

Defending "The Art Preservative": Class and Gender Relations in the Printing Trades Unions, 1850-1914

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Volume 31, 1993

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/ilt31art02>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Burr, C. (1993). Defending "The Art Preservative": Class and Gender Relations in the Printing Trades Unions, 1850-1914. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 31, 47-74.

Article abstract

The essay explores relations of gender and class, and the strategies developed by male unionists in defence of masculine craft status in the International Typographical Union (ITU), the International Printing Pressmen's and Assistants' Union (IPP&AU), and the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders (IBB), between 1850 and 1914.

The ITU and IPP&AU organized along masculine craft lines and effectively defended their status within the workplace with industrial capitalist incursions and the mechanization of the production process. A crisis to male domination of typesetting occurred with the introduction of machine typesetting in newspaper production during the early 1890s. The ITU succeeded in securing control over the operations of the machines for its predominately male membership. By the mid-19th century the work of press feeder was defined as unskilled work suitable for women and boys. With the introduction of larger and faster presses during the last two decades of the 19th century, the IPP&AU struggled to appropriate the task for masculinity using the male breadwinner ideal. The IBB actively supported the organization of women bindery workers from its inception in 1892, albeit with the intent of protecting the interests of journeymen.

Defending “The Art Preservative”: Class and Gender Relations in the Printing Trades Unions, 1850-1914

Christina Burr

We lead the van in war for Liberty
And guard the precious boon Equality,
So let us not forget Fraternity;
For Universal Brotherhood we strive,
And keep the grace of Charity alive,
The rings and money kings will soon be hurled
From self-elected thrones — their mills shall cease
To grind up flesh and blood for chariot grease.
May capital and labor join and say:
“A fair day’s labor for a fair day’s pay,”
So said the MAN whose Word our laws inspire
“The laborer is worthy of his hire.”

William H. Taylor,
Toronto Typographical Union, No.91¹

WILLIAM TAYLOR’S POEM of welcome to fellow tradespeople attending the 1905 annual convention of the International Typographical Union (ITU) conjures images of unequal class relations in an industrial capitalist society where the need to work for a wage was integral to working-class life, as well as his craft’s discourses of “manliness” and masculine pride. Significantly, too Taylor’s poem suggests that the experience of class cannot be understood without considering gender relations.

The printing trades of the late 1800s and early 1900s provide an excellent opportunity to pursue questions concerning the interconnections between class and gender, as well as the ideologies and strategies which male unionists developed to

¹*Souvenir. 1905 Convention ITU*, Toronto, 14-19 August 1905. Emphasis in the original.

defend masculine craft status. During the latter part of the 19th century, segmentation occurred within the printing industry with the emergence of the daily press, technological innovations, and the separation of newspaper publishing from book, magazine, and job publishing. Although the 19th-century printing trades were overwhelmingly male-dominated, a gender division of labour was in place with women occupying those positions socially defined as unskilled, namely, press feeding, and folding, collating, and stitching in the bindery. Building on recent feminist historical and theoretical writings, this paper explores social relations of class and gender, and the strategies developed by male unionists in defence of craft status in three international printing trades unions with industrial capitalist incursions during the last half of the 19th century and the early 20th century prior to World War I: the International Typographical Union (ITU), the International Printing Pressmen's and Assistants' Union (IPP&AU), and the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders (IBB). The response of male unionists to women workers, and the inclusion of women in the union, differed among the various printing trades. The ITU and IPP&AU organized essentially along masculine craft lines and effectively excluded women, whereas in the bookbinding trade where women performed jobs socially designated as "women's work," the IBB supported the organization of women bindery workers, albeit with the intent of protecting the interests of the journeymen bookbinders in the trade.

During the last two decades, the writings of socialist and marxist feminists carried out in the political context of the latest wave of feminism have pursued theoretical and empirical questions concerning the gender division of labour with the overarching political objective of eliminating women's oppression. In two early important essays, American socialist feminist Heidi Hartmann criticized both Marxism for its "gender-blind" categories and failure to explain why women are subordinate to men, and radical feminism for its universalist claims of the existence of male dominance at all times and in all places.² Hartmann defined patriarchy "as a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women."³ Responding to labour segmentation theorists, and the ideological emphasis on sex-typing among radical feminists, Hartmann, a proponent of a "dual-systems" theory, put forth a "materialist" analysis of patriarchal and capitalist social relations. In Hartmann's theory, for women's oppression to be fully understood, both patriarchal and capitalist social

²Heidi I. Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," *Capital and Class*, 8 (Summer 1979), 1-33; Heidi I. Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation By Sex," *Signs*, 1, 3, Part 2 (Spring 1976), 137-69.

³Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage," 11.

relations must be considered first as separate phenomena and then in dialectical relationship to one another.⁴

For Hartmann, job segregation by sex is the primary mechanism in capitalist society by which men maintain superiority over women.⁵ The "family wage" form, or the wage necessary for the male household head and primary "breadwinner" to support a family, "cemented the partnership between patriarchy and capital," and is the "cornerstone of the present sexual division of labor — in which women are primarily responsible for housework and men primarily for wage work."⁶

Some feminist theorists, notably Iris Young, have criticized the dual systems theory put forth by Hartmann for its narrow economism and materialist focus.⁷ According to Young, Hartmann never overcomes the problem of how to isolate the material relations specific to patriarchy.⁸ Gender domination is thus reduced to an aspect of class relations. Paradoxically, Hartmann's definition of patriarchy also appears sexist. In defining patriarchy "as a set of social relations between men," Hartmann relegates relations between men and women to a secondary position.

British feminist Cynthia Cockburn, who like Hartmann propounds a dual systems approach, argued that "the experience of class cannot be understood without reference to sex and gender."⁹ Cockburn's study of London newspaper compositors who were beset by a crisis of craft and masculinity in the mid-1970s, when hot-metal techniques of typesetting gave way to computerized photo-composition, applies E.P. Thompson's conceptualization of class to the analysis of gender relations, and indicates that gender, like class, must also be seen as the product of history. Her analysis distinguishes between the class relations of capitalism and the gender relations of patriarchy, and their interconnections. Unlike Hartmann, however, Cockburn does not ground her analysis of patriarchy solely in the material structure. For Cockburn, furthermore, the struggle over "skill" and

⁴Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, Colorado 1989), 173-5.

⁵Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage," 16-7.

⁶*Ibid.*, 18-9.

⁷Iris Young, "Socialist Feminism and the Limits of Dual Systems Theory," *Socialist Review*, 10, 2/3 (March-June 1980), 169-88; Iris Young, "Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of the Dual Systems Theory," in Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Montreal 1981), 43-69.

⁸Young, "Socialist Feminism," 177. In her critique of dual systems theorists, Young called for a unified theory, integrating class and gender analysis into a system of capitalist patriarchy. The problem of the reduction of patriarchal relations as belonging to the economic system of production, Young's main criticism of Hartmann's approach, is not, however, overcome in the unified systems theory suggested by Young. For an overview of the sociological debates concerning the theoretical relationship between patriarchy and capitalism see Harriet Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work: A Sociological History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Employment* (London 1989), 50-70.

⁹Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* (London 1983), 5.

technology is part of the process by which patriarchal social relations are perpetuated in industrial capitalist society.¹⁰

Similar to Cockburn, Sylvia Walby's *Patriarchy at Work* analytically distinguishes between social relations of patriarchy and social relations of capitalism so as to avoid reducing gender relations to an aspect of class relations.¹¹ Walby suggests that analogous to the capitalist mode of production there is a patriarchal mode of production. Stating the case for an interpretation of patriarchy that acknowledges historically-varying forms of gender inequality, Walby defines patriarchy as "a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women."¹² She argues that under the capitalist mode of production, the control of women's access to paid work is maintained by patriarchal relations in the workplace which have varied historically and include the exclusion of women from certain forms of training or apprenticeship and from male-dominated craft unions.

Unlike Cockburn, Walby fails to give sufficient recognition to gender segregation at the workplace level of analysis with a concern for labour process. Responding to Harry Braverman, who equated "skill" with the male artisan, feminist theorists and historians have called for a conceptualization of skill that illuminates the sexual hierarchies permeating industrial capitalist social organization.¹³ As Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor suggest, skill classifications define men's work as skilled and women's work as unskilled or semi-skilled, and bear little relationship to the level of training or ability required to perform them.

The work of women is often deemed inferior simply because it is women who do it. Women workers carry into the workplace their status as subordinate individuals, and this status comes to define the value of the work they do. Far from being an objective economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it.

¹⁰Cockburn, *Brothers*. In a subsequent monograph, Cockburn suggested that the appropriation of technology by men is an extension of the domination of women by men. See Cynthia Cockburn, *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-how* (London 1985).

¹¹Sylvia Walby, *Patriarchy at Work* (Minneapolis 1986).

¹²Walby, *Patriarchy*, 51. In her theory of the patriarchal mode of production, Walby argues that the key sets of patriarchal relations are to be found in domestic work, paid work, the state, in male violence, and in sexuality. Walby's concept of patriarchy has not escaped criticism. Harriet Bradley, for example, stated that Walby's conceptualization of patriarchy tends to lapse into descriptive generalization, and thus has limited usefulness as an explanation for gender inequality. See Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work*, 54-5.

¹³Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, "Sex and Skill: Notes towards a Feminist Economics," *Feminist Review*, 6 (1980), 82-4; Jane Gaskell, "The Social Construction of Skill Through Schooling: Implications for Women," *Atlantis*, 8, 2 (Spring 1983), 13-4; Veronica Beechey, *Unequal Work* (London 1987), 73-88.

Thus "skilled work is work that women don't do."¹⁴ Recently, within the discipline of Canadian historical writing, feminist historians have probed the interconnections between gender and "skill," and have provided important insights into how gender relations intersect with class relations in specific historical contexts.¹⁵

Drawing on the approaches of dual systems theorists, and contributing to the growing body of historical research which focuses on the gender division of labour, this study of 19th- and early 20th-century printing trades unionism argues that gender interests prevailed over those of class in the attempts by male trades unionists to exclude women from the better-paying jobs in the printing trades.

I

*'That coming curse — the incompetent compositress':
Gender Exclusion in the ITU*

PRIOR TO ITS WIDESPREAD MECHANIZATION in the 1890s, typesetting was labour intensive and increasingly became a bottleneck in the production process with the development of faster and larger rotary, cylinder, and web presses during the period after the mid-19th century. Hand typesetting or composition had remained essentially unchanged since the invention of the process by Gutenberg in the 1400s. Holding the composing "stick" in one hand, and selecting type from the case with the other, the compositor inserted each piece of type upside down and from left to right on the stick. Each line had to be justified using blank slugs and leads to ensure that a line of text fit properly on the stick and with adequate spacing between words and lines of text. When the stick was filled, the composed line was transferred to a shallow three-sided tray called a "galley." Once the galley was filled a proof was "pulled," and the impression was proofread for errors. The marked proofsheets and the galley were returned to the compositor who corrected errors using a pick-like

¹⁴Beechey, *Unequal Work*, 30.

¹⁵Joy Parr explored the relationship between gender and skill in a comparative study of two Ontario towns: Hanover, a furniture-manufacturing centre which employed male craftsmen, and Paris, where the biggest employer was the textile industry with its predominantly female labour force. Shirley Tillotson studied gender and the social construction of skill in the early 20th-century urban telegraph industry. The gender division of labour was the focus of Margaret McCallum's firm-specific study of Ganong Bros. confectionery factory located in St. Stephen, New Brunswick. My own PhD dissertation examines the gender division of labour in the Toronto printing trades between 1870 and 1914. Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto 1990); Shirley Tillotson, "We may all soon be 'first-class Men': Gender and skill in Canada's early twentieth century urban telegraph industry," *Labour/Le Travail*, 27 (Spring 1991), 97-125; Margaret E. McCallum, "Separate Spheres: The Organization of Work in a Confectionery Factory: Ganong Bros., St. Stephen, New Brunswick," *Labour/Le Travail*, 24 (Spring 1989), 69-90; Christina A. Burr, "Class and Gender in the Toronto Printing Trades," PhD dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992.

implement called a "bodkin." A metal frame called a "chase" was placed around the type and locked onto it by filling the space between the type and the chase with wooden sticks. The completed "form" was then transferred to the press room.

Cynthia Cockburn and Felicity Hunt in their respective studies of British compositors, and Ava Baron in her writings on 19th-century American newspaper compositors, have observed that although press work undeniably was a physically demanding occupation, composing type was a comparatively light task requiring nimble fingers; according to 19th-century standards of femininity, this ought to have made the task an appropriate form of women's work.¹⁶ In her seminal study of women's work in America, Edith Abbott documented the work of women as printers during the colonial period.

Margaret Draper of Massachusetts "printed" for the governor and council; in South Carolina a woman was appointed printer to the State after the close of the Revolutionary War; and Benjamin Franklin's sister-in-law at Newport, in Rhode Island, printed for the colony, supplied blanks for the public offices, published pamphlets, and in 1745 printed for the Government an edition of the laws, containing three hundred and forty folio pages. Her two daughters who assisted her in printing were said to have been "correct and quick compositors at case."¹⁷

Abbott indicated, however, that printing has never been a trade which "women have made their own," and further cited apprenticeship rules governing entry into the craft, and the policy of male unionists, which "has always been hostile to the employment of women."¹⁸

The National Typographical Union (NTU), organized in 1850, and reorganized in 1852, raised the issue of including women in the union shortly after its 1854 founding convention in Buffalo. The convention had resolved "that this union will not encourage, by its acts, the employment of females as compositors."¹⁹ The "woman question" re-emerged at the international level in the 1860s. At the NTU's 1867 convention, delegates decided that the question of employing women compositors was a local matter and should thus be settled by local unions.²⁰ Two years later, in 1869, the NTU was renamed the International Typographical Union (ITU),

¹⁶Cockburn, *Brothers*, 24; Felicity Hunt, "Opportunities Lost and Gained: Mechanization and Women's Work in the London Bookbinding and Printing Trades," in Angela V. John, ed., *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918* (Oxford and New York 1986), 76-84; Ava Baron, "Contested Terrain Revisited: Technology and Gender Definitions of Work in the Printing Industry, 1850-1920," in Barbara Drygulski Wright, et al., eds., *Women, Work, and Technology Transformation* (Ann Arbor 1987), 58-83.

¹⁷Edith Abbott, *Women in Industry* (New York and London 1919), 247.

¹⁸Abbott, *Women in Industry*, 249-51.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 252-3; George A. Tracy, *History of The Typographical Union* (Indianapolis 1913), 153-4.

²⁰Tracy, *History of the Typographical Union*, 226.

to recognize the inclusion of Canadian members.²¹ The new organization amended its constitution to provide for granting separate charters to women printers in any city where the application was approved "by the subordinate union of male members."²² In the aftermath of a New York printers' strike in January 1869, during which Susan B. Anthony, as head of the Working Women's Association, encouraged employers to establish a school for training women typesetters, Women's Typographical Union No.1 was chartered.²³ The New York women printers' experiment in trade unionism was not successful and met with hostility from the male unionists. At the ITU's 1873 convention in Montreal, a motion was passed that no more charters be granted to unions comprised of women only, although women were permitted to join the men's locals.²⁴ This suggests a reinforcement of patriarchal control within the ITU.

Further insight into the exclusion of women from the craft during the late 1800s can be gleaned at the local level. When asked if the union had any objection admitting women compositors to membership, John Lumsden, a Toronto newspaper compositor and vice-president of ITU Local 91, testified to the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour in November 1887, that the union had no objections to women belonging to the union as long as they came in on "equal terms" with the men.²⁵ Testimony by Stewart L. Dunlop, also a journeyman printer and member of Local 91, although not working at the trade at the time, revealed that women practically never entered the workplace on equal terms with men compositors.

Q.-Do female compositors work by the day or week, or by the piece? A.- They work, I believe by the piece.

Q.- If they do the same class of work as male compositors are they paid the same rate? A.- Well, not usually....

Q.-Do these female compositors begin in the same manner that boys do and work up to the position we would call journey work in the same manner? A.- No, they are put on case immediately, and are given copy and told to proceed.²⁶

²¹The Saint John, New Brunswick local was the first Canadian union to affiliate with the NTU in 1865. The Toronto local affiliated in 1866, and the Ottawa and Montreal unions following in 1867. Gregory S. Kealey, "Work Control, the Labour Process, and Nineteenth-Century Canadian Printers," in Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds., *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Kingston and Montreal 1986), 94-7.

²²Tracy, *History of the Typographical Union*, 235.

²³Tracy, *History of the Typographical Union*, 253-6; *Typographical Journal*, LVII, 4 (October 1920), 408-9; William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminists Reform of Sex and Society* (New York 1980), 165-89.

²⁴Tracy, *History of the Typographical Union*, 268.

²⁵*Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital in Canada*, 1889, [hereafter *Report*] Ontario evidence, 109.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 40.

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Later in the questioning, Dunlop was asked:

Q.- Do employing printers prefer female labor at the lower wages to journeymen at the higher wages? A.-Some do.

Q.- Then there is an advantage to the employer in getting females at the lower wages? A.- There must be in some cases, but, of course those who do first-class work and are competing for first-class work scarcely employ female labor at all except for feeding presses.²⁷

The tendency towards ambiguity in Dunlaps' responses perhaps might be attributed to the fact that he was fielding questions posed by A.T. Freed, Tory editor of the *Hamilton Spectator*.²⁸ Dunlop's testimony suggests, however, that conditions of capitalist industrialization within the 19th-century printing trades denied women both access to the five-years term of apprenticeship specified in union regulations and wages equal to male compositors. This, in turn, functioned to exclude women from the typographical union while simultaneously protecting the wage scale and skilled-craftsman status of male compositors.

Composition was predominantly a male occupation in 19th century Toronto. In 1889, Local 91 reported that 35 women in comparison to 595 union and non-union men were employed as compositors in the city, thus revealing that the strategies of the male unionists effectively excluded women from the trade. All of the women were "learners," with experience in the trade ranging from one to four years.²⁹ Thus during the 1870s and 1880s, the women compositors posed little real threat to the skilled-worker status of journeymen compositors in the Toronto printing trade.

Dunlop's testimony further reveals that employers played a crucial role in perpetuating women's inferior position in the trade. The responses by Hugh Graham, proprietor of the *Montreal Star*, to questioning by Samuel Heakes provides some insight into the employers' perspective on the employment of women compositors.

Q.—Do you find the girls do equal work with the men? A. I do not think quite as good taking the men all round.

Q.—Do you find them equal to the men as compositors? A.—I think some of the girls are equal to the average man, but there are also reasons why taking them altogether, they are not worth as much as the best men...

Q.—You think a woman cannot compete successfully with a man? A.—I think there is a little difference. We pay our best men 30 cts., and our best woman 29 cts., that is only a difference of one cent per thousand; but there are reasons obvious to everybody, why a woman cannot be depended upon to the same extent as a steady man; besides they are not

²⁷*Ibid.*, 41.

²⁸Gregory S. Kealey, *Canada investigates industrialism* (Toronto 1973), xii.

²⁹*Typographical Journal*, I, 3 (15 September 1889).

equally as strong and cannot endure the same amount of fatigue and therefore altogether they are not worth as much.³⁰

Physiological differences between men and women, namely the tendency for women to be physically weaker than men, thus resulting in a performance by women compositors below male standards, were used by Graham to justify the lower rate of remuneration of women compositors.

The testimony by the male printers and by employer Hugh Graham attests to the complexity of the relationship between gender and class in the late 19th century printing industry. Rather than joining with women compositors to struggle against capitalist exploitation, male unionists sacrificed class interests in defence of their patriarchal stake in the trade. Employers, on the other hand, justified paying lower wages to women compositors by arguing that women were not capable of performing "equally" to men. A certain measure of cross-class alliance between employers and male unionists stemming from patriarchal exclusion of women compositors is thus inferred.

During the late 1800s technological innovations, notably after the invention of the linotype patented by Otto Mergenthaler in 1885, together with the expansion of the daily press and the intensive capitalization of the newspaper sector of the printing industry, made machine typesetting a viable alternative to hand composition in the production of newspapers, and resulted in the first real crisis of craft, and masculinity, for male hand compositors. The linotype had a keyboard similar to a typewriter. When the machine operator depressed a key a hollow matrix was released. When enough matrices were collected to form a line, the margins were justified and the operator pushed a lever to start the casting machine which poured molten lead into the mould, thereby creating a "line o' type".³¹ The typesetting machines were designed for straight matter composition, and although ideally suited to newspaper production were inappropriate for commercial job printing where the specialty requirements for fancy type required the skills of the hand compositor, or in the production of books where a better quality of print was required than was produced by the machines. Newspaper publishers viewed machine typesetting as analogous to the work of women typists in the clerical sector, and attempted to gender the operation of the typesetting machines as

³⁰*Report*, Quebec evidence, 327. The existence of two typographical unions in Montreal, Local 176 of English compositors, and Jacques Cartier, Local 145 of French compositors, raises the question of the extent to which employers were able to exploit any ethnic tensions between the two locals and thus keep wages down or take advantage of comparatively cheaper female labour. This remains an area for in-depth historical research.

³¹"The Birth of the Linotype," *Typographical Journal*, XLII, 4 (April 1913), 413-5; Mergenthaler Linotype Co., *Speed and How to Attain It* (New York), in Toronto Typographical Union Records, Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO), MS 423, Reel 11.

women's work, thereby reducing labour costs by eliminating the comparatively more costly-hand compositors.³²

Fearing displacement by women machine operators, the ITU quickly sought to establish control over the operation of the machines. In 1889, the international union adopted a resolution instructing that in "all offices within its jurisdiction where typesetting machines are used, practical printers shall be employed to run them: and also subordinate Unions regulate the scale of wages on such machines."³³ The ITU also appointed a committee to consider the need for additional legislation concerning the operation of machines. Interestingly, the union report emphasized the physical demands of operating the machines, the inference being that only men were capable of operating the machines: "That the work upon machines, being of a more exhaustive character, both physically and mentally, than hand composition, that the hours of labor upon them be reduced to the lowest possible number — eight hours being the maximum."³⁴ The eight-hour maximum has additional significance, as the ITU was about to enter a lengthy struggle for the eight-hour day.

Employer-union conflicts occurred as the typographical union struggled to establish jurisdiction over the operation of the machines for its members. For example, in Toronto, the national leader in the English Canadian printing industry by the 1870s, several struggles over the use of the machines, and the attempts by employers to use comparatively-cheaper women operators at lower wages, took place during the early 1890s. In keeping with the ITU directive that local unions regulate wage rates for the operation of the typesetting machines, Toronto Typographical Union Local 91 declared a time scale of \$15 per week for machine operators in September 1892.³⁵ Subsequently, on 26 October 1892, the compositors at the Toronto daily *News*, were locked out and replaced by non-union machine operators, several of them women, when proprietor Charles Riordan refused to pay the time rate unilaterally declared by the union.³⁶

The lockout at the *News* was eventually resolved in favour of the union. Under the terms of settlement, the newspaper was to become a union office. Local 91 also secured for male unionists control over the operation of the typesetting machines and a time-rate scale. The News Printing Company was to nominate "union men"

³²For an analysis of the "feminization" of clerical work, see Graham Lowe, "Class, Job and Gender in the Canadian Office," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 10 (Autumn 1982), 11-37; Graham Lowe, "Mechanization, Feminization and Managerial Control in the Early Twentieth-Century Canadian Office," in Heron and Storey, eds., *On the Job*, 117-209; Margery Davies, *Woman's place is at the typewriter* (Philadelphia 1982); Ava Baron, "Contested Terrain Revisited: Technology and Gender Definitions of Work in the Printing Industry, 1850-1920," in Drygulski Wright *et al.*, *Women*, 58-83.

³³*Typographical Journal*, I, 1 (15 July 1889), 4; George E. Barnett, *Chapters on Machinery and Labor* (Carbondale and Edwardsville 1926), 3-29.

³⁴Tracy, *History of the Typographical Union*, 453-5.

³⁵Toronto Typographical Union Minutes, 6 February 1892.

³⁶*Canadian Printer and Publisher*, I, 7 (November 1892), 14.

as students to learn on the machines at a rate of \$12 a week for six weeks. At the end of the six-week period, an operator demonstrating proficiency (defined as the ability to set 2000 ems per hour or 100,000 ems per week) was to be remunerated at a weekly rate of \$14, and would replace non-union operators — some of whom were women, currently employed at the *News*.³⁷

Similar struggles were fought in Toronto at the *Canada Presbyterian*, a weekly religious newspaper, and the Ontario Stereotype Company, a local boiler plate manufactory, in order to make room for cheaper labour in the form of what Local 91's correspondent to the *ITU Typographical Journal* termed "that coming curse — the incompetent compositress."³⁸ On 19 December 1892, ten men were locked out at Ontario Stereotype and replaced by lesser-paid women machine operators.³⁹ Meanwhile, C.B. Robinson, proprietor of the *Canada Presbyterian* declared his combined newspaper and job-printing office an "open shop" in which he could operate the machines as he saw fit. In actuality, Robinson was also employing women "learners" as machine operators at rates below union scale. On 10 January 1893, 22 union men, two non-union men, and six boy apprentices walked off the job. Management replaced the striking compositors with non-union workers, most of them women and boys.⁴⁰ Subsequently the office was closed to typographical union members, and the union men found employment elsewhere.⁴¹ By contrast, the Ontario Stereotype conflict was resolved on terms that gave Local 91 control of the shop and reinforced male domination of the typographical union. On 5 June 1893 the union passed a resolution declaring this manufactory a union shop.⁴²

Not two years later, the issue of non-union women's employment on typesetting machines at sub-scale rates erupted again. In April 1895, the chapel associated with another local boiler plate concern, the Toronto Type Foundry, brought a grievance before the union that the firm's manager, was using "girls" on the typesetting machine, and was not paying the women these union scale.⁴³ When

³⁷TTU Minutes, 3 December 1892. An "em" is a unit of measurement used in the printing trades. The letter "m" in any size font of type has a body as wide as it is high, and the letter "n" occupies half of this area.

³⁸*Typographical Journal*, IV, 15 (1 February 1893), 6. Auxiliary printing or "ready print" involved the supplying of country newspapers with printed news on one side, while the other side was left blank to be filled with local news, editorial, advertisements, and other material, at the country office. With improvements in the stereotyping process during the 1870s, printed sheets were replaced by ready-made press plates called "boiler plate."

³⁹*Typographical Journal*, IV, 15 (1 February 1893), 6; TTU Minutes, 16 February 1893.

⁴⁰TTU Minutes, 16 February 1893; *Globe*, 10 January 1893.

⁴¹TTU Minutes, 10 March 1893.

⁴²TTU Minutes, 1 April 1893.

⁴³Each workshop unit in the printing trades was called a "chapel." The shop steward was called the "Father of the chapel." For the origins of the terms in early craft tradition see Joseph Moxon, *Mechanik Exercises of the Whole Art of Printing*, eds., Herbert Davis and Harry Carter (New York 1962, Originally 1683), 323.

interviewed by a committee of Local 91, company treasurer Wright indicated that the object of introducing female cheap labour was to remain competitive with the *Truth* in the manufacture of ready prints.⁴⁴ On 27 April, the union instructed its chapel chairman to enforce the constitution and the scale.⁴⁵ Toronto Type Foundry management refused to comply with the union's terms and a strike ensued.⁴⁶

Once again strike action resulted in victory for the male unionists. In August, the firm agreed to hire Local 91 members, and to do so at scale.⁴⁷ The strike outcome was less satisfactory, however, for Margaret Aitken, a member of Local 91 working at the Toronto Type Foundry. In autumn 1895, Aitken was brought before the typographical union on charges of "ratting," or strike-breaking. At the local's regular monthly meeting on 5 October, the union-appointed trial committee reported: "Miss Aitken said in her defence that she had lost money on the Stereo Plate Co., and also was liable for more losses, and also that she being female she could not get back so easily as quick as a male so she stayed in."⁴⁸ The local voted to expel Margaret Aitken from the union.⁴⁹ While evidence of women's responses to the actions of the male unionists is admittedly thin, it can be inferred from her response that women machine operators resented the gender inequalities in their trade which effectively denied them the same opportunities as male compositors.

Rather than joining with the women machine operators in the struggle with employers, male unionists succeeded in protecting their own craft interests. Ava Baron found that the percentage of women in machine typesetting was lower than those in hand composition, and suggested that men may have accepted the linotype because it *diminished* rather than increased the opportunities for women in the trade.⁵⁰ In June 1901, the *Typographical Journal* reported that the International Union controlled practically all of the machine-tenders and operator-machinists.⁵¹ Table 1 presents the actual figures published by the ITU. The figures, compiled from the reports of the local secretaries of the American and Canadian locals, indicate that women comprised only 3.7 per cent of the union and nonunion machine operators. Out of a total of 416 unions, located in 385 cities, 24 (5.8 per cent) failed to report. The ITU met head-on the challenge of mechanization, and succeeded in appropriating the machines for its predominantly male membership. Any interpretation suggesting the massive displacement of men by machines is inaccurate. In fact, very little of that actually occurred. Male unionists were trained to operate the machines and the skills of the hand compositor were still required in the book

⁴⁴TTU Minutes, 25 April 1895.

⁴⁵TTU Minutes, 27 April 1895.

⁴⁶TTU Minutes, 3 August 1895.

⁴⁷TTU Minutes, 24 August 1895.

⁴⁸TTU Minutes, 5 October 1895.

⁴⁹TTU Minutes, 5 October 1895.

⁵⁰Baron, "Contested Terrain Revisited," 47.

⁵¹*Typographical Journal*, XVIII, 11 Supplement (1 June 1901).

and job printing sectors. Table 1 further points to the emergence of a new "skilled" male occupation in the work of linotype machinists who repaired the machines.

TABLE 1

	Union	Nonunion	Total	Percent union
Male machine operators	6406	557	6965	92
Female machine operators	166	99	265	63
Male machine tenders	475	73	548	86
Male operator-machinists	730	--	730	100
Total	7777	729	8506	91

Source: Supplement to the *Typographical Journal*, (1 June 1901).

II

"Skill" and Gender in the IPP&AU

UNTIL THE LATE 1800s, both composition and presswork were carried out by the same worker in a combined newspaper and book and job shop. At that time, the emergence of the daily press, the separation of newspaper production from commercial job and book printing, and innovations in the production process with the mechanization of presswork resulted in a decline in the need for the "all round printer." The period between 1850 and the 1880s was one of crisis among printing trades workers, for the uneven process of industrialization with the mechanization of presswork resulted in tensions between compositors whose handicraft skills remained intact and pressmen who became machine-tenders. A redefinition of skill and masculinity occurred among pressmen as they made the transition from craftsman to machine operator.

During the 1870s and the 1880s, compositors dominated the ITU. Historian Elizabeth Baker has alluded to mounting tensions in pressmen-compositor relations within the international union.

The new era of printing which began in the 1880s brought striking advances to the men of the pressroom, and those who were members of the International Typographical Union felt increasingly oppressed by the hold of the compositors. Their craft had undergone fifty years of mechanization while typesetting had stood still. Now, in their determination to be heard

as craftsmen in their own right, they had come to feel more and more conscious of their value to employing printers and less and less dependent upon the compositors for strength.⁵²

In April 1885, Cincinnati Pressmen's Local 11 issued a circular calling for the organization of an international pressmen's union. The matter was left in abeyance until 1888 when a strike by the New York Typographical Union, "Big 6," for a new wage scale was settled by the compositors without concern for the interests of pressmen members.⁵³ A conference of pressmen was called for 8-10 October 1889 in New York. Pressmen representing 13 union locals in the United States and Canada attended the conference. The convention constituted itself the "International Printing Pressmen's Union of North America (IPPU)."⁵⁴

Disputes arose during the 1890s within this new union, with the pressmen claiming that lesser-paid assistants and feeders were supplanting journeymen pressmen in "making-ready" the form. Among the press feeders a grievance arose concerning the irregular enforcement of International recommendations on apprentice pressmen, who typically were recruited from the ranks of the press feeders. While the IPPU recommended a ratio of one apprentice to four journeymen, and that pressmen's unions should admit to membership apprentices who had completed three years of presswork, local pressmen's unions were given the authority to decide how many apprentices they would take, and at what stage of their apprenticeship they should be transferred. With the glut of apprentices and "two-thirders" on the labour market, the assistants and press feeders felt that the apprentice recommendations denied many of the best assistants and feeders access to journeymen status.⁵⁵

The conflict between the pressmen and the press feeders and assistants was partially resolved at the IPPU annual convention in 1896, where concessions were made to the press feeders and assistants. A resolution was passed at the convention specifying that when a member of an assistant's or feeders' union received the pressmen's scale, he should apply for membership in the pressmen's union. Also, feeders and assistants were formally recognized when the organization changed its name to become the "International Printing Pressmen and Assistant's Union (IPP&AU)."⁵⁶

With the introduction of larger and faster presses beginning in the 1880s, the work of the feeder was socially redefined along skill and gender lines. While press feeding had been defined previously as unskilled work for women and boy apprentices, in the late 1890s the IPP&AU, through its journal *The American*

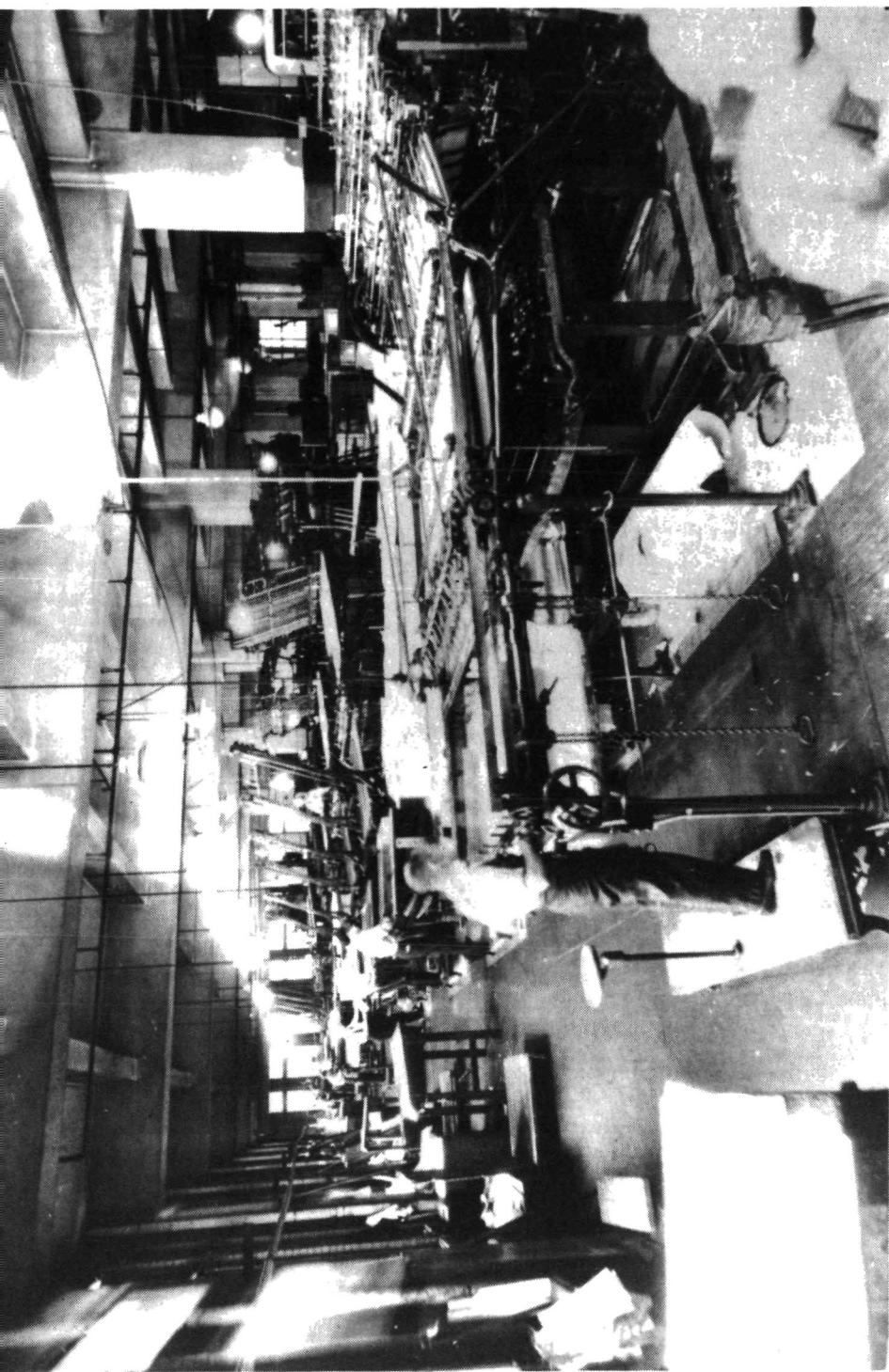
⁵²Elizabeth Faulkner Baker, *Printers and Technology* (New York 1957), 69.

⁵³Baker, *Printers*, 73-4.

⁵⁴Baker, *Printers*, 74-7.

⁵⁵Baker, *Printers*, ch. 10. Apprentices who were nearing the end of their term of apprenticeship, or "two-thirders," were sometimes hired by employers to carry out the tasks of journeymen printers, but at rates below those paid to journeymen.

⁵⁶Baker, *Printers*, 175-80.



Methodist Publishing House, Archives of The United Church of Canada, Toronto.

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Pressman, strove to masculinize the feeders' work by appealing to the ideology of the male breadwinner.

Not many years ago the pressfeeder was a mere boy, just out of school and inspired by dreams of great achievements which he was hopeful of realizing when he attained his majority. He probably commenced his career in a printing office as an errand boy or sweeper and in spare moments learned to kick a jobber... But his wages refused to be raised. Then it occurred to him that if the feeders organized a union they could formulate a scale of wages which they could convince their employers was just. No doubt many feeders will recall struggles they had to secure recognition as union men at the hands of employers.... Today the feeder presents a different spectacle. Instead of the boy or youth we find in the average feeder of the present time a matured young man, in numerous instances married and with a family to support. The tendencies of the times have conspired to make his calling more of a permanency lessening opportunities for advancement; he has learned to understand his work better...and above all, is more profitable to his employer.... But the feeder doesn't get a cent more for it. A feeder is a skilled workman and as such should at least be paid living wages and not upon a standard lower than that of a common laborer...⁵⁷

A connection between skilled worker status and male breadwinner was invoked in this instance to justify a demand for higher wages.

By the turn of the century, the concept of the male breadwinner was used by the male unionists to attempt to exclude women from the pressroom and from the IPP&AU. In the critique of women's employment in the pressroom that appeared in the November 1905 *American Pressman*, it was suggested that women "come in competition with the boys who enter a pressroom to make a profession of the calling," and abandon the pressroom as soon as they "see an opening for marriage or find a place congenial to their tastes."⁵⁸ The article concludes:

Now how far should the I.P.P. and A.U. encourage the employment of females in the pressrooms to the detriment of the rising generation of males as bread winners. The female never aspires to be a pressman as the work is not adapted to their sex. The question arises how to get rid of their encroachment.⁵⁹

Patriarchal exclusion in the social organization of the pressmen's and assistants' union, consistent with the broader ideology of the male household head as family breadwinner during the late 1800s and early 1900s, is revealed by the above quotation. This exclusion, while protecting the position of men in the workplace, also may have enhanced the power of men as husbands and fathers within the

⁵⁷ *American Pressman*, VII, 12 (November 1897), 349.

⁵⁸ *American Pressman*, XV, 12 (November 1905), 386.

⁵⁹ *American Pressman*, XV, 12 (November 1905), 386.

family.⁶⁰ Further indicative of gender exclusion of women from press work is the social redefinition of the job as being “not adapted to their sex.”⁶¹

Web presses, fed by machine from a continuous roll of paper, were installed in newspaper offices in the 1880s. The introduction of web presses for newspaper production resulted in further division in the labour process and a reconstitution of skill. Journeymen web pressmen were viewed as mere machine tenders by their flat-bed counterparts. Web pressmen defended their skilled-worker status:

Many pressmen who have acquired skill in handling two-revolution and stop cylinder presses, have the idea that there is little brain work needed in running a web press; that the machine is entirely automatic after the make-ready is finished, and that it permits the pressmen and helpers to stand round with folded arms watching the big combination do its work. This is a great mistake, as anyone will certify who has been in the press-room of a daily newspaper when the perfecting web press was at full speed, and observed its many duties. These monsters have to be watched as closely as a baby; watched, too, with a sharp eye to one's own personal safety as much as to the proper conduct of the press and paper... There are more helpers to a web machine than to any ordinary cylinder, and the pressman remains indispensable as ever he was.⁶²

Unlike the earlier, masculine craft-based notion of the hand pressmen's skill, that of their counterparts working the web presses was socially defined to incorporate the mechanical capabilities required by the newer production process. The traits of the web pressmen were outlined in *The American Pressman*: “He must be a skilled mechanic... with cool head and iron nerves, quick witted, full of resource and ready

⁶⁰The meaning of the wage form shifted during the latter part of the 19th century from a “family wage” dependent on the income of all family members to a breadwinner wage or a “living wage,” on which a man can keep himself, his wife and his children in decent living conditions. The breadwinner wage, although seldom realized by working-class families, was a goal of male trades-unionists seeking higher wages and control over job conditions. There has been some debate among historians as to whether male breadwinner ideology was used to reinforce patriarchal relations within the family, or whether women participated in the strategy with the influence of bourgeois family ideals. See Martha May, “Bread before roses: American workingmen, labor unions and the family wage,” in Ruth Milkman, eds., *Women, Work and Protest* (London 1985), 1-21; Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, “The ‘Family Wage’: Some Problems for Socialists and Feminists,” *Capital & Class*, 11 (Summer 1980), 51-72. Wally Seccombe, “Patriarchy stabilized: the construction of the male breadwinner wage norm in nineteenth-century Britain,” *Social History*, 11, 1 (January 1986), 53-76.

⁶¹Seccombe, “Patriarchy stabilized.” Articles and letters from local correspondents published in the *American Pressman*, alluded to the physical strength and mechanical know-how necessary to operate the large cylinder and rotary presses, capabilities which were deemed masculine. See, for example, *American Pressman*, I, 7 (May 1891), 97; III, 11 (November 1893), 569-70; VIII, 4 (March 1898), 80; XII, 3 (February 1902), 80.

⁶²*American Pressman*, III, 11 (November 1893), 569-70.



Methodist Publishing House, Corner of the Mailing Room, Archives of The United Church of Canada, Toronto.

for all emergencies."⁶³ The definition of skill for web press operators was conceived in decidedly masculine terms.

III

Bookbinder's Unionism and the Organization of the Bindery "Girls"

IN CONTRAST to the other printing trades, a significant proportion of the labour force in the printing industry's bookbinding sector was comprised of women. The organization of women bindery workers was an important concern for male unionists during the late 1800s and early 1900s. A gender division of labour was firmly in place in the bookbinding sector of the printing industry by the late-19th century. Women employed in the binderies carried out the "forwarding" tasks in the production process. "Forwarding" encompassed those tasks preparatory to the main binding process, including folding printed sheets, collating, and sewing collated pages onto strings or bands or stitching with wire.⁶⁴ All of the tasks between sewing and the actual "finishing," or the process of ornamenting the cover of a book, such as trimming, rounding and backing, lining-up, and gluing and gilding the edges, were completed by men.

Except for the laying of gold leaf on book covers, the ornamentation of covers or the "finishing" component in the labour process was carried out by men.⁶⁵ The finishing work of men was viewed as the skilled "artistic" component in the bookbinding process, and in a manner somewhat analogous to the male compositors, was guarded in a tradition of apprenticeship rooted in a masculine work culture. The finishing or ornamentation of up-market high-quality volumes was accomplished either by tooling, stamping, painting, inlaying or some combination of these techniques.⁶⁶

The labour process was further dependent upon the type of publication being produced. For example, special-edition job binding required that each book be bound by hand by a skilled "artistic" binder who typically ornamented each cover

⁶³*American Pressman*, III, 11 (November 1893), 569-70.

⁶⁴J. Ramsay MacDonald, ed., *Women in the Printing Trades* (New York 1980, Originally 1904), 3-5; Mary Van Kleeck, *Women In the Bookbinding Trade* (New York 1913), 38.

⁶⁵Van Kleeck, *Women in the Bookbinding Trade*; Herbert P Home, *The Binding of Books: An Essay in the History of Gold-Tooled Bindings* (New York 1970, Originally 1894); Bernard C. Middleton, *A History of English Craft Bookbinding Technique* (London 1963).

⁶⁶A popular form of late 19th-century tooled binding was called blind tooling or "antique." In blind tooling, the impressions of the finisher's tool are apparent on the cover, but no gold-leaf inlay is applied. A stamped binding is a binding finished in a press using stamps bearing a figure or pattern. Detailed descriptions of these elaborate binding processes are found in various issues of the *International Bookbinder*. See for example *International Bookbinder*, III, 7 (July 1902), 123-4; V, 2 (February 1904), 17-8; XII, 12 (December 1911), 437-8.

with a design. In pamphlet, periodical, and catalogue work, the sheets were folded and stitched with wire, often by machine, but no covering in cloth or leather was necessary.

The forwarding work of women in the bindery was viewed as lower status in the workplace hierarchy. British historian Felicity Hunt's observation that the work of women in the bindery was viewed as "marginal" in the social organization of production is significant.⁶⁷ Depending on the type of binding required, aspects of women's forwarding work were performed by machine by the late 1800s. Cheap reprint editions, pamphlets, and catalogues were stitched by machine with wire instead of thread. A trade manual dated 1880, describes the operation of the wire stitcher: "The machine is fed with wire from spools by small steel rollers, which at each revolution supply exactly the length of wire required to form little staples with two legs."⁶⁸ Contemporary literature reveals that not only was the process of sewing gendered female, but in the social re-organization of the labour process with the introduction of sewing machines, the machines were gendered by men as domestic implements for women bindery workers.⁶⁹

The process of hand folding involved laying the sheets upon a table with the signatures — the letters and numbers used to collate the text — facing downwards on the left-hand side. Holding a piece of polished wood or bone appropriately called a "folder" in her right hand, the woman folder brought the sheet over from right to left, carefully placing the folios together. The folder was then drawn across the two folios of the sheet to crease the centre. The signatures, if the sheet was folded properly, appeared at the foot of the first page.⁷⁰ Machines for folding were also available after the mid-1800s. In her analysis of the 19th-century London book-binding trade, Hunt found that although men operated the folding machines, there was virtually no displacement of women's labour by the machines.⁷¹ The fact that it was comparatively cheaper for employers to employ women hand folders limited the use of the machines to overtime periods when the employment of women was restricted by law.

During the 1880s and early 1890s, men and women bookbinders in North America were organized by the Knights of Labor. Bookbinders were typically

⁶⁷Felicity Hunt, "Opportunities Lost and Gained: Mechanization and Women's Work in the London Bookbinding and Printing Trades," in John, ed., *Unequal Opportunities*, 87; Felicity Hunt, "The London Trade in the Printing and Binding of Books: An Experience in Exclusion, Dilution and Deskilling for Women Workers," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 6, 5 (1983), 517-24.

⁶⁸Joseph W. Zaehnsdorf, *The Art of Bookbinding* (London 1880), 25-6.

⁶⁹Macdonald, *Women in the Printing Trades*, 3-14; Van Kleeck, *Women in the Bookbinding Trade*, 38-48.

⁷⁰Zaehnsdorf, *The Art of Bookbinding*, 1-2; Middleton, *English Craft Bookbinding Technique*, 6.

⁷¹Hunt, "Opportunities Lost and Gained," 84.



Methodist Publishing House, "Busy Bindery," Archives of The United Church of Canada, Toronto.

incorporated into mixed local assemblies.⁷² In Canada, a bookbinders' trade LA, No.5743, appropriately called "Hand in Hand," was organized in Toronto on 25 February 1886, and persisted until 1894.⁷³ "Hand in Hand" included both men and women bindery workers, and occasionally sponsored an "At Home" in an effort to draw women bindery workers into the Knights of Labor.⁷⁴

Few details about the activities of bookbinders in the Knights of Labor are found in the research completed to date. Gregory Kealey and Bryan Palmer posit that the Knights forged a "movement culture" during the 1880s in which for the first time workers saw the potential for a unified working class.⁷⁵ Contradictions were found, however, in the Knights' view of women and women workers. While the Knights of Labor accepted women as members and recognized the work of women outside the home, the Order was still committed to the Victorian ideology of domesticity for women. The ideology of the Knights of Labor was "buttressed by that predictable prop, the family, and the timeless innocence and preeminence of femininity," and reinforced with the thinking that women, if conditions permitted, would prefer to return to their "proper" sphere in the home.⁷⁶

The International Brotherhood of Bookbinders (IBB) was organized in Philadelphia in May 1892, with the amalgamation of the National Trades Assembly No. 230 of the Knights of Labor and the International Bookbinders Union, both of which were holding conventions at the same time in the city.⁷⁷ Women bindery workers were included under the umbrella of the IBB from the outset. The preamble to the 1892 constitution of the IBB states:

The efforts of individuals without union, having proved ineffectual to maintain an adequate rate of compensation for their labor, and experience having shown that associated and united effort, when founded on justice and guided by reason, being of great benefit to working men and women, and in order to concentrate our efforts for the attainment of our rights, we deem it necessary that an organization of our craft be formed which will have a tendency to elevate

⁷²John R. Commons, *et al.*, *History of Labour in the United States*, Vol. II, (New York 1918), 332-55; Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Toronto 1987), ch. 2.

⁷³*Eleventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries 1892* (Toronto 1894), 18; Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, 102, 322.

⁷⁴Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, 107.

⁷⁵Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, ch. 8.

⁷⁶Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, 318; Karen Dubinsky, "The Modern chivalry: women in the Knights of Labor, Ontario, 1880-1891," MA thesis, Carleton University, 1985; Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia 1984), ch. 5. Bettina Bradbury criticized Kealey and Palmer for being dismissive in their critique of the Knights of Labor, and indicated that Kealey and Palmer deny that an important element in the social construction of masculinity for skilled workers was their capacity to support a wife. Bettina Bradbury, "Women's History and Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail*, 19 (Spring 1987), 35.

⁷⁷*International Bookbinder*, VI, 6 (June 1906), 170-1.

our conditions and place the bookbinding trade in the front rank of the mechanical industries of the world...⁷⁸

The trade unionism of the IBB was rooted in conditions of advanced industrial capitalist development with elements residual from the international's Knights of Labor antecedents, notably the explicit inclusion of all workers in the bookbinding trade, both men and women.

Three years later at the bi-annual convention of the IBB, the statistician reported that 35 men's locals and 5 locals of bindery women belonged to the organization. Unfortunately, the aggregate statistics did not designate the location of the unions. Not surprisingly, given New York's predominance in the US bookbinding trade by the turn of the century, that city's bindery women were among the first to establish a separate women's local organization, Local 43, in 1895.⁷⁹ Also, at the IBB convention in 1896, Miss Kate V. Smoot of Washington was elected second vice-president.⁸⁰ Miss Nannie T. Daniel, also from Washington and employed in the Government Printing Office, was elected second vice-president of the international at the 1898 convention. The election of women to the IBB Executive was not, however, the result of any formal change in the constitution of the international union to ensure that women bindery workers had a voice at the international level. A woman was, nevertheless, elected regularly to the executive of the international from 1896.

In his annual report to the IBB convention in Toronto in May 1898, President Bodin stated that he was dissatisfied with the efforts made thus far by the officers of the local unions to organize bindery women.⁸¹ The following year, convention delegates modified the general laws to countenance the chartering of separate locals of women bindery workers for purposes of defending the craft-status of journeymen bookbinders under conditions of intensifying industrial capitalist exploitation.⁸² The women's locals were designated by the title "Bindery Women's Local Union." By 1900, eight bindery women's locals had been organized under the IBB jurisdiction in the following US cities: St. Paul, Washington, New York, Minneapolis, Boston, Denver, Lansing, and Philadelphia. In Canada, Bindery Women's Union Local 34 was formed in Toronto on 26 June 1901. Charles Goldsmith, an organizer for the IBB, and a journeyman bookbinder at a prominent local Toronto printing trades firm, the Methodist Book and Publishing House, helped organize bindery women in the city.⁸³

⁷⁸Constitution and By-Laws of the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders, 1892.

⁷⁹Van Kleeck, *Women in the Bookbinding Trade*, 175.

⁸⁰Proceedings of the Fifth Bi-Annual Convention of the IBB, 5-7 May 1896.

⁸¹Proceedings of the Sixth Bi-Annual Convention of the IBB, 3 May 1898.

⁸²Constitution and By-Laws of the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders, 1899.

⁸³*Typographical Journal*, XIX, 2 (15 July 1901), 81-3.

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Later in February 1905, IBB President Robert Glockling indicated that the organization of women bindery workers was of “mutual” benefit to both sexes. Focusing first on the benefits of union affiliation for bindery women, Glockling stated:

History tends generally to imply the idea of the inferiority of women in the industrial and political field. It remained, however, for the Labor organizations to declare against this doctrine. The Order of the Knights of Labor in the early eighties declared for “Equal pay for equal work.” And why not? Assuming that wages represent the media of exchange for life’s necessities, why should not Women share equally in wage distribution? Does it require any less for life’s necessities of woman than man’s?⁸⁴

Ideological links with the Knights of Labor are obvious from the above quotation.⁸⁵ Glockling then turned to the advantages to men bookbinders derived from the organization of women:

From an economic point of view, women’s Locals are a necessity to the Brotherhood. The exploiting of female labor will grow if not checked. Why is a girl employed in place of a man? The answer is, “Because she is cheaper.” With our women organized, we will be able to educate them in the economic situation, and thus avert much of the future difficulties that will inevitably arise if we keep them apart.⁸⁶

Women were accepted by men in the bookbinding trades, but only in the forwarding tasks defined as women’s work and where they did not pose a threat to the skilled hand bookbinder, and where indeed the organization of women might potentially be of “mutual” benefit to both sexes.

⁸⁴*International Bookbinder*, VI, 2 (February 1905), 43. Robert Glockling was a prominent late-19th and early-20th century Toronto labour movement figure. Glockling was active in the Toronto District Assembly 125 of the Knights of Labor, and was financial secretary of the DA in 1887, recording secretary in 1888, and treasurer from 1889 through the early 1890s. At the annual convention of the IBB in 1898, he was elected first vice-president, and subsequently president in 1905; a position he held until his death in 1913. Glockling was also president of the Toronto Trades and Labor Council in 1889-90 and 1895-96 and Secretary of the Ontario Bureau of Labor from 1900 to 1906.

⁸⁵According to Dubinsky, however, the equal pay principle advocated by the Knights of Labor was illustrative of one of the contradictions in the Order’s ideology:

Equal pay implied an acceptance of women as equal partners in the ‘public sphere’ of productive life. Not only did this directly counter dominant notions of women’s proper sphere, it also tended to undercut the Knight’s own romantic vision of working-class domesticity and womanhood.

Dubinsky, “The Modern Chivalry,” 107.

⁸⁶*International Bookbinder*, VI, 2 (February 1905), 43.

There was also a belief among IBB leadership that women were incapable of organizing effectively without the assistance of the men. The editor of the *International Bookbinder*, J.L. Feeney of Washington, stated:

It is the duty of the local organizations of men to make some effort, in each city where there is no women organization, to organize them into a union... The women have to be taught what trades unionism is, and when they have become educated and thoroughly understand the tenets and principles of organization, there are no better trades unionists than the women workers.⁸⁷

Paternalism among the male unionists in the IBB can be inferred from the above excerpt from Feeney's editorial.

In 1908, the smaller women's locals surrendered their charters and merged with the men's locals. The consolidation of the two unions was the result of a directive by IBB President Glockling ordering that "where small locals exist of men and women, separated, that there be but one local."⁸⁸ Thus, the women's locals in Toronto, Rochester, Buffalo, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Austin, Texas surrendered their charters.⁸⁹ Although locals of women bindery workers continued to exist, the demise of several of the women's locals reinforced the position of the bindery women as a minority interest in the male-dominated and male-controlled union.⁹⁰

Despite the elimination of the smaller independent women's locals, the IBB continued its campaign to organize women bindery workers. Glockling emphasized the importance of organizing women bindery workers in his address to the annual convention of the IBB in 1910:

I want to go on record as giving attention to the organization of the Bindery girls, for without their assistance we would not be able to accomplish very much. There should be great efforts made in this connection, for I have always found that the man is able to take care of himself under most any circumstances whereas the women are not so fortunate. It is not because the employer prefers to employ women in preference to men, but rather because he can secure her labor much cheaper than that of the men, if the women were to receive equal pay with the men we would have no objections to her taking our place.⁹¹

The paternalistic assumption that women were not capable of organizing for themselves is obvious from Glockling's remarks. Less obvious, perhaps, is the

⁸⁷ *International Bookbinder*, V, 7 (July 1904), 136.

⁸⁸ *Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders*, Cincinnati, 8 June 1908.

⁸⁹ *International Bookbinder*, IX, 6 (June 1908), 168.

⁹⁰ After Glockling issued the directive, women's bindery unions continued to exist in Chicago, Washington, New York, Minneapolis, Boston, Denver, Lansing, Philadelphia, Des Moines, Portland, Baltimore, and San Francisco. *International Bookbinder*, IX, 7 (June 1908), 270-1.

⁹¹ *Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the IBB*, 1910.

persistence of the exclusionary "equal pay" strategy like that used by male craft unionists in the late 1800s to defend their status as skilled workers and as primary family breadwinners.

During the early 1900s, the organization of women bindery workers was at the forefront of the IBB's agenda. Although the skills of the hand bookbinder were still required to produce "up-market" books, special editions, and subscription books, an expanding market in "cheap-books" and periodicals, technological innovations, and changes in the social organization of production, weakened the position of skilled male hand bookbinders. By the turn of the century, machines for gathering, casing, folding, stitching, embossing, and stamping were widely available, and hand bookbinding was increasingly a beleaguered craft. Male unionists, nevertheless, succeeded in appropriating the machines for masculinity, and women's work in the bindery remained concentrated in the customary forwarding tasks in the production process. The employers' responses to the interviews conducted by Van Kleeck and her colleagues in the early 1890s provide some insights into prevailing gender relations which continued to restrict women to their customary forwarding jobs in the production process:

One, an art binder, said that the work of women was restricted only by the men's trade union, and that women were capable of doing men's work. He added, however, that a woman would find it difficult to work fast enough to make her employment profitable in processes commonly done by men. Another, the superintendent of an edition bindery, said that the tasks of women were restricted by their lack of capacity, not by the rule of any organization; they would not have strength to handle the machines which the men operate....the superintendent of a magazine bindery declared that there was no process in his workroom which could not be done by women. "I could put a girl to work operating the cutting machine," he said, "if I paid her \$18 a week...I could have a woman tend the large folding machine if I paid her the same as the union scale for men. I don't know why I don't except that I see no good reason why I should."⁹²

The equal pay strategy of the male unionists and prevailing notions of femininity and masculinity were effective in protecting the position of male bookbinders in the workplace.

Conclusions

ANALYSIS OF CLASS AND GENDER relations in the North American printing trades between 1850 and 1914 reveals that male unionists implemented exclusionary strategies in defence of masculine craft status which contributed to the perpetuation of the gender division of labour within the printing trades and restricted women to the jobs of press feeding and forwarding in the bindery — all jobs which were socially designated as unskilled by men. Both the ITU and IPP&AU organized along

⁹²Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the IBB, 1910, 68-9.

masculine craft lines and effectively defended their status in the workplace against industrial capitalist incursions and the increasing mechanization of the production process. In contrast to the ITU and the IPP&AU, the IBB actively supported the organization of women bindery workers, albeit with the intent of protecting the interests of journeymen bookbinders.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s gender interests prevailed over class interests in the printing trades, as male unionists struggled to redefine skill for purposes of excluding women from the higher-paying jobs. The study of printing trades unionism reinforces the position of dual systems theorists, notably British feminists Cynthia Cockburn and Sylvia Walby, that under conditions of industrial capitalist transformation, the control of women's access to paid work is limited by patriarchal social relations.⁹³

Following the widespread implementation of machine typesetting in daily newspaper production beginning in the early 1890s, the ITU curbed the potential threat to the domination of the craft by securing control over the operation of the machines for its predominantly male membership. The appropriation of the machines for male unionists was obtained at the expense of women machine operators who were unable to comply with the terms set down by the union — namely, completion of a five-year apprenticeship and employment in a union shop at wages equal to those of male compositors. Employers, on the other hand, were unwilling to pay women compositors the same wages as journeymen. A measure of cross-class alliance between male employers and male unionists which might be attributed to patriarchal social relations was thus inferred. This further attests to the complexity of class and gender relations in the late 19th-century printing trades.

During the period immediately after the mid-1800s, the work of the press feeder was socially defined as unskilled work suitable for women and boy apprentices. With the introduction of larger and faster presses during the 1880s and 1890s, the international union struggled to appropriate the task of press-feeding for its predominantly male membership. In the case of the male pressfeeders, breadwinner ideology was used as a patriarchal strategy to protect the interests of men in the workplace and further exclude women from the pressroom.

In the bookbinding sector, women carried out those tasks socially defined as women's work; specifically, the forwarding tasks of folding, sewing, and collating, and the laying of gold leaf in the finishing process. The IBB actively supported the organization of women workers, as long as women remained in those occupations designated as "women's work." Beginning in the 1890s, when the widespread introduction of machines in the finishing process for some types of edition and commercial bookbinding threatened the status of skilled journeymen bookbinders in the trade, male unionists adopted an exclusionary equal-pay strategy. Once again, gender interests prevailed over class interests in the efforts of male unionists to redefine skill with the intent of excluding women from the better paying jobs.

⁹³Cockburn, *Brothers*, 3-35; and Walby, *Patriarchy at Work*, ch. 3.

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