations does one contribute in any

meaningful way to effecting change.⁹⁰ For over twenty years The Voice and the Icelandic women promoted the issue in their respective communities and kept the issue in the public eye.

Suffrage was won in Manitoba with the cooperation, and sometimes active participation, of The Voice, the organized labour movement, and individual working men and women. The Voice had supported suffrage since 1895, and was the first paper in the West to do so.⁹¹ On two occasions it hired a woman's columnist from Winnipeg, and in both cases the women were committed suffragists who used their columns to put forward pro-suffrage views. The Trades and Labor Council endorsed the franchise for women in 1895, and remained involved in the battle for suffrage.⁹² Equal suffrage was endorsed by the Woman's Labor League.⁹³ Working-class men and women, from the Hislops, William Scott and A. W. Puttee in the Equal Suffrage Club to Gertrude Puttee and the Flett sisters in the Political Equality League, were actively involved in so-called middle-class suffrage associations. It is true, as The Voice itself acknowledged, that the leadership came from the middle class. It is not true, as Carol Bacchi and others have suggested, that credit for the victory belongs solely to farmers and middle-class professionals.

ENDNOTES

1. Catherine Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
2. Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983, p. 35, footnote 50. The suffragist in question was Helena Gutteridge of British Columbia.
3. The People's Voice, 23 February 1895, p. 5. Dr. Yeomans was a Montreal-born widow and graduate of the Ann Arbor Medical School. She began practicing medicine in Winnipeg in 1885 and is thought to have been the first woman physician in Manitoba. As an executive member of the local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she had been campaigning for female suffrage from within the WCTU when she was appointed provincial president of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association in 1894. When she witnessed the defeat of a provincial suffrage bill in February 1894 she decided that the women of Manitoba needed an organization that would devote all of its energy to the cause of woman suffrage, unlike the WCTU which campaigned for a number of causes. Since the battle for suffrage was clearly being waged in the provincial legislatures, it was at that level that women should organize. She called a special meeting following a WCTU meeting in November 1894 and the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club was formed. (Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, pp. 50-52)
4. The People's Voice, 2 March 1895, p. 2.
5. Ibid., 9 March 1895, p. 8. He subsequently took a similar stand on the Trades Council's involvement in the prohibition question. (Ibid., 23 March 1895) For more on Gideon, see The Voice, 26 August 1898, p. 1.
6. The People's Voice, 16 March 1895, p. 6.
7. Ibid., 16 March 1895.
8. Bacchi claims that it lasted one year (p. 28) and Cleverdon suggests ten (p. 52). Neither substantiates her claim.
9. The People's Voice, 23 March 1895, pp. 3-4.
10. Ibid., 30 March 1895, pp. 3,6.
11. Ibid., 6 April 1895, pp. 3,6; 13 April 1895, p. 3.
12. Ibid., 16 March 1895, p. 6.

13. The Voice later claimed (28 January 1916, p. 1) that its support for woman suffrage dated back to 1895, and boasted that it was the first paper in the West to show such support.

14. Ibid., 5 November 1897, p. 1.

15. Ibid., 30 December 1898, p. 7.

16. For more on Hind, see Kennethe M. Haig, Brave Harvest, Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945. Though she was a colleague of Hind's and was herself involved in the suffrage campaign, Haig does not address this aspect of Hind's life.

17. The Voice, 17 June 1898, p. 8.

18. Alan F. J. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914, Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975, p. 27.

19. The Voice, 14 September 1900, p. 4. See item 5 of the revised platform of the Winnipeg Labor Party.

20. Ibid., 16 November 1900, p. 2.

21. Ibid., 18 January 1901, p. 6.

22. Ibid., 16 November 1900, p. 2.

23. Ibid., 15 March 1901.

24. Ibid., 22 March 1901.

25. Ibid., 22 March 1901, p. 10.

26. It is not known when Puttee's support for suffrage dates from but during his 1900 and 1904 campaigns for election to the House of Commons he had advocated full adult suffrage and encouraged women to canvass for him. Ibid., 19 January 1900, p. 1; 14 October 1904, p. 4.

27. Ibid., 8 November 1901, p. 6.

28. Ibid., 12 July 1901, p. 6.

29. Ibid., 11 October 1901, p. 4.

30. Ibid., 24 January 1902, p. 7.

31. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 52.

32. The Voice, 29 May 1903, p. 6.

33. Cf. a text about suffrage in Britain on 5 May 1905, and an editorial about socialism and suffrage in Finland on 22 November 1907.

34. Cf. a piece by Mark Twain on suffrage in New Zealand on 26 January 1906, and a piece from the Social Democratic Herald on 14 June 1907.

35. The sole exception was the announcement of an address on suffrage at an open meeting of the Labor party a year and a half earlier. The Voice, 11 October 1907, p. 12.

36. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 55.

37. For more on this organization and the contribution of Icelandic women to the suffrage movement in Manitoba, see Mary Kinnear, "The Icelandic Connection: Freyja And The Manitoba Woman Suffrage Movement", Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme, vol. 7, no. 4, Winter 1986, pp. 25-28.

38. The Voice, 19 March 1909.

39. Ibid., 18 November 1910, p. 1.

40. Ibid., 6 May 1910, p. 4.

41. Ibid., 3 June 1910, p. 10; 13 January 1911. At the next meeting the League decided to have its own petitions printed up when finances permitted, but later postponed the printing when it learned that no petition would be presented to the legislature the following session.

42. Ibid., 3 June 1910, p. 10.

43. Ibid., 13 January 1911; 10 February 1911, p. 6.

44. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 55.

45. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Political Equality League Papers.

46. Nellie McClung, The Stream Runs Fast, Toronto: Thomas Allen Ltd., 1914, pp. 101-110. McClung acknowledged the "good work" of the Icelandic women, and added that "the WCTU women could always be counted on and the same was true of the Labor women."

47. The Voice, 20 September 1912, p. 2.

48. The Council's Education Committee was appointed to organize the meeting. Ibid., 8 November 1912, p. 1.

49. Ibid., 6 June 1913, p. 1.

50. Ibid., 30 January 1914, p. 4.
51. Ibid., 9 January 1914, p. 6.
52. PAM, Political Equality League Papers.
53. The Voice, 24 April 1914, p. 1.
54. Ibid., 1 May 1914, p. 8.
55. Ibid., 19 June 1914, p. 1.
56. Ibid., 3 July 1914, p. 1.
57. Cf. ibid., 19 February 1915, p. 4.
58. "A little girl named her kitten 'Anti-Suffragette'. When her mother asked her why she gave the kitten such an awful name, she replied, "oh, that's allright. She can change it when she gets her eyes open." Ibid., 12 March 1915, p. 5.
59. Cf. ibid., 19 March 1915, p. 5.
60. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard, 1975 (revised edition), p. 155.
61. Ibid., p. 70.
62. Only women, however, were eligible for the presidency of the League.
63. Lillian Beynon Thomas, Francis Marion Beynon and E. Cora Hind were journalists, Nellie McClung was a writer, and Dr. Mary Crawford was a physician. One quarter of the suffrage leaders surveyed by Carol Bacchi were journalists or writers. Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? See also Susan Jackel, "First Days, Fighting Days: Prairie Presswomen and Suffrage Activism, 1906-1916" in Mary Kinnear, ed., First Days Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987, pp. 53-75. For more on women journalists in Canada, see Barbara Freeman, "'Every Stroke Upward': Women Journalists in Canada, 1880-1906", Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme, vol. 7, no 3, Fall 1986, pp. 43-46.
64. The column of 19 November 1915 (p. 6) appears to have been the last one.
65. See, for example, an article by Rose Schneidermann of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, on 15 August 1915, p. 6.

66. The Voice, 23 July 1915, p. 7.

67. Ibid., 30 July 1915, p. 7.

68. Working-class suffragists, she said, spoke of giving working women the vote so that they might protect their own interests; why then should capitalist women not do the same and vote in their class interests? It was illogical to expect upper-class women to use their votes to protect the interests of working class men when those men, who had for years had the power of the ballot, had themselves failed to use it effectively. Women, she concluded, were entitled to the vote, not because they were "wise angels", but because they were "ordinary human beings striving equally with men to solve the problems of life." The Voice, 19 February 1915, p. 4.

69. Ibid., 17 September 1915, p. 5.

70. See, for example, The Voice, 6 December 1912, p. 8.

71. Ibid., 1 November 1912, p. 1.

72. Ibid., 7 February 1913.

73. Ibid., 6 March 1914.

74. Ibid., 24 January 1913.

75. Ibid., 6 June 1913, p. 13.

76. See, for example, "Charm and Chivalry vs. Woman Suffrage", ibid., 2 January 1914, or "Political Equality", ibid., 30 January 1914.

77. Ibid., 23 July 1915, p. 1.

78. Ibid., 6 August 1915, p. 1.

79. Ibid., 3 September 1915, p. 1.

80. Ibid., 17 September 1915, p. 1.

81. Ibid., 26 November 1915, p. 1.

82. Ibid., 3 September 1915, p. 1.

83. Ibid., 26 November 1915, p. 1. Prominent suffragist A. Vernon Thomas finally objected to the negative tone of The Voice's editorials. He challenged the paper to make public the foundation for its suspicions of the Norris government and disagreed that there had been no opposition. He also pointed out that there had been no organized opposition to universal male suffrage in Manitoba. (Ibid., 3 December

1915, p. 7) Thomas' wife Lillian, however, disagreed with him. In a letter to Catherine Cleverdon she, like The Voice, expressed concern about the ease with which the vote had been won. (Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 52) The Voice did not respond to Vernon Thomas' letter, and no more critical articles appeared.

84. The Voice, 23 July 1915, p. 1.

85. Ibid., 28 January 1916, p. 1.

86. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 49.

87. Bacchi, Liberation Deferred?, pp. 27-28.

88. Mary Kinnear, "The Icelandic Connection".

89. Ibid., p.27.

90. Here Kinnear falls into the same trap as Carol Bacchi: by suggesting that the "suffrage movement" is composed only of those actively involved in organizations whose primary goal was woman suffrage, they minimize the contributions of class- or culture-centered groups. Since members of those communities frequently preferred to work with one another in multi-issue groups, they only rarely joined such organizations as the Political Equality League. It should come as no surprise to Bacchi and Kinnear that, having defined "suffrage movement" in such a way that it excludes almost all but middle-class Anglo Saxons, they find little evidence of participation or influence by others.

91. The Voice, 28 January 1916, p. 1.

92. It participated, for example, in the Political Equality League delegation that visited Premier Norris in the spring of 1915 to remind him of his promise, made in opposition, to grant women the vote. Ibid., 28 May 1915. The Minute Books of the PEL indicate that it corresponded from time to time with the Trades Council.

93. Given its interest in securing the support of labour, it is interesting that the PEL seems not to have worked with, or even communicated with, the League.

CHAPTER 4

The Voice Speaks to Women

The Voice clearly assumed that it was being read by women, and on occasion it spoke directly to them. It published romantic fiction, it directed advertisements at women, and it published a woman's column. Of these the woman's column is probably the most significant. It was designed specifically for women and thus reflects The Voice's attitude to all women, in the paid labour force and at home. Moreover, for nearly seven years it was edited by a local working-class woman, and it is the only record we have of one of these women speaking for herself. The fiction published in The Voice, as well as the advertising and humour, while presumably directed at both men and women, reveal much about The Voice's general attitude to women.

A woman's column first appeared in December 1894, six months after the People's Voice began publishing. It was prompted by a letter to the editors from "Maggie M." in which she asked for a woman's column "all about dresses and nice things".¹ The following week the woman's column began, subtitled "Interesting letters from the Workingman's Family Circle". It contained another letter from Maggie, social notes, an article about a ballet girls' union in New York, a diatribe against lady journalists, and a letter in response

to Maggie, accusing her of being flighty. The correspondent also offered an innovative solution to the problem of the underpaid and overworked "telephone girls": they should become domestic servants, buy good underclothing and marry respectable young tradesmen.²

The column continued into 1895 with more correspondence from Maggie and Judy, a young woman with a writing style very similar to Maggie's. There were also suggestions that the "typewriting girls" organize, an article about the wonders of unionism for women, and a letter from a domestic servant complaining about her lot and calling for the creation of a union.³

Within a month, Judy's writing style had undergone a radical change and she was "conducting" the column. The coherent, intelligent prose that followed was in marked contrast to her previous writing which, like Maggie's, had read like a parody of women's writing. Under Judy's direction the woman's column took on the tone it was to have for the next several years. Gone were the stories about her boyfriend Jim and the exchange of letters with Maggie. They were replaced by a mixture of household hints, health advice, recipes and fashion, with only the occasional article about women in the paid labour force.

It is not clear when Judy's editorship of the column ended, though it may have been late in 1897 when the column disappeared for several months. It returned in the spring

of 1898⁴, and then disappeared again for four years, and resumed in March 1903.⁵ The column continued through 1905, and stopped again toward the end of the year. The content remained the same as it had been under Judy's direction. One typical column from May 1903 contained a pot-pourri of articles on such topics as Mathilda Lotz, the painter of animals, the small waist, the vapour bath, luncheons, putting on a shirtwaist, the education of a Viennese girl, gossiping, women doctors, hairwash, baking tins, kitchen help, how helpful children are the happiest, unaired bedrooms, high heels and finished step, systematic housekeeping, London working women, children's frocks, a lampstand and music rack, a toilet bath, a girl's ideals, the treatment of houseplants, rice, dress hints, the advantages of being fifty, the open fireplace, training children to be neat, pints and pounds, a dull finish, room arrangement, and more advice on children.⁶

In 1906, the woman's column began its longest uninterrupted run under one editor. From 12 January 1906 to 12 September 1912 Ada Muir directed the column, intending that it be "useful and instructive to workers' wives and daughters."⁷ An articulate and coherent writer, Ada Muir was a British born mother of six.⁸ Although trained as a nurse in Britain, there is no evidence that she nursed in Canada. She was active in the community, and was involved in founding a local Health League and the Woman's Labor

League. She served on the executive of both organizations and edited their columns which also appeared in The Voice frequently just after the woman's column on the editorial page. Under Muir's direction the woman's column took a considerably more political tone. Household advice and fashion hints virtually disappeared, and the health advice was markedly different. Instead, Muir focused primarily on four issues: the well being of working women and how unions could help them; health, both personal and public; prostitution and the ways in which the law treated men and women differently; and suffrage. Though considerably more political than previous editors, Muir was by no means a radical. She did not call into question woman's primary role as wife and mother, and instead sought ways in which woman could better fulfill this role.

Muir raised the issue of working women almost immediately. In her second column she suggested that although most women were not themselves members of unions, they were ex-officio members because of the quiet but important ways in which they made union men's lives easier.⁹ Shortly afterward, she expressed concern about the ways in which imported British domestic servants were being exploited.¹⁰ Muir was a staunch advocate of collective action to address common problems. She called for the creation of a women's trade union league, presumably similar to those operating in Britain and the United States, and stressed that it would be

good for women while not adversely affecting their competence as homemakers.¹¹ She advocated the establishment of "self-supporting homes" for the hundreds of homeless self-supporting girls and women in Winnipeg, modelled after those set up by the Women's Municipal League in New York.¹² When the Woman's Labor League was founded early in 1910, Muir was a staunch supporter, became its secretary and used her column to promote its activities.¹³ On more than one occasion she called on women workers to organize as their first step toward emancipation. Organization might be "an evil" --though Muir did not explain how it might be so--but the alternative was worse, and evil or not, organization was the necessary first step. Once women were united they could begin to work for improvements in their living and working conditions.¹⁴

The woman's column had always included information on health, but with Ada Muir at the helm there was a noticeable change. Where earlier columns had contained articles about smelling salts and dieting, Ada Muir, a vegetarian, sang the praises of lentils, whole wheat bread and meatless cuisine, and criticized the wearing of corsets.¹⁵ She wrote endless articles on the medical inspection of school children, public health, typhoid, medical atrocities, "Medical tyranny"¹⁶, vivisection and women's diseases. She bitterly opposed vaccination, calling it a "mischievous university dogma", and expressed strong reservations about the

pasteurization of milk. She was deeply distrustful of the medical profession, and bragged that none of her six children had ever visited a doctor.¹⁷ Shortly after a health league was founded in 1907 she was elected its secretary-treasurer. Her husband, Alan, was the league's president.¹⁸ Reports from the health league followed the Woman's Column, and given that she was the league's secretary, were probably the work of Mrs. Muir.

Muir retained her interest in public health matters after the family left Winnipeg in 1912, and in Vancouver she and her husband established a People's League for Health and an Anti-Vaccination and Medical League. According to Angus McLaren the Muirs were the only vigorous opponents of the sterilization of the feeble-minded and mentally ill in British Columbia before 1933; to them sterilization was equivalent to murder. They accused medical doctors of collusion with capitalists to exterminate labour leaders in prisons and asylums, and charged them with attempting to control government. They were suspicious of "regular medicine" and were interested in Rosicrucianism, herbal medicine, astrology, and telepathy. In Winnipeg their public health targets had been vaccination and pasteurization; in Vancouver they added tonsillectomies, adenoidectomies, appendectomies (evidence of "medical sadism") and the giving of iodine to school children on the grounds that it created drug dependency.¹⁹

For Muir, public health was a class issue. Her opposition to the control of public health by medical professionals was part of her general concern that the leadership of social programs and public life as a whole would become the monopoly of the middle class. She believed that these professionals' interest in public health indicated merely their desire to make themselves indispensable and guarantee themselves an income rather than a genuine concern for the wellbeing of the masses.²⁰ This may help to explain Muir's apparent distance from her contemporaries in the middle-class Manitoba women's movement, at least two of whom were physicians.²¹

Another question of great concern to Ada Muir was prostitution. By 1910 Winnipeg was widely recognized as the vice capital of the country, a "moral cesspool"²² with "the rottenest conditions of things".²³ Despite assurances from clergyman and anti-prostitution activist Dr. Frederick DuVal that women's help was not needed in the fight against vice, that it would be a "man's battle" and that "the chivalry of the men of Winnipeg" could be relied upon "to take away this reproach"²⁴, Ada Muir felt that vice was women's business. She raised the issue for the first time in her column of 26 July 1907 when she reported on the resolutions adopted by the Women's Socialist Union of Pasadena, California. The union claimed that prostitution was the fault of an economic system that underpaid women; it decried

the injustice of punishing the women when the men went free. Muir agreed with the analysis of the Pasadena women, adding that a similar situation existed in Winnipeg.²⁵

As long as she edited the woman's column, Muir argued tirelessly that it was useless and unfair to penalize women while failing to address the economic causes of prostitution, and it was blatantly unfair to send the men home and the women to court. She suggested that reformers should seek instead to find ways to help these women to earn a decent wage, since most of them became prostitutes for economic reasons. Until the economic issue was addressed, the police "must appear rather as parasites on vice than as defenders of public morality."²⁶ Muir put the blame for Winnipeg's flourishing prostitution trade squarely in the laps of men, those who purchased the favours of women, those who arrested the seller and not the buyer, and those who made the laws that forced women into the street and then punished them for it. She criticized the police and municipal authorities for their failure to close down the segregated district and arrest the frequenters.²⁷ Muir recognized how women's disenfranchisement and the prevailing view of them as "the noblest work of God" were limiting to women. Every woman was a potential victim, by virtue of her sex deprived of a voice in the judicial and political systems of the country, and thus effectively denied redress. She was keenly aware of a double-standard: immoral men were

protected by other men, "but an immoral woman is a monstrosity and deserves all she gets."²⁸

Given this analysis it is not surprising that Muir advocated a solution to the prostitution problem that differed from that espoused by Frederick DuVal and his colleagues in the Ministerial Association. DuVal, a man described by James Gray as a "pint-sized zealot"²⁹ focussed single-mindedly on closing the brothels in the city's segregated district and once so harassed an incumbent mayor on the question that he withdrew from the mayoralty race.³⁰ While DuVal acknowledged the role of poverty in creating prostitution and supported the YWCA's efforts to help "working girls"³¹, he generally saw the problem as a moral one. Muir, though no less a moralist³², saw prostitution as one of the by-products of a society in which men and women were not equal. Though both agreed that the segregated district should be closed down, for DuVal the problem would end there, while for Muir it was more complex. Prostitution would not be eradicated by the simple closing of brothels, but by raising women's wages, providing them with adequate housing, applying existing laws justly and, through the franchise, giving women a say in making those laws.

Ada Muir was thus an ardent supporter of woman suffrage, a position she revealed quite quickly to her readers.³ In

1907, for example, she took the Labor Party to task, wondering why there was no mention of women in the party platform except in an item referring to woman and child labor, and why, given the party's strong support for woman suffrage, there was no mention of it in the platform. She went further, suggesting that if the Labor Party took a definite stand on the suffrage question more women might attend its public meetings. The workers, and indeed society at large, could not afford to ignore the education of women in this way.³⁴ She criticized the National Council of Women of Canada for its silence on the subject of suffrage.³⁵ Upon learning that Mrs. Pankhurst was to speak in Toronto, Muir called on Winnipeg suffragists to invite her to Winnipeg³⁶; in December 1911 Mrs. Pankhurst spoke in Winnipeg under the auspices of the University Women's Club.³⁷ Muir wrote lengthy and numerous pro-suffrage articles, reported on events in the United States, Great Britain and continental Europe and on occasion even printed suffragist poetry. In the six years that she edited the woman's column, not a single month went by without at least one mention of suffrage in the column.

Muir viewed suffrage as a means of eliminating some of the obstacles for women. The major problem for women was their powerlessness, and though she recognized that suffrage would not completely resolve the problem, she did see women's lack of power and lack of voting rights as inextricably linked.

Chivalry was a poor substitute for justice³⁸ and did not protect women from being assaulted or left penniless when their husbands died or deserted them. Government and the courts treated men and women differently, and only through the ballot could women eliminate the double standard. Once they had the vote women could force governments to take them seriously and the courts to treat them fairly.³⁹ Suffrage would give women an active voice in changing unjust laws.

Ada Muir's consistent raising of the suffrage issue is particularly important in light of the dormant state of the Manitoba suffrage movement in the early years of the twentieth century. Legislative activity in favour of woman suffrage had come to an end with the defeat of a bill in 1893, and though Dr. Amelia Yeomans and other members of the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club and the Icelandic suffrage societies remained active, they concentrated on low profile educational activities. Catherine Cleverdon in her study of the woman suffrage movement in Canada offers three explanations for this lull in activity. She suggests that the early leaders had exhausted themselves in the debates of the 1880s and 1890s, and had yet to be replaced by a second generation of suffragists. The relative prosperity of the early 1900s may have disinclined people to political agitation in general, and the tremendous growth of the West in the period may have preoccupied people.⁴⁰ Whatever the explanation, it appears that things were quiet on the

suffrage front in Ada Muir's Manitoba. The Equal Suffrage Club had folded and the Political Equality League was not formed until a few months before the Muirs left Manitoba. In the absence of high profile well-publicized suffrage activity, Ada Muir's column is significant. By returning to the subject again and again, she kept the issue in the minds of the working men and women who read The Voice. By spreading her message out over six years and by presenting it as part of a package of desirable social reforms, she avoided accusations that she was obsessed with a single subject, as happened when she wrote a series of articles on Christian Science.⁴¹ Muir's impact on the battle for woman suffrage in Manitoba is probably far greater than her place in the historiography would suggest⁴², and her one-woman suffrage education campaign no doubt reached more working people than did those of the Equal Suffrage Club and the Political Equality League.

Muir had a social vision that set her apart from her middle-class contemporaries. She perceived that her interests were sometimes different from working-class men by virtue of her sex, and from those of middle-class women by virtue of her class, and in this she is reminiscent of the British Columbia suffragist and labour activist, Helena Gutteridge.⁴³ Both put forward a feminism based on their experiences as working-class women. That Muir was not alone in holding these views is evidenced by the existence of the

Woman's Labor League and the fact that her column continued for nearly seven years. The Voice was a business, and had its editors believed that there was no market for Ada Muir's product they would have discontinued it.

In the autumn of 1912, Ada Muir announced to her readers that because of family considerations she was "taking the trail west".⁴⁴ With her departure, The Voice lost "the only really independent woman contributor in the Dominion"⁴⁵, and the women of Winnipeg lost an ardent and articulate advocate on their behalf. Winnipeg's loss, however, was Vancouver's gain, and Muir remained politically active on the west coast.

Muir's writing in The Voice bears some resemblance to that of contemporary maternal feminists. Women working outside the home were a necessary evil; their prime function remained "the care and raising of the human race".⁴⁶ Women, she claimed, made a legitimate and important contribution to the labour movement by making working men's lives easier⁴⁷ and by caring for future workers and trade unionists. A woman could better serve her family if she was knowledgeable about health, nutrition and child care, among other things. Muir saw her column as a means of educating her readers⁴⁸, and insisted that it was woman's duty to be informed about all matters of concern to herself and her family.⁴⁹ An educated womanhood could then join with men to work for the betterment of all, or as she put it in an address to the

Health League on "Woman's influence upon the world", "True reform will come in the blending of male and female intellects and expression, and man can never obtain emancipation from error until woman's power upon the world comes into its heritage."⁵⁰

Such views make it tempting to link Ada Muir with Nellie McClung and her maternal feminist colleagues, but there are also striking differences. Muir does not appear to have been very interested in the temperance question nor are her columns marked by the xenophobic tone that characterized the utterances of many maternal feminists.⁵¹ She expressed none of the social gospel rhetoric and did not present suffrage as a panacea for society's ills. While she wanted improvements in women's wages and working conditions, she did not share the maternal feminists' desire to get women out of the factories altogether. Most importantly, Muir had a clear and occasionally articulated class analysis, considered herself a member of the working class, and addressed a working-class audience in a working-class paper. Maternal feminism arose from a middle class milieu, and despite expressions of interest in the welfare of working people, remained a fundamentally middle class-ideology.⁵² It did not, as Muir did, challenge the inequitable distribution of wealth, nor did it address the ways in which class membership prescribed people's options. Though she

may on occasion have resembled them, Ada Muir was not a maternal feminist.

Two weeks after Ada Muir announced her departure she was replaced by a new editor, Mary Ford, who remained for just over a year. Prior to her appointment at The Voice Ford had edited a woman's column in the Grain Grower's Guide.⁵³ In her inaugural column, she suggested eight topics for discussion: suffrage, the need for a woman morality inspector or police officer, a parents' association, whether a free labour bureau for women was a necessity, civic education, the mayoralty, the union label, and "the living wage for the working girl".⁵⁴ In fact she concentrated on three issues: parenting, working women and suffrage.

Ford was a believer in eugenics, and while she did not devote as much space to it in her column in The Voice as she had in the Grain Growers' Guide⁵⁵, it still figured prominently, particularly in the early columns. They abound with advice on child rearing. She was a devout Christian, and encouraged her readers to raise their children in God's benevolent gaze. She urged them to write to her to obtain the booklet "How to Tell Life's Truth to Children" so that children might be made aware of "God's perfect plan" in an atmosphere of purity and sweetness.⁵⁶ Children raised in such an atmosphere would become wholesome and virtuous adults, and in turn beget pure children, to the benefit of society as a whole. Mothers were encouraged not to be too

protective of their children because children needed to be allowed to believe that they were looked after by God.⁵⁷ Though parenting featured less prominently in later columns, Ford's view of women as mothers and caregivers first was reflected in her writings on suffrage and working women.

Among the topics for discussion proposed in her first column were the questions of the need for a free labour bureau for girls and women, and the living wage for girls and women. She expressed concern about the exploitation of domestic servants, in particular those lured from the Old Country with promises of good wages.⁵⁸ A reader responded by calling on the friends of domestics to form a Domestic Service Protection League. The author of the letter told of an existing association in Winnipeg working for the improvement of domestics' wages, but implied that its concern was primarily financial, while the focus of the proposed protection league to be the defence of domestics' rights in general, and the raising of awareness of these rights among employers.⁵⁹ There is no record of a Domestic Service Protection League having been formed. This letter was followed by one from "Working Girl", asking that someone launch a good restaurant for women where they could get a substantial meal for a decent price. The working girl abhorred charity, said the writer, she was "an embodiment of independence."⁶⁰ It is significant that in most cases discussion of these matters of direct concern to working

women was prompted by letters from readers; Ford rarely raised them herself. The Woman's Labor League had been active for over a year and a half when Mary Ford took over the woman's column, yet she never mentioned it, and there is no evidence of her having been involved in it. Though she wrote for an audience that included working women, Ford appears to have been uncomfortable with the notion of women in the paid labour force, preferring to see women in the nursery rather than in the factory.

Ford wasted no time in making her pro-suffrage views known. In her second column she called on women to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens and to vote in municipal elections.⁶¹ because, as she put it, "[W]omanhood [was] the greatest moral force the world has ever known."⁶² She led off her third column with The Woman's Platform-"Votes for Women/The eight hour day/A Living Wage/To Guard the Home"⁶³ - an opening she was to repeat several times over the duration of the column. As she had done in the Guide, Ford invited her readers to correspond with her. A number of readers wrote in support of suffrage, though they did not always agree with Ford's maternalist reasoning. In response to those who said that women did not want the vote, Ford decided to poll her readers and included a ballot in the column,⁶⁴ however it was worded in such a way that

readers could only vote in favour of suffrage. The poll results were not released.

According to Ford, four classes of women needed the vote: women interested in science ("We have in the city a laboratory to see whether milk is fit for children."); women interested in economics ("The girl who has studied the immigrant problem sees in every shipload possibilities for beauty and for great things. She knows they can only be cared for and benefitted collectively."); women interested in industrial work ("The whole sweatshop system is a situation to be regulated politically."); and the domestic woman ("The woman who used to be able to take care of her children by individual effort, when she made her bread at home and milked her own cows, she did not need the ballot to secure pure food. Now these are governmental matters.")⁶⁵ Though by no means an advocate of militancy, and rarely of collective action⁶⁶, Ford encouraged working women to collaborate with their wealthier sisters for their mutual benefit.⁶⁷ She did not, however, offer any practical suggestions about how this was to be done, and made no mention of the Political Equality League which had been formed a year earlier and was actively courting labour support.

The contrast with Ada Muir is striking, both in terms of style-- Ada Muir launched stinging attacks while Mary Ford pleaded gently-- and substance. They frequently took

similar positions on issues, but for sometimes very different reasons. Ada Muir wanted woman suffrage because it was just; Mary Ford wanted the vote because it would bring women's moral influence into government. Mrs. Muir wanted a police crackdown on vice, with the law applied equally to men and women; Mary Ford wanted "a new chivalry of just and generous protection of girlhood."⁶⁸ Both were advocates of better wages and working conditions for employed women, though only Ada Muir urged the women themselves to organize to this end. Mrs. Muir called for sweeping changes in society, and Mrs. Ford wanted reform. Both saw motherhood and marriage as central to women's lives, and encouraged women to educate themselves to fulfill this role better. Muir was suspicious of middle-class women and tended not to work with them politically; Ford advocated building coalitions across class lines.

Mary Ford edited the woman's column until the end of 1913. No explanation was given for her departure, and it marked the end of a locally produced woman's column. When the column resumed in the spring of 1916, it had gone full circle and returned to the style it had in the period immediately following Judy's editorship. The copy was syndicated, probably from the United States. The focus was on recipes and fashion and household hints, and is neatly summed up in a headline from October 1916, "Woman's Work—First of all it is to Make Attractive the Home."⁶⁹ The

political content was muted and infrequent, and working women were only rarely mentioned. The column itself disappeared in the summer of 1917.

This focus on women's domestic role is also apparent in most of the advertising in The Voice. From the very first issue, there were a number of advertisements aimed directly at women. Virtually all presented a picture of women as physically weak and primarily concerned with finding, attracting and keeping a man, and the subsequent domestic duties. Women were encouraged to keep up-to-date with the latest in housekeeping products intended to make those duties easier: "Housewives who have not used the China Magic Smokeless Stove Polish are behind the age".⁷⁰ There were also ads for milliners, grocers, bakers, dressmakers, clothiers, furniture stores, and suppliers of various household and personal products, many of them directed at women.

Women's alleged physical weakness was a boon to the publishing and advertising industries. Nervous diseases could be cured by South American Nervine, acute indigestion by Burdock Blood Bitters, "sallow skin, pimples, eruptions, and discolorations" with Dr. Agnew's Pills, and Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription would remedy "any derangement of the distinctly feminine organism", give it "strength, vigour and elasticity" and stop all "debilitating drains". Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cured women of everything from pallor

to terminal disease, one home treatment claimed to be able to remove cancerous lumps from women's breasts, and Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound was for sufferers of ovaritis or painful menstruation.⁷¹ Womanhood, it appeared, could be cured.

It did not take long for advertisers in The Voice to begin using women's physical attributes in their copy; the first attempt came in 1894 in an ad prefaced "It takes a pretty girl ...".⁷² In the years that followed there were similar references and drawings of attractive women, culminating in September 1910 with the appearance of two half-naked mermaids in a Bell pianos ad.⁷³ This was unusual: most ads featured demure young ladies and apron-wearing matrons. Few featured children.

Other advertisements addressed men, through women. In one such example two young women, talking about a good looking man, agreed that he would not look such a perfect gentleman were it not for the elegance of his clothes, from Cameron and Riley, tailors.⁷⁴ Other clever advertisers capitalized on men's concerns about the increasing emancipation of women, producing ads mocking feminists. "PANTALOOTICS ..." in bold type caught the readers attention: it continued, "The Women's Dress Reform Society advocated wearing of pantaloons for the fair sex. Someone called them pantaloontics; good name, isn't it? We advocate the wearing of pants for men", and went on to describe the

wonders of their trousers.⁷⁵ Another ad featured a drawing of a very tough looking woman, and the caption "SHE knows a good thing when she sees it - SHE buys a pair of White and Manahan's Indestructible Suspenders".⁷⁶ This was likely a not so subtle reference to the supposedly "mannish" looking advocates of women's rights. Another advertiser made this topical contribution: "WOMEN'S RIGHTS Whether women have the right to vote or not, they have the right to a good cup of Tea and they are guaranteed the best when they drink Blue Ribbon Tea ...".⁷⁷ Women might be moving into the work place in increasing numbers, and might be nudging their way into the public sphere, but their growing emancipation was not reflected in the advertising copy in The Voice. Rather, that ads reflect a view of women as fundamentally domestic creatures whose claim to equal rights was threatening and faintly ridiculous. Interestingly there is not a single advertisement in which a woman appears as a worker.

The Voice frequently published humour, usually as filler between stories and at the end of columns. This material too is revealing of the paper's attitude to women. A substantial proportion of The Voice's humour featured women, and much of it was misogynist. Most was in the form of short, two line jokes. Three kinds of women appear: stupid women; henpecking, incessantly talking women; men entrapping women. One of the earliest jokes had a woman asking her husband whether, when the dollar was marked down to 53

cents, it would be that way every day or only on Fridays. Another witticism suggested that a woman's mind was cleaner than a man's because she changed it more frequently.⁷⁸ The writers of The Voice's humour subscribed to the prevailing myth of constantly chattering women and silenced men. Poor harassed man just could not get a word in.⁷⁹ Fortunately for them a man was still king of his castle and all who inhabited it, as in this offering: "Boy (reading) - 'And she sailed down the river.' Teacher - 'Why are ships called she?' Boy (precociously alive to the responsibilities of his sex) - 'Because they need men to manage them.'"⁸⁰ Some jokes poked fun at single women: an article about an automatic hugger designed to comfort lonely women at resorts concluded with the observation that "'Tis better to be loved by machinery than not to be loved at all."⁸¹ Others mocked the fierce competition among women for husbands: "Cora - 'Paul told me last night he wouldn't marry the prettiest woman living.' Fannie - 'Then your chances of getting him ought to be very good.'"⁸²

As with the advertising, the humour often had a bearing on current affairs. Shortly after a strike of garment workers and the formation of Winnipeg's first union of women workers this joke appeared: "Garment Worker - 'Our union is getting a big membership now since we reduced the initiation fee.' Jess - 'I told you \$2 was too much to expect any woman to pay.' Garment Worker - 'Yes, we realized it, so we made it

\$1.98."⁸³ Suffragists also came in for some comical abuse. While The Voice and elements of the organized labour movement supported and were involved in the suffrage campaign in Manitoba, a joke in the paper reminded readers that suffragettes were really ugly, unloved, unsatisfied women who aspired to be men: "'Oh!' exclaimed the Suffragette fervently, 'if the Lord had only made me a man!' 'Perhaps he did dear', said the widow soothingly, 'but you just haven't found him yet.'"⁸⁴ Advocates of women's rights were ridiculed: "She - 'A female suffrage advocate says that women should get men's wages.' He - 'A friend of mine who is married says they do.'"⁸⁵ For all its editorial support for equality, The Voice was not adverse to using stereotypical views of women as the basis of its jokes.

Fiction in The Voice appeared in two forms, short stories and serialized novels. As was the case with the advertising and humour published in The Voice, women tended to be presented as helpless, not terribly bright creatures whose destiny, if not whose ambition, was to snare a man.⁸⁶ They were jealous, possessive, sometimes catty. Like much escapist fiction, stories in The Voice frequently featured the wealthy and, particularly in the case of the serialized novels, abounded with unlikely coincidences and convoluted plots.⁸⁷

Like the authors of The Voice's advertising and humour, the writers of its fiction were not adverse to sniping at

feminists. There was, for example, "Dr. Evans' First Patient: The Story of a Young Woman Physician and a Young Man Patient". After four years of hard work in a famous medical school, Martha Evans returned to her home town to practice. She was soon summoned to the house of Mrs. Greengo, a local widow whose nephew, an attractive, brilliant young lawyer, was visiting and was unwell. Dr. Evans could find nothing physically wrong with him and prescribed rest, which he agreed to, provided she would accompany him on his morning drives. He was soon cured, thanks to Martha's cheerful presence. He then proposed, admitting that he had feigned illness in order to meet her, and Dr. Evans' first patient became her last one. The author of the story pointedly assured the reader that despite being a professional woman Martha was delicate and feminine, an utterly womanly woman. She was a "new woman" in "the sweetest, noblest and purest sense of that much abused word" and "had none of the coarse, mannish affectations that so many women suppose they must display in order to impress the world with their mental superiority."⁸⁸

Much of the fiction published in The Voice seems to have been syndicated, probably from the United States. Occasionally, however, the paper published local material, as in 1913 when it printed two stories by "C" of Fort Rouge, a community adjacent to Winnipeg. The first was an "industrial idyll", written especially for The Voice. It

told the convoluted story of a young woman from a poor but good immigrant family who was nearly seduced by a wealthy young man who she naively allowed to accompany her home from a dance. The second was a "North End Romance", another story of a poor but good young woman who this time met and married a poor but good young man.⁸⁹ Both stories featured young working class women for whom marriage to a respectable hard working young man meant security and happiness, and who could easily be led astray if they fell in with the wrong company. Though different from the syndicated product in that its characters' lives more closely resembled those of The Voice's readers, the local material shared the same formulaic and escapist quality: virtuous girl survives attempts on her chastity, marries fine young man, and they live happily ever after.

The images of women in The Voice's woman's column, advertising, humour and fiction accurately reflect both the diversity in the lives of Winnipeg's working-class women and The Voice's ambivalence regarding women's changing place in society. On the one hand, the focus on women engaged in household labour was completely legitimate: while women were increasingly visible in the paid labour force, most women were primarily wives and mothers. Of those in the paid labour force, many worked what sociologists now call the "double day", and still had need of the recipes and household hints for their afterhours domestic duties. The

wage disparity between men and women was such that marriage did in fact represent security and most women were, or were hoping to be, wives and mothers. On the other hand, more and more women were working, were joining unions, and were calling for a greater role in the public sphere. The woman's column, however, was edited for only eight of its nineteen years by a suffragist, and fewer than seven by a politically active working-class woman. Working women were never portrayed in the advertising, and only rarely in the fiction. The humour was almost uniformly misogynist. The Voice's editorial pages might be promoting equal political rights for women and encouraging women to organize, but in its general content the paper was only rarely able to see beyond an image of women as domestic, pure, manipulative and not very bright.

ENDNOTES

1. The People's Voice, 22 December 1894, p. 3.
2. Ibid., 29 December 1894, pp. 4-5.
3. Ibid., 5 January 1895, p. 3; 12 January 1895, p. 7; 19 January 1895, p. 7. The editor replied that such a thing existed already, run by the Women's Christian Temperance Union.
4. Cf. The Voice, 7 May 1898, p. 7.
5. Ibid., 20 March 1903, p. 5. Copies of The Voice are unavailable from June 1903 to October 1904, so it is not clear what happened to the woman's column in this period. Since there was a column being published in the time immediately preceeding and immediately following this gap, it is perhaps safe to assume that during at least some of it the column continued.
6. Ibid., 29 May 1903, p. 5.
7. Ibid., 12 January 1906, p. 4.
8. Ibid., 23 August 1912, p. 3.
9. Ibid., 19 January 1906, p. 4.
10. This is in marked contrast to previous woman's columns on the subject, the most recent on 30 June 1905, in which concern centered on how to deal with one's maid.
11. The Voice, 5 October 1906, p. 6.
12. Ibid., 24 September 1909, p. 4.
13. Ibid., 18 February 1910, p. 6.
14. Ibid., 31 May 1907, p. 4.
15. Ibid., 16 January 1897, p. 3; 2 March 1906, p. 4; 23 March 1906, p. 4; 16 February 1906, p. 4.
16. Ibid., 25 August 1911, p. 3.
17. Ibid., 12 May, 1911, p. 3; 7 July 1911, p. 3; 23 August 1912, p. 3.
18. Ibid., 18 October 1907, p. 2.

19. Angus McLaren, "The Creation of a Haven for 'Human Thoroughbreds': The Sterilization of the Feeble-Minded and the Mentally Ill in British Columbia", Canadian Historical Review, vol. LXVII, No. 2, June 1986, pp. 127-150. McLaren points out that middle-class feminists in British Columbia were among the first to call for sterilization and were its most active proponents.

20. Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of English Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983, p. 121.

21. Dr. Amelia Yeomans was an early proponent of suffrage, and Dr. Mary Crawford was an active member of the Political Equality League. Crawford campaigned for compulsory medical examination of school children and was later appointed medical inspector in Manitoba public schools. Bacchi, ibid., p. 98.

22. Dr. J. G. Shearer, General Secretary for Canada of the Moral and Social Reform Council in the Mail and Empire, 12 November 1910, quoted in the Report of the Royal Commission on Vice in Winnipeg.

23. Shearer in the Toronto Globe, 19 November 1910, quoted in the Report of the Royal Commission on Vice in Winnipeg.

24. Frederick DuVal, The Problem of Social Vice in Winnipeg Being A Reply to a pamphlet entitled 'The attitude of the church to the social evil'. Together with a brief examination of the question in the light of Physiology, Law and Morality, Winnipeg, 1910, p. 4.

25. The Voice, 26 July 1907, p. 4.

26. Ibid., 20 December 1907, p. 4.

27. Ibid., 24 November 1911, p. 3. In an article entitled "That Frequenter Again", Muir wrote: "According to the police report during the month of January there were 17 women convicted of being inmates of bawdy houses, seven women convicted of being keepers of bawdy houses and only one man convicted of being a frequenter of a bawdy house.

"So they caught the hearty animal during the first month this year. Are our vigilant police going to keep up this startling record of one in a month or is this to be the year's work in this respect?

"How so many women can be arrested if there is only one frequenter is a marvel to a woman's way of thinking. It is moral anarchy to punish so many women merely on the evidence of a police constable who is incapable of arresting the men who contribute to the delinquency of the women. ..." (10

February 1911, p. 3)

28. Ibid., 7 June 1912, p. 3.

29. James H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986 (first published, 1971), p. 35.

30. Ibid., p. 37.

31. DuVal, The Problem, p. 19.

32. She once complained of a disregard for decency among some dairy men who conducted stud operations on or adjacent to public roads. The Voice, 28 January 1910, p. 4.

33. Her first article on the subject appeared less than six months after she began editing the column. Ibid., 15 June 1906, p. 1.

34. Ibid., 20 September 1907, p. 10.

35. The NCWC did not endorse votes for women until 1910. Bacchi, Liberation Deferred?, p. 31. Muir was also critical of their failure to contradict the media's inaccurate and biased reports of the activities of British suffragists. (The Voice, 6 December 1907, p. 4)

36. Ibid., 3 November 1911, p. 3.

37. Ibid., 15 December 1911, p. 3. All Winnipeg suffragists were not as sympathetic to Mrs. Pankhurst as was Ada Muir. In a letter to Catherine Cleverdon, Lillian Beynon Thomas explained: "We resented very keenly the fact that some English women came out and tried to stampeed us into taking violent methods. We had not yet used peaceful methods and we refused to do anything violent until we had. We did not need anything like that". (Catherine Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950, p. 48) For more on Mrs. Pankhurst's visits to Canada and the reaction of Canadian suffragists to English militancy, see Deborah Gorham, "English Militancy and the Canadian Suffrage Movement", Atlantis, Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1975, pp. 83-112.

38. "There is no subject either sacred or profane that the man opposed to women suffrage will not seize upon as an argument in his favor. We have been told through sections of the daily press that the wreck of the Titanic is proof positive that women have all they want without woman suffrage. Did not men drown that women might be saved, were not women placed in the boats first, etc?" The Voice,

26 April 1912, p. 3.

39. See, for example, a series of articles she wrote about the case of Angelina Napolitana, a woman convicted of the murder of her husband. Muir believed it to be a case of justifiable homicide and maintained that Napolitana was the victim of class politics and patriarchal double standards. Ibid., 23 June 1911, p. 3; 14 July 1911, p. 1; 28 July 1911, p. 3; 1 September 1911, p. 3.

40. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement, pp. 53-54.

41. Cf. The Voice, 28 June 1912, p. 3.

42. She is absent from virtually all of it, with the exception of Carol Bacchi's work in which she is mentioned only in her capacity as a member of the Woman's Labor League. See Bacchi, Liberation Deferred?, pp. 117, 121.

43. Cf. Susan Wade, "Helena Gutteridge: Votes for Women and Trade Unions", in Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess, eds., In Her Own Right, Victoria: Camosun College, 1980, pp. 187-207.

44. The Voice, 20 September 1912.

45. Ibid., 28 June 1912, p. 3.

46. Ibid., 5 July 1912, p. 3.

47. Ibid., 19 January 1906, p. 4.

48. Ibid., 5 July 1912, p. 3.

49. Ibid., 29 December 1911, p. 3.

50. Ibid., 8 November 1907, p. 6.

51. See, for example, the comments of Augusta Stowe-Gullen quoted in Wayne Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World': The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto 1877-1914" in Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s - 1920s. Toronto: Women's Press, 1979, p. 23.

52. Linda Kealey, "Introduction", ibid., p. 13.

53. Grain Growers' Guide, 11 October 1911 - 5 June 1912. She was replaced at the Guide by journalist and suffragist Frances Marion Beynon, the paper's first full time woman editor.

54. The Voice, 4 October 1912, p. 3.

55. One historian has described her as "single mindedly concerned with promoting eugenics" in the Grain Growers' Guide woman's column. Anne Hicks, "Francis Beynon and The Guide", in Mary Kinnear, ed. First Days Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987, p. 51 (footnote 34). See also, for example, an article by Ford in the Grain Growers' Guide, 25 October 1911, p. 23.

56. The Voice, 4 October 1912, p. 3.

57. Ibid., 25 October 1912, p. 3.

58. Ibid., 11 October 1912, p. 3.

59. Ibid., 18 October 1912, p. 3.

60. Ibid., 18 October 1912, p. 3.

61. Women had had the right to the municipal franchise since 1895, as was the case for men, there were property qualifications. Women were not allowed to hold office until after 1916. Alan F.J. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914, Montreal and London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975, pp. 38-39.

62. The Voice, 11 October 1912, p. 3.

63. Ibid., 18 October 1912, p. 3.

64. Ibid., 10 January 1913. Ford had done a similar thing when she was editor of the Guide's women's column. In that case she asked readers to write her with their thoughts on woman suffrage. Some of the letters were printed.

65. The Voice, 15 November 1912, p. 3.

66. There is no record of her having encouraged women in the paid labour force to join or form unions, for example.

67. Ibid., 10 January 1913, n.p.

68. Ibid., 25 October 1912, p. 3. This is the only mention of prostitution in Mrs. Ford's columns.

69. Ibid., 6 October 1916, p. 6. Two typical columns contained a poem about mothers, articles about "A Mother's Tact and Touch", "Sorrow Suppression", and "One Piece Frocks" and recipes for "Parsley or Mint Jelly", "Tomatoes Stuffed with Spaghetti", "Cream of Asparagus Soup", and "Crushed Strawberry Ice Cream". Ibid., 7 April 1916, p. 5; 30 June 1916, p. 6.

70. The People's Voice, 3 November 1894, p. 8.
71. Ibid., 21 November 1896, p. 2; 5 December 1896, p. 2; 18 September 1897, p. 2; 14 January 1898, p. 3; The Voice, 18 October 1912, p. 2. For more on Lydia Pinkham, see Sarah Stage, Female Complaints: Lydia E. Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine, New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1979.
72. The People's Voice, 24 November 1894, p. 5.
73. The Voice, 7 September 1910, p. 5.
74. The People's Voice, 18 January 1896, p. 2.
75. Ibid., 3 October 1896, p. 4.
76. Ibid., 8 April 1898, p. 4.
77. The Voice, 30 April 1915, p. 6.
78. The People's Voice, 24 October 1896, p. 2; The Voice, 5 November 1897.
79. For example, "Doctor - 'Mr. Enpeck, I fear your wife's mind is gone'. Mr. Enpeck - 'That doesn't surprise me. She has been giving me a piece of it every day for ten years.'" (The Voice, 12 November 1897, p. 5); "Willie - 'Pa, why do we call our language the mother tongue?' Pa - 'It's because your father never gets a chance to use it.'" (Ibid., 22 November 1901, p. 3); "An Ohio woman recently preached her husband's funeral sermon. She was bound to have the last word." (Ibid., 12 September 1902, p. 9)
80. The People's Voice, 28 November 1896, p. 6.
81. The Voice, 15 June 1900, p. 3.
82. Ibid., 14 September 1906, p. 5.
83. Ibid., 15 June 1900, p. 3.
84. Ibid., 19 November 1915, p. 3.
85. Ibid., 1 September 1905, p. 11.
86. See, for example, the wonderfully titled "A Capricious Belle - The Romantic Life-Story of Sue Pillow-Martin-Pretty and Witty This Tennessee Coquette Flung Money Away With The Reckless Abandon That She Lacerated Masculine Hearts", The Voice, 3 November 1899, p. 2; or "A Bachelor's Confession: He Told How He Had Been Forced Into Matrimony", by F.A. Mitchel (Ibid., 13 May 1910).

87. For other examples in The Voice see "Imperial Millions" by Julias Hawthorne, appearing between 10 June and 23 September 1898; "When Lovely Maiden Stoops to Folly" by Laura Jean Libbey, from 30 September 1898 to 17 February 1899; and Cyrus Townsend Brady's "Sir Henry Morgan, Bucaneer", between 11 August 1905 and January 1906.

88. Ibid., 2 February 1900, p. 3.

89. Ibid., 3 October 1913; 5 December 1913.

CONCLUSION

For twenty years The Voice spoke to the working-class men and women of Winnipeg. It reported on local, national and international events of interest to them, chronicled their activities, advocated a variety of measures designed to improve their lives, and promoted discussion of various social issues. In addition, it frequently allowed working people to speak for themselves from within its pages. Reflecting a broad range of working-class thought, The Voice has much to tell us about the lives and preoccupations of Winnipeg's working class. Historians have long recognized the value of The Voice as a source, and have used it extensively, particularly for studies of the Winnipeg General Strike. Much of its potential, however, remains untapped. This thesis has demonstrated the importance of The Voice as a source for working-class women's history: the paper records both the activities of women and the reactions of men to them. In addition, the thesis has documented for the first time the involvement of the working class in the suffrage movement. It is my contention that The Voice is an important source for the study of all

aspects of Manitoba's social and political history, and that any such study that does not take The Voice into account is incomplete.

A thorough reading of The Voice reveals an equivocal attitude to women. The paper, and its parent body the Trades Council, were supportive of women in the paid labour force and of their right to play a greater role in public life. The Voice encouraged women to join existing trade unions, and in the absence of such unions it proposed they form new ones. The Trades Council and The Voice offered the use of their offices, provided speakers, gave advice, negotiated with employers on behalf of fledgling unions, collected and administered strike funds, and sought alternative work for locked out workers. It lauded the formation of the garment workers' union in 1899, Winnipeg's first union of female employees, as the event of greatest benefit to the working class in the history of the organized labour movement in Manitoba.¹ As for those women not in the paid labour force but sympathetic to labour, the paper urged them to form associations to work for improvements in working people's lives and to assist in organizing women workers. The organized labour movement was an early supporter of woman suffrage and individual members played an active role in suffrage associations. In addition, The Voice campaigned for legislative protection for female employees.

At the same time, however, The Voice printed articles

outlining the deleterious effects of paid labour on women's physical and moral health and its disastrous consequences for family life: neglected children, unhappy husbands, untidy homes. Women, the paper claimed, lacked the strength and mechanical aptitude necessary for industrial life; as working women, they imperilled their unborn children; in short, they belonged in the home. To reinforce the latter point, The Voice printed column after column of domestic advice, recipes, tips on childrearing and fashion hints. Working women never appeared in advertising, and only rarely in fiction. Those working women who did appear in the fiction were almost invariably professionals. The paper's humour poked fun at women, implied that they were stupid and suggested they only stopped talking long enough to listen to men's proposals of marriage. Again and again the paper reminded women that having a home and a husband was their sole and rightful ambition.

At the heart of this ambivalence is The Voice's difficulty in coming to terms with the presence of women in the paid labour force. It accepted that young women would be employed for a time between the end of their formal education and the beginning of their married life, and encouraged and helped them to take steps to protect themselves against exploitation by ruthless employers. The brave young working girl was an inspiration to all working people: the garment workers, for example, led the annual Labour Day parade for years. But her future was more

problematic. The Voice foresaw two possible paths: come her early to mid-20s she might leave the workforce for her natural habitat, the home, or she might remain in the paid labour force, taking jobs from men, leading a morally dubious life, and ending up a lonely miserable old maid. The ambiguity in The Voice's portrayal of women comes from the paper's acceptance of the reality of Miss Brave-But-Temporary, along with its hope that she ultimately become the perfect domestic woman.

As has been demonstrated in this thesis, The Voice employed a strategy of both positive and negative reinforcement of its views. On the one hand, it presented a positive and flattering view of domestic life, and reminded readers that caring for a home and family was a woman's lot. On the other hand, it presented an extremely negative view of the long term female employee, and detailed the ill she caused herself and society. As for working women, they could be tolerated, providing they did not remain in the labour force for long and did not challenge the position of men as family bread winners and leaders of labour. The Voice's ideological reinforcement of women's temporary status in the workforce had a more practical complement. Though the paper encouraged women to form unions, it never questioned the right of men to lead those unions, and though garment workers' delegates only rarely attended meetings of the Trades Council, organized labour's governing body, The Voice never called attention to their absence. Moreover,

The Voice and the Trades Council lobbied actively for minimum wage legislation for women. A minimum wage was arrived at by calculating the smallest amount on which a single woman without dependents could decently maintain herself. The calculation itself thus confirmed the male role as family head and breadwinner. Women were thereby encouraged to leave the paid labour force after a few years with promises of happiness should they go and infamy should they stay; they were reminded that the leadership of the labour movement was a male preserve, and, since the minimum wage was frequently the maximum wage, they were reminded of their subordinate role in the family.

Working-class women do not appear to have disagreed with The Voice's position. Ada Muir, though an advocate of women's involvement in trade unions and an instigator of the Woman's Labor League, never suggested that women's employment was anything but temporary. She did not call into question women's primary role as wife and mother, and instead sought ways in which women could better fulfill that role. She reminded her readers that woman's prime function was "the care and raising of the human race", and that women contributed importantly to the labour movement by making working men's lives easier and caring for future workers and trade unionists.² Muir's successor as editor of the woman's column, Mary Ford, seemed uncomfortable with the notion of women in the paid labour force and did not urge them to organize. She too saw women as wives and mothers first, and

as temporary workers, if at all. The first Woman's Labor League, from 1909 to 1911, concurred and devoted most of its energy to campaigning for changes in the Dower Law and the Married Women's Property Act. The second Woman's Labor League, beginning in 1917, although considerably more concerned with the welfare of working women, also lobbied actively for a minimum wage for working women. It may have disagreed with the Minimum Wage Board's policy of setting the figure trade by trade, preferring instead a flat minimum wage, but it did not question the premise that the figure should be based on the minimum necessary for a single woman to support herself.

There was thus a consensus among the leaders, both male and female, of Winnipeg's working class: men were members of the paid labour force for all of their adult lives, and women only briefly, between childhood and children; men supported families and women supported only themselves. Further study of the employment patterns of Winnipeg women is necessary before it can be determined whether or not they followed The Voice's prescription.

ENDNOTES

1. The Voice, 16 April 1909, p. 1.
2. The Voice, 5 July 1912, p. 3; 19 January 1906, p. 4.

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