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WORKING WOMEN; A STUDY OF THE MEANING OF EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT
IN WOMEN'S LIVES

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD. to the University of Warwick.

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Declaration

A version of some of the material in Chapter Three of this thesis has been previously published as

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These publications have not been prior to writing the thesis.

Summary

This thesis has addressed an ongoing debate on gender differentiation in employment which has been concerned to analyse why women's economic activity should be constructed as more marginal than men's and why women's employment should be so concentrated in low paid, low skilled jobs. The research has examined the nexus of women's paid and unpaid work and how the form of the organisation of the family and familial ideology undermines the crucial importance of paid employment both to women and the family, whilst the form of the organisation of the labour process often undervalues the real competences women have. The research makes plain the contribution of women's paid and unpaid work. It has been focussed as a case study, on the experiences of a sample of women clothing workers who were made redundant. The case study provides material on the organisation of the clothing industry and the nature of women's jobs there; on employer's strategies for restructuring and rationalising the labour process - which includes factory closure, and the impact and meaning of job loss in the context of patterns of female economic activity, women's familial role and the conditions of the female labour market. As such therefore, it is a study not just of job loss, but of the nature of women's work. The thesis concludes that women's paid employment remains differentiated and marginalised whilst women are employed as cheap labour and whilst that is endorsed by men's claim to a breadwinner's wage. The sexual division of labour within the family contributes to the construction of women as cheap labour. However the wage form, as an unequal wage, sustains those familial relations.

PART ONE

THE MAKING OF WOMEN'S WORK

CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT; THE STRUCTURING OF DIFFERENCE

A major social and economic trend in Britain since the Second World War has been the growth of paid employment for women, especially married women, outside of the home. Women now represent approximately 40 percent of the total labour force. Of course women's paid employment has not been limited to the post-war period since women constituted an important labour reserve in the early period of manufacturing (until the nineteenth century Factory Acts both protected and confined women's employment) and in both World Wars. Yet the perceptible trend from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century had been the steady decline in employment for married women; from 25 percent in 1851, to 13 percent in 1900, and 12 percent in 1921. Since 1948 however, this downward trend has been reversed. By 1977, 50.4 percent of married women were economically active⁽¹⁾ (Department of Employment/DoE, 1981), and which represented two-thirds of the total female labour force (Equal Opportunities Commission/EOC, 1979, p.38). This very long term trend for the female labour force to grow has been attributed to post-war economic expansion which created jobs for women, particularly married women. Although it has also been argued, that the growth of paid employment for women is more apparent than real, since much of women's work has been located in the informal economy and thus uncounted and hidden in official returns (Hakim, 1982; Land, 1975; West, 1978). Even if this is the case, what the post-war period does represent is women's movement into the formal economy and an official recognition of their economic activity. Now, marriage, childbirth and childcare do not signal the end of women's labour force participation. A pattern of earlier marriage, fewer children and a return to the labour market is reflected in the way that

female economic activity rates now peak in the 35 plus age group (EOC, 1982). This 'new' female economic activity in the post-war decades has forged a new life cycle pattern for women.

Yet the movement of women into employment has not been evenly distributed and women predominate in certain jobs and certain industries. In part the unevenness reflects the pattern of economic expansion, the growth of the service sector and the relative decline of manufacturing. Service sector expansion has been considered to be integral to the dynamic of capitalist development (Baran and Sweezy, 1973; Braverman, 1974) and it is here that the significant increase in jobs for women has occurred. In the U.K. it was made possible by accelerated economic growth and the creation of capital surplus, through the periods 1940-1945 and 1945-1966 (Mandel, 1978). Moreover this economic growth combined with post-war restructuring which also had the effect of job creation; expansionist Keynesian policies of full employment, state intervention and the establishment of the Welfare State. Consequently job growth has occurred both in private services (finance, marketing, advertising, distribution, banking and retailing) and in the public sector (health, education and social services).

That this growth would lead to more employment for women was 'neither accidental nor unforeseen', (Counter Information Services/CIS, 1976), and had been incorporated into the Labour Party's National Plan for 1965. By 1971, Britain had become a 'service economy' with two thirds of all women employees concentrated in that sector. Three industries, distributive trades, professional and scientific services and miscellaneous services, accounted for a half of all women's jobs (DoE, 1974). This concentration of women in certain sectors is a distinctive feature of women's employment. It is equally true for manufacturing where women have only been employed in large numbers in four industries; food and

drink, clothing and footwear, textiles and electrical engineering. Moreover, women are concentrated in a very narrow range of occupations and jobs. (Hakim, 1979). On the whole women's entry into paid work has been confined to low paid, unskilled work, whereas women's access to skilled jobs, better paid jobs and jobs of responsibility, has relatively deteriorated (op cit).

Whilst paid work for women outside of the home has grown, what is now clear is that women's work is segregated from men's work, and different from men's work;

Women's work is radically different from that done by men. Women workers are paid less than men, they work in a much smaller range of occupations than men, they do much more part-time work, and, in manufacturing, they tend to work alongside other women, in a small number of industries. Women are not as skilled as men, for a variety of reasons, and they are neither promoted as much as men nor are they to be found in great numbers in the professions and in management jobs (Mackie and Patullo, 1977, introduction).

Women's paid work is structured as a marginal activity and of lower value than men's. In work, women effectively occupy a female ghetto. The debate on women's work arises from a range of political and theoretical perspectives, they share however, a key question. Why and how is women's work different from men's?

Changing fertility patterns and longevity has meant that women's lives are no longer taken up with childbirth and childcare, and women are now 'freer' to work outside the home. However, women still have primary responsibility for childcare, and housework, and the organisation of the family household. It is observable that this domestic work

renders women less 'free' than men to engage in waged work. Women are often not able to work a full working day, nor have women been able to acquire the same skills as men. Rather women's skills often appear to be an extension of their domestic skills. Working less hours and in less skilled work than men, women also earn less than men, and their lower wages continue to maintain women in economic dependence on men. Analyses of women's work have employed a wide range of conceptual frameworks and have drawn upon biological, social and economic explanations for the phenomenon of gender differentiation at work; what they all share however, is an idea that the sexual division of labour within the family also affects women's position in the labour force in some way or another.

This sexual division of labour is taken to be the process by which different kinds of work are allocated to men and women on the basis of gender differentiation. It is more than a division of labour. This differentiation of work within the family is integral to the construction of gender, of masculinity and femininity, so that tasks themselves become masculine or feminine. Moreover, it is hierarchical; it is a division in which women are subordinate to men, and women's work is constructed as being less value than men's. This sexual division of labour is taken to be rooted in a pre-industrial, or pre-capitalist family form, and a large part of the debate on women's work centres on how and why it has been maintained in industrialised societies. Industrialisation has radically transformed the family, but there still operates within it a division of labour between men and women, and certain features of this are reproduced in the labour market and production itself.

This chapter discusses the debates on women's employment and how that employment has been analysed in terms of women's position within the family, the labour market and the labour process. It is a problem that

the debate has many threads, but little cohesion. It is necessary to underline that much as empirical research has neglected the subject of women at work (Brown, 1976), it is a far greater problem that there is a lack of theoretical^{or} conceptual categories with which to analyse women. Women's economic activity has often been ignored, even by official statistical enumeration (Hakim, 1982), and theoretical concepts often assume rather than explain, female subordination. Nevertheless, the post-war economic expansion has established women's economic activity as normal circumstance and paid work has become a significant part of women's lives, and, like a puzzle, slowly the pieces are coming together.

The Family

Zweig's study of women's employment, Women's Life and Labour (1952) provides a clear indicator of the conditions under which women were drawn into the labour force in the immediate post-war period. Specifically, the demand for female labour arose in local, sexually segregated and unskilled work. In 1951, the average rate of pay for women was 53 percent of the male rate and this differentiation in the 'value' of male and female employees was justified in terms of differences in strength, productivity, reliability and efficiency (p.107). Zweig noted that this cheapness of female labour contributed to employers' preference for women in some instances and, consequently, placed women in a particularly hostile relation to men (p.32). Trade union practices remained restrictive and men allowed women into trade union organisation only insofar as it furthered men's rather than women's interests. Zweig did not regard women's paid employment as a progressive development, placing women on a scale somewhere between adolescent and male worker; in the worst jobs, with the worst pay and with no opportunity to change that. He did not attempt to theorise or explain this location of women's work.

Dual Role

It was Myrdal and Klein's Women's Dual Role (1956) which provided an early and seminal conceptualisation of gender differentiation in employment. Up until then the structural functionalist conceptual framework of Talcott Parsons had been extremely influential in the analysis of gender differentiation (Millett, 1972, p.228). Parsons had defined the male role as one primarily within production, and the female role primarily within the family or kinship system. Parsons had shifted the analysis of gender differentiation away from earlier 'psychological' explanations and recognised a sexual division of labour which was socially structured. However, in rendering the sexual division of labour as normative and prescriptive, it became an analysis which was concerned with preserving the family, rather than accommodating and understanding change (Millett, p.233). Myrdal and Klein retained the concept of role differentiation but ascribed to it a far greater flexibility. Consequently the effect of women's increased labour force participation was to transform the 'traditional' female role, located exclusively in the family. As wives, mothers and workers, women had re-entered the economic sphere and acquired a 'dual role'.

The primary focus of Myrdal and Klein's work was to reconcile family and work as complementary, not conflicting, twin aspects of women's lives. During the war period millions of married women had been recruited into the labour force, but such a use of female labour was structured as exceptional circumstance and for the duration of the war effort only. After the war a return to economic and social 'normality' was sought, and precisely because of the irrevocable changes brought about by war, the family was seen as all the more important as a site of continuity and stability (Riley, 1979). Although women had to give up their war time jobs, many wanted to remain in work and the wholesale 'return' of women

to the home did not occur. Even by 1947, 18 percent of married women were working. A government led export drive, war in Korea, renewed rearmament and the raising of the school leaving age, all combined to create an ongoing labour demand⁽²⁾ and provided married women with work. That married women should want to work after the war came as a surprise, 'the speed and readiness with which married women came forward to fill the vacant jobs was entirely unforeseen' (Myrdal and Klein, p.79).

Myrdal and Klein addressed themselves to an official concern that married women were working to the detriment of child welfare and the restoration of secure family life. In arguing for better conditions of work for women, better training, wider opportunities, more part-time work and greater opportunities to return to work after a period of child-care, Myrdal and Klein were also arguing for better motherhood and better family life. They recognised that the employment of women was not only an established fact of life, but a growing trend, and it was important to make it easier for women to combine their two roles rather than to create the conditions in which they conflicted. They were seeking to influence prevailing attitudes and policy making, and thus the concept of dual role was not just an analysis of women's work, it was a reassurance and restatement of family. Their representation of women's employment was not a degradation of family life, but rather a progressive development whereby women's role increasingly became a realisation of full individual potential in all spheres. In the 1968 Preface to second edition of Women's Dual Role, Myrdal and Klein state that women's paid work and their family responsibilities are no longer 'irreconcilable alternatives' and finally women have reclaimed the economic role which had been taken away from them with the development of the factory system which had physically separated women and the family from the site of production.

The potency of their concept is that it used the idea of role as one of fundamental identity and achieved the reconciliation of femininity with employment. This was to appeal to men, who had 'found it difficult to adjust themselves to the idea of a wife who was radically different from their mothers' (p.8). It reassured women who felt guilty about the implicit neglect of children and family that was fostered especially by the prevalent ideas of the time on maternal deprivation. 'Contemporary psychology has put a very heavy burden of responsibility on the mother's shoulders' (p.143). It provided a theory of gender differentiation in employment which informed many subsequent studies of women's work. More than providing an analytical framework, it set the focus of study so that for a long time afterwards the study of women's employment has not been on their work as such but on the relationship between family and work for women and their management of that duality, (see for example Klein, 1965; Yudkin and Holme, 1969).

Jephcott's case study of the employment of married women in the Peak Frean biscuit factory, Married Women Working (1962) is one of the few studies of working class women. The analysis of married women's work was placed within the same economic, social and demographic changes as identified by Myrdal and Klein, and had the same preoccupations;

The domestic and industrial issues are two aspects of a whole, and it is as a whole that this study has tried to understand the problems raised by this new trend (p.170).

In common with many employers, Peak Frean factory had been forced in the early 1950's to rethink its labour recruitment policies in the light of an acute labour shortage of both male and unmarried female labour. By the mid 1950's, 82 per cent of Peak Frean's employees were married women and almost half of them were employed on a part-time basis (Jephcott, p.67).

Jephcott identified the most distinctive feature of married women's work to be in the fact that they worked consciously to improve their families standard of living (p.19). They perceived themselves as better mothers by earning a wage with which they could purchase for their children, opportunities and experiences which they themselves had never had.

Jephcott provided another reassurance for women's dual role, and rather than, the family being weakened by married women's employment, family life was strengthened by the easing of financial hardship and worry (p.161). Husbands too, 'became reconciled as the advantages of the second pay packet grew evident' (p.167).

Studies of professional working women have been especially concerned with the impact of married women's work on the organisation of family life and the sexual division of labour within it (Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976; Ward and Silverstone, 1980). For these studies have tended to pin their hopes for the dual role thesis on the middle class woman. Well educated and trained, probably with a career before having children, such married women would have career commitments equal to their husbands and that would in turn push for a more equitable domestic division within the family. These families Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) labelled 'dual career' families, and as such set the pattern for the future. Well, they would if it were not for the labour market which constantly blocked women's opportunities;

Study after study in recent years has pointed out that women generally, quite apart from any question of promotion to top jobs, tend not to be offered the same chances of training for skilled work or promotion as men, nor to be motivated by their education or work environment to take them; that they tend to be segregated into

'women's work', devalued by equal pay, treated as lacking in commitment to their work and as unsuitable to be in authority over men, and trained and encouraged not merely to accept these conditions but to think them right; and that husbands, the community (for example as regards nursery schools and shopping hours) and employers have only half heartedly adapted to the change in women's labour market due to the increasing share taken in it by married women (Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971, p.25).

Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) were forced to modify their earlier thesis in the recognition that women were entering 'work' rather than careers, so that whilst a 'dual career' family remained the ideal, a 'dual worker' family was the commonest pattern. They did also recognise that work for women was not transforming the allocation of domestic work between men and women, rather it remained the responsibility of women and as such constituted a 'bottleneck' to women's opportunities (p.355).

It is this kind of discursive contortion that reveals a fundamental unresolved tension in the concept of dual role. In arguing for the right for women, and particularly married women with children, to work, Myrdal and Klein were making extremely progressive demands and their theorisation of gender differentiation has provided a most influential framework for conceptualising women's employment ever since. Yet even by the time Klein's Britain's Married Women Workers appeared in 1965, it was apparent that women's employment opportunities were severely restricted. The trend that she and Myrdal had perceived a decade earlier was well established. By 1965 married women made up 52 percent of the female labour force, and the Labour Government had commissioned a survey to discover

the conditions under which more married women could be encouraged to return to work (Hunt, 1968). Employment for women had become normal, not exceptional circumstance, but the range of jobs open to women was severely limited, within occupations and industries traditionally designated as women's work. Such work was low paid and unskilled, and part-time work, which Myrdal and Klein had advocated as a major facilitator of women's dual role, Klein now recognised as invariably meaning the worst kind of jobs (Klein, p.109).

The optimism of the dual role concept cannot be reconciled with the empirical fact of women's ongoing inequality in paid work. Whilst dual role theory reclaims for women a representation in the economic which had been denied by Parsons' analysis of role differentiation, this loosening of the concept of role also leads to the loss of any sense of the way in which the relation of the family to society and the economy may be structured (Beechey, 1978, p.165). Rather than role being resolved by either the needs of the family or society, it becomes almost a question of individual 'choice'. The rejection of any process of structuring, and the stress on change and individual flexibility leads the concept of 'dual role' into idealism. It cannot explain why women cannot have the equal employment opportunities they may have 'chosen'.

This idealism is perfectly reconcilable with the social democratic period within which the 'dual role' concept was developed. Functionalism had not been totally jettisoned, but was moving away from its classical form, the rigidity of which would not fit with the social democratic ideals of the post-war period. Economic growth, progress and equal opportunity were inextricably linked. 'Progressivism' became an ideology (Finn et al, 1977, p.176) which earlier sociology could not accommodate. The determined optimism of post-war social democracy easily slipped into utopianism. Class and sex antagonisms were put aside in pursuit

of equal citizenship (Wilson, 1980). The problem of inequality is resolved by implicit faith in the progressive qualities of advanced industrialisation, economic growth and post-war social democracy in Britain. Myrdal and Klein's feminism and analysis of female employment was therefore integral to the period in which they were working. They made no connection between women's position at home and their status in the workforce and they 'either ignored or misunderstood class' (Birmingham Feminist History Group, 1979, pp.62-63). Their politics was that of the pressure group and they identified the middle class professional women as the vanguard for equality (op cit). Consequently the ongoing limits to 'progress', the persistence of low pay for women and discrimination against women, could only be explained through some 'hang over' effect of old fashioned attitudes, which would gradually change. The concept of women's dual role is absolutely committed to progressive change, and founders therefore, on its failure to explain why the sexual division of labour remains fundamentally unchanged.

Domestic Labour, Capitalism and the Family

This apparently intractable allocation of domestic responsibilities to women led to a series of analyses of the unpaid work which women undertake within the family household. Dalla Costa and James (1972) both argued that the housework performed by women was not simply a private and individual arrangement that 'happened' to occur in every family household. Rather women's servicing of the family unit, was also the servicing and reproduction of waged labour. Their polemical intervention was both a restatement of the value of women's housework and an attempt to integrate it with an analysis of production. They claimed that as women's domestic labour was essential to a capitalist economy, it was 'productive' labour. James' somewhat irreverent application of the Marxist category of productive labour to women's housework, triggered a debate

that was a rather ponderous affair, centring on whether women's housework, in that it reproduced labour power, was productive labour, and thereby functional in some way to capitalism. (Harrison, 1973; Himmelweit and Mohun, 1977; Seccombe, 1974; Smith, 1978).

Ultimately the questions could not be answered, as Molyneux (1979) argued;

Neither an understanding of women's subordination, nor the politics for overcoming it, can be derived from analyses of domestic labour alone.....(it) cannot be reduced to economic or material factors alone, even where they are conceived in the broadest terms (p.22)

It did however shift the conceptualisation of women's dual role away from an idealistic reconciliation of the two spheres. It led to a questioning of the relevance of women's domestic work to modern capitalism; 'why have housework and childcare, in modern industrial societies such as Britain, continued to such a great extent to be the responsibility of women, and organised on a private family basis?' (Gardiner, 1975, p.47). Moreover, it led to a questioning of the relevance of women's dual role; 'what is the significance of the fact that women go out to work as well as working in the home?' (Foreman, 1977, p.113).

So that although the focus of the domestic labour debate was such that the question of women's paid work was not directly addressed, and was represented mainly as an extension of women's primary work, housework, it actually laid the basis for analysing the connection between the family and production. It led some writers to view the duality of women's unwaged and waged work as dependant structures in capitalist production (Foreman, 1977; Gardiner, 1975) and the root cause of female subordination (Adamson et al, 1976).

Braverman's work Labor and Monopoly Capital (1974) went a long way

in explaining the demand for female labour, tying it into the exigencies of the economy itself, in a way that earlier studies had ignored. Braverman suggested that women form part of an industrial reserve army of labour, and constitute particularly cheap labour, both because of the size of this potential labour reserve and because of 'the barrier (which Braverman felt no need to explain) which confined women to much lower pay scales' (p.385). According to Braverman, women, as a cheap labour supply, have met the demand for unskilled labour that has arisen with the post-war expansion of the service sector, and moreover the expansion of that labour intensive sector was itself premised on the availability of cheap labour. His analysis also offers some explanation for the segregation of women's work, in that the demand for cheap labour has been specific to certain industries and certain jobs. It is however only a partial explanation, and Braverman did not pause to consider why women should constitute this cheap labour reserve. He took for granted the sexual division of labour.

Adamson et al (1976), Beechey (1977) and Bland et al (1978) have all argued that women are a distinctive constituent of an industrial reserve army precisely because of the sexual division of labour, because of women's dual role. Not only have women been maintained within the family to perform crucial unpaid domestic work for a capitalist economy, but when women become economically active in the labour force, they can be structured as especially cheap and flexible labour, because of their ongoing position within the family. Materially, this duality is sustained by women's wages which are below the level of subsistence, and which keep women ultimately dependent within the family, and ideologically sustained by familial ideology which marginalises women's employment. Thus, as cheap labour, women may be a preferred source of labour. Cheap to employ and easy to dismiss because women can return to their work in the home,

without either material or ideological disruption. This structuring of women as a cheap labour supply can only be maintained as long as women have this specific dual role. This analysis raises the possibility that it is in the interests of capital that the sexual division of labour within the family is maintained. Such a hypothesis is supported by the visible ways in which the State endorses and structures female dependency within the family (Land, 1976; McIntosh, 1978). Then it may be argued that the structuring of the duality of unpaid and paid work for women is a modified form of the sexual division of labour, corresponding to the current economic form of modern industry, and not some resilient residue from an earlier economic formation. However, although there can be little doubt that women have made up a reserve of labour, it is not so clear that the sexual division of labour within the family corresponds so functionally to the needs of capital, nor that women are in fact more disposable than men;

In the sense of providing a labour reserve, women's labour power has clearly become an important part of what Marx saw as an industrial reserve army....(but) what is in dispute is whether or not women bear, to a disproportionate extent, the burden of unemployment in times of crisis, whether they are more disposable.

(Bruegel, 1979, p.13)

Economic recession in the late 1970's has provided 'the test' to women's greater disposability, and there is considerable evidence to suggest that women are in some instances more vulnerable to job loss. Women as part-time workers often do not have full employment protection rights; women are usually employed in unskilled work, and they may well be more dispensable than skilled workers, and women are less well organised in protecting their jobs.

However, whilst it may be the case that women are formally more vulnerable than men and some traditional areas of women's employment in manufacturing have been particularly hit by recession, there is some evidence that women have been protected from job loss by the continuing demand for female labour in the service sector. Because female labour has been differentiated from men's, and because women's jobs are sexually segregated both by industry and skill, male and female labour is not interchangeable in ways that the concept of the industrial reserve army suggests (Gardiner, 1976; Milkman, 1976). It may be that in recession women's labour is sought, precisely because it is cheaper. It has been suggested that the limits to the utility of female labour as cheap labour have been reached (Huws, 1982; Weir and McIntosh, 1982) and technological restructuring will radically affect women's employment levels, but that as yet remains to be seen.

The concept of the industrial reserve army only corresponds partially therefore to empirical observation. Moreover, there are theoretical problems in using the concept to explain gender differentiation, when it is a category which has been developed at an analytical level of abstraction that does not differentiate individuals within it;

there is no group of human subjects who because of differentiated human/social attributes are its sole or consistent members, for the RAL does not require differentiated categories nor does their existence explain why they are unemployed. Within the framework of capital, the abstract labourer is neither male nor female, black or white, young or old.

(Anthias, 1980, p.52).

If the concept of 'dual role' addressed itself specifically to an analysis of gender differentiation, to the neglect of the economic structures in which it operates, the concept of industrial reserve army is confined to

economic categories in which there is no scope for social or ideological forms of differentiation. This is quite a limitation on any analysis of gender differentiation in employment since employers clearly do differentiate, discriminate and seek to utilise to their advantage, existing social divisions.

The Labour Market

Employers' differentiation of male and female labour, and creation of men's and women's jobs is manifest at the level of the labour market. In fact Seear (1968) observed that there are two labour markets, one for men and one for women, and this has been empirically supported by Hakim's work on occupational segregation (1979). Differentiation between men and women is so entrenched in the labour market that it appears to mirror and reinforce the sexual division of labour within the family. Labour market theory has offered some insights into how this structuring of divisions takes place, although there have been two dominant models of the labour market, and which approach the question of why women's jobs are unskilled and low paid, quite differently. One model is of a free, and competitive labour market and which suggests women possess less skill than men, and the other is of a structured, and segmented labour market, which suggests that economic structure and discrimination combine to confine women to unskilled work.

A Competitive labour market

The classical formulation of the labour market is a free and competitive model, which differentiation is explained through differences in skills. Employers offer better wages and conditions to skilled labour, because it is argued it is more productive labour. Consequently to command the best labour market position possible, individuals should invest in themselves as 'human capital', that is they should acquire skills. This

'orthodox' or 'neo-classical' model of the labour market has been enormously influential on labour market studies, although on the whole has tended not to address itself to the question of gender differentiation;

The human subject of neo-classical investigation is
a timeless, classless, raceless and cultureless
creature; although male, unless otherwise specified
(Amsden, 1980, p.13).

Where gender difference has been considered, women's inferior labour market position has been explained by the fact that women are less skilled than men; their human capital is of a lower value than men's. This model of the labour market considers the sexual division of labour within the family, to be very important indeed. In fact it pre-determines women's labour market position. Women have a stronger commitment (either in the present, or in the future) to marriage and the family, than to the labour market, and therefore, unlike men, women make the 'choice' not to acquire skills to maximise their wage earning capacity, rather their labour is utilised more effectively within the family.

Mincer (1980) and Becker (1965) have suggested that the sexual division of labour itself, is premised on 'economic rationality'. That is, each family assesses which of its family members are best able to be its 'breadwinners'. This apparently neutral formulation of household organisation is however, invariably along traditional sexual divisions. It is invariably the case that men are more 'efficient' as breadwinners as they command higher wages than women. Whilst change is blocked by the fact that the longer women are occupied with childcare, the more their wage earning capacity diminishes. Women's 'human capital' deteriorates, the longer women are occupied in childcare and domesticity (Mincer and Polachek, 1980, p.177). Consequently, Mincer and Polachek have argued, that what appears to be discrimination and differentiation within the

labour market, in fact takes place outside of it (op cit). This competitive model of the labour market cannot analytically allow for discrimination, or any process of structuring to occur within a free market. The structuring of difference, either takes place outside of the labour market - within the family, or discrimination is called something else. Phelps (1980) accepts that some employers make stereotypical assumptions about women and calls this 'statistical discrimination'. That is, not real discrimination in the sense of holding a distaste for women, but in keeping with rational economic behaviour;

The employer who seeks to maximise expected profits will discriminate against blacks or women, if he believes them to be less qualified, reliable, long term, etc., on the average than whites and men respectively, and if the cost of gaining information about the individual applicant is excessive. Skin colour or sex is taken as a proxy for relevant data not sampled (pp.206-207).

The work of Chiplin and Sloane (1976) provided the first major study, within the framework of labour market model, of the British female labour market. They endorse the American studies of women's place within a competitive labour market and the proposition that the sexual division of labour within the family is the site of skill and wage differentiation between men and women. This does then mean that a wage differential in men's favour has the effect of reinforcing the traditional sexual division of labour (p.8). Chiplin and Sloane recognise that this does present some difficulty in explaining any change, especially the growth of women's employment, but they tackle this problem by identifying the increase in labour saving domestic appliances, 'convenience' foods, and the commercial provision of many services formerly undertaken by the

housewife, as the major impetus behind the increase in women's paid work. These developments have had the effect of shifting somewhat the economic utility of women's labour - out of the home and onto the labour market (p.17). It has not however effected labour market equality, and indeed, Chiplin and Sloane argue that inequality has to be recognised;

it must be recognised that an optimum distribution of labour may imply an unequal distribution of the sexes by occupation (largely because of labour force attachment).....on both efficiency and equity grounds it may in fact be preferable for males on average to be in relatively highly skilled and highly paid activities. (p.140).

They consider that whilst women remain responsible for domestic work, they remain less reliable, less productive labour, and differentiation of the labour market is a rational employer practice. Higher wages are justly paid to the more skilled, productive workers (p.51), who happen to be men.

Following on from this, Chiplin and Sloane suggest that differentiation in the labour market on the basis of gender, may not therefore be analogous to racial discrimination. Whereas there may be no material difference between black and white male labour for example, women do have children, do withdraw from the labour market. In other words, men and women are unequal because of the sexual division of labour within the family and their unequal labour market position is a reflection of that. The only way out of this pre-determined inequality in the labour market, is for greater educational and training opportunities for women.

One of the crucial insights of neo-classical economics has been that the labour market is competitive, but rather than providing a basis for understanding how female labour may be used to undercut wages, this

labour market model totally denies the possibility of this occurring. Locked in a technicist definition of skill, it does not question the nature of skill, it equates unproblematically skill with productivity and it ignores the fact that skill is irrelevant to a large range of jobs. It cannot address itself to the question of constraints in the labour market, because it defines the labour market as a free relationship. Yet the extent to which the labour market offers choices or constraints is a vital determinant of social stratification. (Blackburn and Mann, 1979 p.2), and of women's role in society (Bruegel, 1978, p.106). Insofar as the competitive labour market model has analysed at all the position of women in the labour market, it takes as given the sexual division of labour within the family, and does not analyse it as a site of inequality. More, it does not allow that the labour market itself may structure the differentiation of men's and women's jobs and may be a cause of women's lack of skills and employment opportunities.

Structured labour markets

A radical break from the classical formulation of the labour market came with the idea that rather than being the site of the exercising of individual free choice, discrimination is a structured feature of the labour market. Both dual labour market theory and segmented labour market theory provide a conceptual framework for structural constraint and as such have been of relevance to the analysis of women's jobs. The concept of dual labour market arose from the attempt to develop an understanding of the ghettoisation of black labour in the United States and has subsequently been applied to analyse female labour as well. Dual labour market theory proposes that industrial economies display an inherent dualism, with a primary and secondary sector, with corresponding primary and secondary labour markets. The primary sector is the more developed sector of the economy, typified by large scale enterprises, capital

intensity, and technically advanced production methods, and job specific skills.

Doeringer and Piore (1971) who have been the main proponents of dual labour market theory, suggest that it is the high technical composition of the production process and the necessary training for job specific skills of the primary sector, that leads employers to seek to protect their investment by seeking employee stability. They do so by establishing internal labour markets and job hierarchies, from which women are mainly excluded on the supposition that women are less reliable and stable than men. The secondary sector tends to be the reverse of this. It is typified by small, labour intensive, unstable industries, and firms operating on the margins of highly competitive markets. This sector actually fosters a casualisation and instability of employment as a way of keeping wage levels down. It is the secondary sector which provides the vast majority of jobs for women. This separation of the labour market according to assumed behaviour traits, tends to be self reinforcing as far as women are concerned. They are confined in casual and unstable work, yet their labour turnover is explained through some inherent characteristic of women themselves, rather than the nature of their secondary sector employment. Gordon (1972) regarded the confinement of women to the secondary sector to be more entrenched than for other groups of workers;

Women are much less able than previously 'disadvantaged' workers to identify with 'advantaged' workers and to follow their model in the transition to stable work. Further, the social definition of family and sex roles continues to undercut employment stability for women. And, as the percentage of women in the labour force continues to increase, some employers seem more likely

to move many jobs into the secondary market in response to the (expected) behavioural characteristics of secondary women employees (p.48).

Unlike the American dual labour market literature which tends to consider the position of women as an afterthought, Barron and Norris (1976) brought to the foreground gender differentiation in their discussion of dual labour market theory. They counter the notion that the sexual division of labour within the family alone, pre-determines the nature of women's paid work, and assert that the labour market is also a major determinant of gender differentiation (p.47). They argue that the labour market differentiates to such an extent between men and women, that in the U.K. the secondary labour market, is in fact, a female labour market. Barron and Norris converge with earlier dual labour market theorists in arguing that the labour market differentiates and discriminates between men and women mainly on the basis of stereotypes, but they consider that the effects of maintaining women in a secondary labour market are specific to women. Women appear as a marginal labour force, and have a weaker claim to the right to work than men, and are more dispensable than men (pp.54-57). Barron and Norris argue that this degree of structural differentiation is much more than a question of inequality; the dual labour market operates as a fundamental barrier to social change (p.64). Yet for all that Barron and Norris present a damning assessment of the consequences of discrimination, an analysis of the labour market in isolation from the organisation of production will not get much beyond the 'coincidence' of gender division and the secondary female labour market (Beechey, 1978), p.180). Barron and Norris were not concerned with the underlying logic of the dual labour market; that is management's strategies for the organisation of production.

Segmented Labour Markets

There is a labour market literature which does make more explicit links with the organisation of production, and as a theory of segmented labour markets it has been developed as a radical critique of dual labour market theory (Edwards, 1975; Gordon, 1972; Edwards, Reich and Gordon, 1975). The segmented labour market model is of a job market divided and stratified by job clusters more numerous than the dual labour market model allows, but what is distinctive about this version of labour market analysis, is that it suggests that divisions in the labour market arise not so much from employers' need for a stable workforce, but from employers' need to control production. This theory of the labour market reacts against a technicist definition of skill, to the point of denying it. It assumes that deskilling is very advanced and that hierarchical differentiations are imposed by employers as a strategy to check any labour collectivity that might arise out of the tendency towards the homogenisation of labour. Consequently employers have imposed on jobs which have no distinctive or objective basis for differentiation, job ladders, promotion structures and specific posts of entry. It divides worker against worker as trade unions themselves get caught up in a 'hierarchy fetishism' (Gordon, p.77).

In a later elaboration of their segmented labour market thesis, Reich and Gordon (1982) suggest that this model of the labour market may also explain gender differentiation in that employers may utilise sexual antagonism as one of a range of strategies to 'divide and conquer' labour (p.237). Yet although it may be that employers do exploit the social subordination of women, we still do not have an explanation of how or why employers are able to segment the labour market in this way. Blackburn and Mann have argued that there is an inherent functionalism in this labour market model and suggest that a more direct attack on

wages and control could be mounted if, for example, male and female labour were interchangeable (pp.30-31). Whilst it is the case that employers are not neutral in their practices, the advantages of segregation or segmentation are not always clear-cut.

A theory of segmented labour markets presented a challenge both to technicist criteria for skill and labour market differentiation, and to Braverman's over simplified identification of the trend to homogenise labour. By arguing that employers' create differentiation in the labour market, it becomes more apparent how class struggle is built into job segregation. However, the structured labour market model tends to universalise the production process and strategies for control, when in fact possibilities for control will differ according to different economic historical and cultural circumstance (See for example Stone, 1975; Wilkinson, 1977). Moreover, labour itself is a crucial agent in the structuring of the labour market (Friedman, 1977). Organised sectors of the white male working class have consistently sought to control entry into occupations, firms and industry. One of the most effective ways this has been done has been in the differentiation of labour according to skill. In elevating control as a quality sought over and above skill, the segmented labour market model misses the crucial point. There is a range of strategies for division and a range of bases for privilege. There is more than one way of gaining cheap controllable labour. In the end the labour market is one moment in the social relations of production, and can only provide therefore fragments of insight into the process by which male and female labour may be differentiated.

The Labour Process

In a review of sociological studies on women's employment, Beechey, (1978) stated, 'what is in fact required is a theory which links the

organisation of the labour process to the sexual division of labour' (p.180). Not only Marxists have addressed the question of work organisation. There have been notable work organisation studies which have been concerned with women's work (Cunnison, 1966; Lupton, 1963). Yet Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital was an important restatement of the value of analysing work organisation as the organisation of a capitalist labour process. He argued that employers' strategies to achieve and accumulate profit are the criteria for the specific form of organisation of the labour process. In this context of modern industry, those strategies are aimed at cheapening labour by degrading skilled work. Braverman suggested that the growth in women's paid employment is integral to the degradation of work; that women are potentially an agency for deskilling. As unskilled labour substitutes for skilled labour, so women are substituted for men. Braverman charts the ways in which this process of deskilling and feminisation occurred in clerical work, as an example of this.

On the whole however, direct substitution has not been women's route into employment, and Braverman slides from proposing that women are an agency of deskilling in specific occupations to suggesting that the economic shift from manufacture to services, and the employment of women, itself represents the degradation of work. Braverman does not analyse the implications of his own insights. He does not address, and therefore does not answer, the question of why and how female labour may be used in this way. We still need to know how is it that, 'it is female employment that accounts for the bulk of the occupational and industrial shift' and what are the implications of the fact that 'it is female employment that constitutes the bulk of the new working class occupations' (p.397).

Braverman's analysis of the organisation of the labour process has been much criticised, especially for his omissions or incomplete analysis. Braverman opened up a new debate on the nature of skill and yet in his own work he holds onto an ill-formulated duality. Sometimes he uses skill to mean craft skill (a rather static definition) and sometimes he understands skill as only a social construction (Elger, 1977). The important question of why some tasks and occupations should be labelled as 'skilled' and others as 'unskilled' is not addressed (Cutler, 1978, p.83). Nor does Braverman concern himself with class struggle, or labour's resistance to capital's imperative to deskilling, when both are major determinants of the organisation of the labour process (Schwarz, 1977). Most importantly different groups of workers have different organisational strengths to resist deskilling (Rubery, 1978) and in some instances the labour process itself affords to some jobs the basis for that resistance (see for example, Beynon, 1973; Goodrich, 1975; Nichols and Armstrong, 1976).

The propulsion to deskilling and hence break down labour differentiation, is not the straightforward even development that Braverman describes. Whilst the extension of control through deskilling and the cheapening of labour (theoretically) leads to the creation of a mass unskilled labour market, that attack on skill, which is equally an attack on job control, autonomy and wages, is inevitably resisted, whenever, wherever and however, possible. So whilst Braverman has a tendency to see skill itself as the source of strength, Rubery (op cit) points out, that the historical strength of skilled labour in craft unions, has been as much rooted in strong labour organisation as in craft skill itself. Or, conversely, it has been possible for certain groups of workers to maintain job control and high wages after the technical basis for the skill has become obsolete. The labour process is not just about the organisation of work, it is about conflict within the work process between capital and labour

(Nichols, 1980). Recent studies of the labour process have recognised how gender is sometimes a feature of the conflict over job control and skill differentiation. In the struggle to resist employers strategies for deskilling, skilled men may seek to preserve male privilege; to differentiate themselves from women, and thereby contribute to structuring women as a low paid, sexually differentiated labour supply.

A renewed interest in the labour process has moved the debate on women's employment away from a concentration on the family, where women's familial role has been credited to be a massively determining and largely autonomous factor in the creation of women's work. It has extended the analysis of differentiation beyond the labour market. The study of the organisation of the labour process has pointed the way to how there are many, possible bases for the divisions and differentiation of labour. More, that differentiation arises not only from existing social divisions which are exploited by employers, but those divisions are recreated and have a life of their own within the labour process itself. It is not simply a case that women's work is different from men's because women fail to shake off their familial role, rather at work, men and women are as gendered as they are within the family, or in society in general. If the organisation of work is viewed through the totality of the social organisation of production, there is really no reason to suppose that the labour process itself should be sexually neutered.

Studies of the labour process have shown that employers' strategies to deskill and labour's capacity to resist domination by technology or substitution will be rooted in a range of factors. For example, Lazonick (1979) illustrates how men employed as mule spinners in the 19th Century were able to maintain their wages and their claim to the job after the technical erosion of the skills on which their craft had been based. They were able to resist displacement by cheap labour, less

skilled labour and especially women, firstly by drawing new tasks into the cluster of skills which made up their jobs, and secondly because of concilliatory and compromising employers' strategies that went with the introduction of the new mule. This study of labour process organisation demonstrates how employers' capacity, readiness or need to confront labour, will vary according to available technology, labour supply and the market. The possibility for control and employers' strategies for control have often to be sited within the specific developments and conditions of the industries concerned. Mule spinners maintained their job control and 'skills' in the context of a declining industry still extensively relying upon obsolete technologies and practices (p.258).

Importantly, what is demonstrated is that firstly, the existence of technology does not necessarily or inevitably lead to its utilisation, old methods will do as long as they remain profitable (Elger, 1979), and secondly, it is possible to capture new skills to be incorporated in former jobs;

Labour saving and labour simplifying devices do not automatically dislodge key groups of workers from their strongholds. They do so only when such groups are unable to maintain their relative indispensability (ie. their bargaining strength) during the crucial transition period and cannot therefore 'capture' the new devices for recognised unions (Hobsbawn, 1964, pp.170-171, quoted in Zeitlin, 1979, p.262).

Zeitlin (1979) illustrated this by comparing the successes of engineers and printers in 'capturing' the new processes created by automatic machine tools and mechanised typesetting. The differences in their industries and especially the different strengths of employers.

Consequently conflicts over control and technological change in the two industries had very different outcomes. The national engineering lock-out of 1897 took place against a background of a 'sagging economy' which strengthened employers' resolve and broke union resistance (p265). Whereas the London printing strike of 1911 provided a more favourable climate for labour, during a period of literacy growth, and the introduction of the linotype machine consolidated, not weakened printers' strength. The need for employers to take an offensive is not generalised, but depends on the specific conditions of industry and markets. The imperative to deskill and resistances to that are uneven and varying developments, not unilinear ones (Zeitlin, p.272).

Labour history studies of this kind have shown that skilled labour's practices of exclusion to differentiate itself from less skilled labour, have been a crucial agent in labour process organisation, and consequently, labour market segregation. The differentiation of skilled labour from unskilled labour, has been in many instances the differentiation of men from women. The male working class has had a long historical interest in differentiating itself from women (see for example Alexander, 1976; Taylor, 1979), and this has often combined with employers interests in segregating women from men to maintain women as cheap labour. Consequently, what appears to be labour market differentiation only according to skill, is equally gender differentiation, and that is not to deny any technical criteria for skill, but to recognise, as Phillips and Taylor (1980) state, that 'skill is saturated with sex' (p.85). The ready acceptance of women's work as a special category of work, for women only and overwhelmingly categorised as unskilled work, conceals the extent to which men's skills are socially constructed in relation to women's supposed lack of skill.

Cockburn's (1983) study of the print industry is illustrative of the

way in which women have been excluded from skilled work by men and hence differentiated as both unskilled labour and as women. She demonstrates how men have been able to capture skilled work for themselves even in the context of a changing technology and labour process, and moreover, how men use that technology and work to maintain their power over women. Printers have been particularly successful in protecting their jobs, their skills and their relatively high wages, and one way they have historically achieved this has been by controlling the supply of labour into the industry, with the effect that it has been virtually an all male industry. The printing process itself has been the basis of men's power over women. However, since the late 1970's the print industry has been fighting for survival and employers have 'taken on' the printers, aided by high levels of unemployment, recession and new computerised technology. As the labour process has been reorganised, so the basis for men's power has been undermined. To the very end, the printers' struggle to protect their jobs has not just been to resist the introduction of less skilled labour, it has quite consciously sought to exclude women from what is regarded as a man's job. As Cockburn cogently indicates, printers' arguments why women can't, shouldn't and wouldn't do their job, have remained remarkably similar over a hundred years. It is a study which argues that craft skill is as steeped in ideas of masculinity as it is in technique, and as women are now starting to move into the job, along with the introduction of new technology, it is masculinity that is at stake, not simply a question of livelihood. It is a study which demonstrates patriarchal relations in the work process, and if we are to extend our understanding of why male and female labour becomes constructed as different, we have to recognise and analyse the ways in which men are active agents in that process of differentiation.

Men and women; work and the family

This chapter has outlined the ways in which women's employment has been analysed, with explanations for gender difference variously rooted within the family, the labour market and the labour process. The focus of study has shifted from an empirical observation of women's increased labour force participation and how the family has adapted to that, to a much more explicitly theoretical debate locating women's employment within an historical development of production and the family. Much of the debate has arisen out of a feminist concern with inequality maintained through the sexual division of labour within the family, occupational segregation at work and unequal pay for men and women. Barker and Allan (1976) and Kuhn and Wolpe (1978) suggest that the debate is still undeveloped because of a lack of empirical research. It is certainly the case that discrete debates, located either in the family, the labour market, or production, are problematic since it is manifest that gender divisions are connected through all social structures and institutions, without there being one primary site or cause for gender differentiation.

Yet slowly, empirical studies of women's work and women at work are beginning to appear (Bradley, 1984; Cavendish, 1982; Davies and Rosser, 1984; Pollert, 1981; Wacjman, 1983; West, 1982). A favoured form of recent empirical research on women's employment has been that of the case study. This method of investigation has been much used in studies of work; classically in Beynon's (1973) Study of Fordism. It is a method of research particularly suited to investigate the depth and details of perception and experiences and to provide more rounded analyses. If there are problems with this method of investigation, it is how to theorise the wide variations of empirical findings and to know what generalisations may be extrapolated from specific instances.

Cunnison's (1966) study of shop floor relations in one clothing

factory provided an early example of this method, and provided evidence of how the expectation and assumption of the sexual division of labour within the family, influenced the allocation of work and wage differentials between men and women. More recent case studies of women at work have been more focussed on gender differentiation than Cunnison's work, and have questioned why women are segregated in unskilled, low paid work; why women's work is so often subjected to patriarchal forms of control and whether women's consciousness, or social identity is less rooted in work than men's. On the subject of skill there are different hypotheses. Bradley and Pollert both explain occupational segregation and the unskilled nature of women's work through a deskilling thesis. Cavendish accepts that because of women's domestic responsibilities, they do not have the skills that men have. Whereas in some of the studies there is a suggestion that along with the degradation of skill, there is another process of 'gendering' going on which devalues the real competence that women have (Crompton et al, 1982; Davies and Rosser, 1984). What they all share however, is the idea that ultimately women's primary identification is within the family not work. Pollert and Wacjman suggest that women continue to interpret their working lives through familial ideology, albeit in contradictory ways, whilst Cavendish ascribes women's ongoing identification with the family as necessarily arising from the materiality of their low wage.

Part Two of this thesis is a case study which continues to probe these themes; of how women's and men's work is differentiated, of how the sexual division of labour interprets the position of women in the family and whether women's relation to and consciousness of work is different from men's. It is a study of the impact of redundancy on a sample of women clothing workers, and as such it is particularly alerted to investigating the specificity of women's perceptions and experience of

job loss. If women are a secondary labour force, if women's social identity is primarily derived from the family, if women have such boring jobs and earn so little, does this mean that the impact of job loss on women is experienced as a lesser problem than it is for men? Redundancy, provides in a sense a test of women's orientation to work.

The case study, sets out the historical development of gender differentiation in the organisation of one industry - the clothing industry. It looks at the nature of women's work in the industry and the social relations through which they experience that. It looks at women's perception of job loss, unemployment and the labour market through the interplay of work and the family. Yet the only way in which gender differentiation at work is to be properly understood, is through comparing directly women with men and Beechey (1983) has suggested that we are not asking the same questions of men and women. Rather we use 'familial' concepts to analyse women's work and 'workplace' concepts to analyse men's work. If we continue to ask how is women's work affected by housework and childcare, and how is men's work affected by skill and worker organisation, we lead the analysis, and ourselves, down a path which inevitably locates women in the family and men in work. How do we know that the family is more important for women than it is for men? We are not asking men the same questions. Although recent case studies on women's work have provided fuller accounts of the processes which structure women's employment as different from men's, women are still being analysed separately from men.

In order to analyse difference, we need to start by asking the same questions of men and women, and to locate them within the same, not different, structures. Occupational segregation makes direct comparison very difficult, if not impossible, and the case study in Part Two of this thesis repeats the emphasis of investigating women, separately from

men. But Beechey (op cit) is right when she states that we must at least begin to use the same concepts to analyse women and men, before we can analyse similarities and differences. In the following study of redundancy, the inevitable, individual experiences of job loss are located in the structure of the wage.

To some extent we already know how men's and women's work is structured by the wage. The wage binds men to work and is the primary arena of conflict within the labour process (Anderson, 1977; Baldamus, 1961; Clarke, 1977; Nichols and Beynon, 1977). Moreover, Barrett and McIntosh (1980) have shown how men's collective struggle over the wage has been organised in the form of a family wage. This has cast men in a particular relation to the family, as the family breadwinner. Although the family wage is not necessarily realised by male wage earners, it nevertheless still casts a woman's wage in relation to it. Women work for pin money. This may also be more ideology than substance, but it casts women also in a particular relation to the family - as secondary wage earners, who are also available as unpaid domestic labour. The case study is centrally focussed on the impact of job loss on women, but it structures the comparison of difference in the experience for men and women through the question: How does the loss of the wage affect men and women?

Notes

1. It is very probable that statistics have always and will continue to undercount the extent of married women's employment. Many married women work on the 'fringe' of the economy, working insufficient hours, or earning insufficient pay, to be incorporated in National Insurance enumeration. Different data sources tend to come up with different figures (DoE, 1973).
2. By 1947, the post-war labour shortage was such that the Labour Government launched a campaign to recruit women back into industry (Thomas, 1948).

PART TWO

CASE STUDY

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

As was signalled in Chapter One, the Second part of this thesis is a case study of redundancy and unemployment amongst a sample of female clothing workers. The issue it addresses, of the sexual division of labour in waged work, has involved looking at changes in the organisation of the labour process in the clothing industry; the conditions of the labour market; the detail of the personal experiences of redundancy and the experience of the waged and unwaged work nexus itself. The material that covers this span is inevitably different in character.

The chapter on the clothing industry provides an account of the long term historical developments of the industry. It outlines the wide range of products and production methods, and how the organisation and reorganisation of the labour process has occurred in the context of technological change and competition. It is particularly concerned with the ways in which jobs and skills have become differentiated between men and women. The material for this chapter has been derived from official publications; industry and governments reports and trade union journals and reports; from published studies and from discussions with management personnel in a range of factory sites. It provides an overview of the industry but little of the subjective work experience of clothing production workers. Whilst the remaining chapters of the case study rely very heavily on subjective material drawn from in-depth personal interviews - primarily with women clothing workers, but also male clothing workers, management and trade union officials.

However Chapter Three is not simply fulfilling the convention of providing a backcloth to a case study. Although one of the inherent problems of case studies is that the evidence is weakened, by being

isolated in time or in providing only a rudimentary account of its context. More than that, this chapter serves to explain the form of the sexual division of labour within the clothing industry and which informs both employers' strategies for redundancy and the experience of redundancy. Moreover, the event of factory closures and job loss, as Massey and Meegan, (1982) illustrate, are themselves relevant to the ongoing development of the organisation of the industry.

It has turned out that the empirical research for this thesis has changed since its inception. I had selected the clothing industry to study, as being exemplary of women's work. It is typically very low paid, labour intensive and defined as unskilled or semi-skilled work. Moreover, it is illustrative of the processes of 'deskilling' and substitution, where the reorganisation of work and the introduction of machinery, has rendered obsolete men's craft skills, and introduced women into jobs once performed by men. Through 1979-1980 I gained access to the factories of the clothing manufacturer Robert Hirst, who allowed me to make detailed observations of their reorganisation programme. Management of Robert Hirst referred to reorganisation as 'engineering the factories', whilst assembly workers referred to the introduction of 'minutes'. It was in fact the introduction of work study methods to intensify production without significant further capital investments. It was a strategy for rationalisation and restructuring in response to severe economic recession, increased competition and rapidly contracting retail outlets. It was a strategy which sought to remove remaining elements of skill and control held by both male and female production workers and to increase labour productivity. It was a strategy, fundamentally, for the reduction of costs. Given my interest in the sexual division of labour within the organisation of the clothing industry, and in the conditions of female employment in particular, it seemed highly relevant to look at the impact that such unit cost reduction was having on men's and women's work in

the industry.

Robert Hirst was a manufacturer of men's and boy's clothing, with production based at five factory sites. Competition in this sector of the industry had intensified by the late 1960's, but it was only when Robert Hirst was taken over by Carrington Viyella in 1974, that they had the capital to develop a strategy to reduce unit costs. The concentration on reducing the wages bill, to intensify the labour process, rather than to invest in technological development was in keeping with the strategies of other firms of the same size and in the same market position (see Massey and Meegan, pp.40-49). I had known of this firm's programme of reorganisation through a longstanding but slight personal acquaintance with one of the directors of Robert Hirst, and it was through him that I secured access for research. This individual had an unusual interest in his own work and the industry as a whole and went to considerable measures to facilitate my research. He provided me with a personal introduction to the factory sites I visited. My presence was accepted, as I was his 'friend' and a 'student'. I was given the freedom, to observe all aspects of the production process and to question both shop floor workers and management whenever they were free to do so. In this way I spent up to one week in each factory site (except the Northern Ireland site, which I never visited) and I learned a great deal about the production process.

This 'informal' entry into the firm did have restrictions. Firstly, Carrington Viyella were never officially informed of my work and my presence was therefore known only to Robert Hirst management (although of course they themselves were part of the Carrington Viyella group). This meant that I did not have the possibility for access to 'official' Carrington Viyella policy, and I had to rely on either individual, subjective accounts of that policy, or already published statements. Secondly, this route into the firm was visibly, via management. This

did make me feel (although I never had any evidence to substantiate this) that shop floor workers would associate me with management, and hence further diminish their willingness to talk to me. Undoubtedly, the greatest restriction on any access to shop floor workers was the intensive nature and pace of their work. Nevertheless I was able to observe their work, ask questions whenever it was appropriate to do so, and at this stage of the research, I had no desire to go beyond that.

However, Robert Hirst had responded to their crisis later than most firms, and by 1980 the decision was made to abandon a strategy for the rationalisation of all the Robert Hirst factory sites, and instead Carrington Viyella opted for some relocation of production and the closure of some existing factory sites. In December 1980 Robert Hirst closed down two of its factories, making all of the labour force redundant. I decided to follow through this final and ultimate stage in the rationalisation process, to see what happened after redundancy to a predominantly female workforce. The historical material on the organisation of the labour process in the clothing industry remains a context for rationalisation strategies but now provides a context for redundancy rather than factory reorganisation. Factory closure, as a consequence of the rationalisation of production raises somewhat different questions about women's employment. Whilst job segregation and the underevaluation of women's skills remained as relevant as ever, the closure of the two Robert Hirst factories, mirrored the widespread and increasing occurrence of job loss amongst women, and raised inevitable questions about what was happening to female employment, and what was happening to women as their labour market contracted. Would high levels of unemployment effect some kind of reordering of the two spheres, of work and the family, in women's lives? The emphasis of the thesis has moved therefore. It still asks the same questions about job segregation and deskilling, it is still concerned with the process of differentiation and marginalisation of female labour,

but in investigating women's experience of unemployment, it has developed as a study of the nexus of waged work and family for women.

Early in 1981, I approached Robert Hirst management for information on those employees who had been made redundant. They provided me with names and addresses, as well as details of age, marital status (of the women), employment service records and occupation. I was extremely fortunate to secure this information and feel sure that one reason for their co-operation was that they themselves were leaving (management worked their period of notice until the end of March 1981, whereas all other employees left in December 1980) and therefore had nothing to lose.

From this information I was able to construct a research sample and although the research has not been a quantitative research study but some figures are given here as they are useful in giving some idea of the numbers involved in the different categories, and to give some weighting to the different patterns of experience which emerge. The sample is based on employees from two factory sites belonging to Robert Hirst, in Harrogate and in Castleford. At the time of the closures, 19th December 1980, Harrogate had 203 employees. As the administrative site of the firm of Robert Hirst, this number of employees included management, sales staff, warehouse staff, clerical and secretarial staff, cleaning, catering and maintenance workers, as well as 103 production workers. The Castleford factory had a total of 89 employees of whom almost all were production workers with the exception of a manager, 2 machine maintenance technicians, 2 clerical workers and 2 catering workers.

There were many variables involved in the personal circumstances of these two workforces, especially in terms of age, skills, work histories and marital status. As I wanted to investigate and compare what happened to redundant female workers in two different local labour markets, I decided to construct a research sample out of the production workers only,

to hold constant at least some aspects of the wide variations in labour market positions. I also excluded the large number of employees who were past, or very near retirement age. (Despite the imperatives of rationalisation, the clothing industry still needs to hold onto its skilled workers). They were excluded from the sample as they did not qualify for redundancy pay under the Redundancy Payments Act, and moreover as old age pensioners they would not truly reflect a state of unemployment.

I ended up with a list of employees comprising 71 women and 22 men from Harrogate and 82 women from Castleford. I constructed a sample from each factory by listing these remaining production workers in alphabetical order, selecting a one in two sample. As the total number of men was a small one, all of them were kept in the men's sample. The sample was made up of machinists, operatives and supervisors (women), pressers (men and women) and cutters (men).

I wrote to all the women and men in my sample in April 1981 informing them of my intended work and requesting their participation. In the event a range of personal and work commitments meant that I was unable to begin this work until September of that year. In view of this time lapse, I wrote again to individuals in the sample, and quickly followed that up with a visit to fix a time for an interview. I did not interview all of the sample. A small number did not wish to participate, whilst some of the sample had moved away. Table 1, indicates the size of the sample, the response rate, and the number of interviews undertaken:

	Harrogate		Castleford		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Initial Contact	36	22	40	0	76	22
Interviewed	30	14	29	0	59	14
Once	19	14	20	0	39	14
Twice	11	0	9	0	20	0

The Sample; response and interviews Table 1

All the interviews were conducted in the participants home at a time chosen by them. The interviews were informal, but I did have a schedule of questions which mostly served as an aide-memoire, to ensure that I gained basic information from each interview. (see Appendix 1)

On average these interviews lasted about an hour. Some were shorter where particularly reserved participants only answered direct questions, whilst some were much longer - up to three or four hours - when participants felt particularly expansive. For most of these interviews I was able to talk to women alone, but on a few occasions interviews were conducted in the presence of husbands, and families. This latter situation was not ideal since women usually felt less free to talk about their domestic situation and relationships. Whenever possible I used a tape recorder to record these interviews. On a small number of occasions I did not, either because participants did not wish it, or because we were in a busy family room where it would not have been appropriate. Where interviews were not recorded I made written notes.

The experiences of the redundant employees were traced over a period of 18 months. The first round of in-depth interviews took place in October, November and December 1981, ten months after the factory closures. The time lapse meant that recollections were more coherent, but also more considered. The immediate impact of redundancy could only be reported and understood with hindsight, but had the advantage of providing a perspective over a lengthy period of labour market experience. As Table 1 indicates, a second round of interviews was carried out in May 1982, seven months after the first, with a sub-sample of 20 women, who at the time of the first interviews had either been unemployed or in a situation which they expected to be temporary. This second interview series was less structured than the first, and I did not use a schedule of questions as such although I was clear about what I wanted to know. That was, whether these twenty women were still out of work, and if so, what were their

responses to very long-term unemployment. Or, if they had found work in the interval, what was that work, and their conditions of employment, and what were their responses to that. These interviews were significantly more 'comfortable' for me the interviewer, and I believe for the interviewee, as we both returned to an already known relationship.

As it turned out the distinctive feature in determining the labour market outcome of the two groups of redundant women in two local labour markets, was the different conditions of those labour markets. However there were additional factors which contributed to the varieties in the experience of redundancy and unemployment and these needed to be taken into account. As can be seen from Table 2, men had a longer employment record than women. Whilst there were more women at the Harrogate factory with long employment records than at Castleford;

	Castleford	Harrogate (women)	Harrogate (men)
Under 2 years	12	9	2
2 - 5 years	13	10	1
6 - 10 years	2	4	1
11 - 15 years	1	6	3
16 - 20 years	0	1	2
Over 20 years	0	0	5
Total	29	30	14

Employment record with Robert Hirst, Table 2.

The difference in employment records between the two factories largely corresponds to the different age composition of the female workforce. As can be seen from Table 3, the vast majority of the Castleford sample were in the age group 16 - 25, whereas over one-third of the Harrogate sample comprised of women in their late 40's and 50's;

Age Group	Harrogate	Castleford	Total
16 - 25	10	20	30
26 - 35	5	3	8
36 - 45	3	2	5
46 - 60	12	4	16
	<hr/> 30	<hr/> 29	<hr/> 59

Age distribution of women interviewed, Table 3.

It was married women who made up the majority of those interviewed, although in both towns single women represented a significant number of the sample as Table 4 indicates;

	Harrogate	Castleford
Married	17	14
Single	10	14
Divorced/Separated/ Widowed	3	1
Total	<hr/> 30	<hr/> 29

Marital Status, Table 4

Interviews with former employees were supported by other interviews with management of Robert Hirst, trades union officials and regional local officials from the Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission.

The Approach

The research was concerned with investigating the impact of the loss of waged work on women; to consider how they experienced that as women. I went out and asked them, spending many hours with individual women (and men) in their homes. This methodological approach which actively seeks out the subject's perceptions and experiences of an event, McRobbie (1982) has called 'naturalistic' sociology, and roots it in the methods of participant observation, and especially the work of Howard Becker, and

in the political philosophy of the work of the historian E.P. Thompson, and his 'history from below' (p.46). There is both a methodological argument for this approach and a political one. Becker (1977) himself has argued that large scale surveys and closed questions are very limited in the investigation of experience and contradiction. Whilst Beynon (1973) is scathing of such 'scientific examiners of society', who do not reach 'the issues that so deeply affect people's lives' (p.9).

Whatever this approach may be called, it has found favour in recent years, especially in research dealing with women's employment. Because it is an approach which provides the opportunity for the subject to 'speak' it has been an invaluable tool in revealing the more hidden aspects of women's lives, which often escape largescale survey research and data collection. Cavendish's workplace study (1982) was based on a form of participant observation, although the secrecy of her research also restricted the amount of information that was available to her. Pollert (1981) labelled her study as 'interventionist research' and although she only sat in on the work process, she actively engaged in what she observed. What they share is an extraction of the detail of the nitty gritty of workplace relations, and especially an extraction of the gendered nature of those relations. Some studies which have deployed the 'naturalistic' approach have had some success in linking the sexual division of labour at work and in the family. Central to Wacjman's discussion (1983) is the ideological construction of subjectivity, and the ways in which experience and consciousness interact in contradictory ways. She is certainly not concerned with numbers as she worked with a very small sample, and this may in the end create problems with the extent to which generalisation may be extracted. Cockburn (1983) was equally clear that she is not concerned with quantitative numbers, rather with the contradiction of experience.

The validity of such subjective material is a debate in itself

(McLellan, 1981), but it is not a question of one source of information being superior to another, rather it is a question of which source of information is most appropriate to what we want to know. Such an approach has been revealing but not without problems. This type of empirical research inevitably becomes involved in the sets of relationships which it is investigating - in this case, of management and the labour force, and of men and women - and which in turn has implications for the research.

It is important to be clear about what such accounts can and cannot say, and to recognise the active role of the researcher. The interviews conducted and recorded for this research were transcribed verbatim, but they have subsequently been edited by me for use as empirical evidence for this thesis. (1) I have also removed myself from what was in fact a series of conversations. I have not changed or altered intended meaning and I believe the representation of the interviewees points of view has been a fair one. However I am using their words where I judge them to be relevant in supporting my argument. I do believe that all researchers using this methodology should recognise their control over the proceedings. Similarly, the interview situation itself is not one of equality. I did find that it was usually easier to establish an interview 'rapport' with the women respondents, moreso than with the men. Nevertheless, it was clear to me that I remained in control of those interviews and was rarely questioned myself by the interviewee.

Although it may well be the case that the evidence gathered may confront and challenge the assumptions and research plan of the researcher (Willis, 1980) - and that certainly happened for me - the researcher still has the determining role when using this kind of material and method. Whilst the researcher is seeking a subjective interpretation of events and experiences, the research findings do not 'speak' for themselves. As McRobbie states, 'the raw material, all neatly set out in box files,

on tape and in endless notebooks, is somehow transformed into something quite different...' (p.54). 'Naturalistic' sociology, social interaction, or the case study approach often reveals what other research does not, but it should not be taken that subjectivism is a 'truth' superior to others.

With this caveat, the personal accounts do offer insights into the events and experiences around the redundancies at Robert Hirst. The interviews with management personnel from various levels within Robert Hirst and Carrington Viyella, express a personal reading of what was going on, but as such they represent a fair account and offer insights into management thinking in the period prior to the factory closures. There is, after all, no such thing as a final version of management strategy. Similarly, there is no final version of women's position in the social organisation of production. Contradiction and ambivalence are given expression alongside firmly held beliefs. Some viewpoints express a deviant position, some illuminate widely held views and experiences. They all have something to say.

Notes

1. The quoted extracts that are used throughout this thesis have been credited in different ways. The long interview extracts which make up Chapter Five are credited by name (not real) to the five women concerned. Quoted extracts from interviews with management personnel have been credited with the individual's company position and name (again, not real). Uncredited quotes are all taken from the interviews conducted with women production workers from both factory sites. Each separate paragraph represents a different woman's viewpoint.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Introduction

This chapter looks at the clothing industry as a specific instance of differentiation in men's and women's work. It indicates how the process of gender differentiation and a sexual division of labour does not end at, nor confine itself to, the organisation of the family household. Rather it thrives within the organisation of the labour process itself. As in other industries, clothing has exploited women's economic and social subordination, to use women as cheap labour and as an agency for deskilling. Within the specific conditions of the clothing industry, it can be seen that women have provided the industry with a perverse combination of cheap and skilled labour. Over a period of time the erosion of male craft skills has occurred with the substitution of women onto most production jobs. Yet this has taken place within limited technical change. Clothing has remained a labour intensive industry, in part because of the difficulty of mechanising specific production processes but also because it has so successfully exploited female labour. Whilst many men's skills have been rendered obsolete, women's wages have been kept so low that there has not been the need for such a complete assault on women's skills.

As a case study of the organisation of the labour process, this chapter indicates how changing technical capacity has been only one factor in the complexity and variety of employers' tactics for achieving control. The history of the clothing industry has been an ongoing trade-off strategy between the advantages and disadvantages of capital investment and the use of cheap labour. This is pertinent to recent debates on the labour process (see Thompson, 1983) which stresses that there are not uniform

strategies, that arise from the imperatives of capital accumulation. In clothing, employers' strategies for utilising cheap labour have combined with male manual workers sectional practices, to differentiate women, as cheap labour. This 'success' has meant that only limited technical innovation has taken place within an ongoing dependence on women's labour. In the long term this has been a contributory factor in the industry's demise in the U.K as now it cannot compete with foreign producers in low wage economies who are able to exploit female labour even more effectively. This chapter indicates the conditions under which women's jobs in the industry have been created, and why those jobs are now being lost.

The Making of Women's Jobs

Women make up 80 per cent of the total labour force in clothing, concentrated in jobs that are low paid and designated as unskilled or semi-skilled operations. Once clothing was a craft based industry but skilled work, and particularly men's work, has been eroded through the reorganisation and rationalisation of the labour process.

The main production processes in clothing are cutting, assembly and finishing. Men have been employed⁽¹⁾ on all of these processes but now assembly work has become exclusively women's work and men have been confined to an ever diminishing range of jobs. Men's craft skills were first significantly attacked during the inter-war period, during which time the manufacture of clothing shifted its site from the craft workshop to the factory. This transition had been prompted by a range of factors; the relatively reduced availability of cheap labour; the streamlining of the product and market stability. The industry's reliance on cheap male labour was upset both by the introduction of the Trades Boards which set minimum wage rates for the industry and by restrictions imposed on the early wave of immigration from Eastern Europe (Wray, 1957, p.19). This

forced changes in production methods, most notably in men's wear which employed a higher proportion of skilled male labour and which was far less subject to fashion changes. (It forced changes in fashion itself, so that intricate processes such as tucking and pleating were rarely found on mass produced garments). Developments in production co-existed with the expansion of retail outlets and fuelled the development of each other. Department and chain stores tendered contracts directly with manufacturers. Some manufacturers moved into retail as well - Burton the Tailor being probably the most well known example. Once producers had more reliable markets for their product they were prepared to expand the scale of production to meet larger production runs. The Board of Trade study into the industry in 1948 considered that the expansion of retail outlets led to the 'revolutionising (of) manufacturers' methods of production, and noted that for the first time factory production had become more profitable than production based on either homeworkers or sweatshops (Board of Trade, 1948, pp.8-9).

The move into factory based production in the interwar period involved both technical change and the reorganisation of work methods. The traditional method of production is known as 'making through', and this was defined by the Board of Trade in 1948 as 'the making of a garment by a single skilled worker'. Under the 'making through' system it was often the case that the main assembly was undertaken by a single skilled worker (male), whilst less skilled operations, such as the sewing of button holes and pockets, were undertaken by 'assistants' (men and women). The variations within this system hinged on differences of control. The master tailor system, for example, originated from Jewish tailoring workshops. Under this system the master tailor, who was often paid by contract, performed the skilled operations in making up the garment and then himself recruited and employed less skilled labour as assistants.

This 'set system', as it is sometimes referred to was carried over into factory production. In a factory a head machinist was responsible for organising and supervising his bench of machinists. Production was essentially controlled by the craftsman, who in turn were serviced by less skilled workers and the factory owner or manager exercised only the most general supervision. Craftsmen controlled productivity, the allocation of work and payment. It was a system which was increasingly attacked by management who sought to control the labour process and by workers themselves, for it was very exploitative of less skilled labour. Most union agreements after the war included the ending of the set system. 'Making through' is now extremely unusual but where it does occur, it is without anything like a comparable degree of autonomy and control.

The transformation of production methods which began in the late 1930's was widespread practice by the 1950's, and the assembly of a garment came to comprise of a series of short, simple, piece-work operations. This extensive breaking down of skilled processes into less skilled ones, was combined with some technical change. Machines were introduced onto the many sewing and finishing processes that had once been undertaken by craftsmen. Technical change not only attacked the skills of previously very highly skilled men, but also provided the basis for substitution. Hamilton observed in 1941, that 'mechanisation is making garment making a mass production industry and it is substituting female machine minders for male craftsmen' (p.130). Moreover, by the 1950's such deskilling had led to a very significant increase in productivity, so that 'the use of these machines enables one semi-skilled operative to replace three skilled machinists' (Wray, 1957, p.81). Assembly is now a machine process. The sewing machine has become a sophisticated and fast piece of equipment and the industrial sewing process has only an approximate correspondence to domestically acquired sewing skills. Sewing machines now stitch, trim

and overlock a seam in one simultaneous operation, whilst straight seams can be stitched automatically and this operation amounts to machine feeding rather than sewing. There are other machines for hemming, basting, over-sewing, fixing buttons, and for stitching button holes, zips and trimmings.

Since the war, this mechanisation of assembly work, and its transformation into exclusively women's work, has been combined with the application of work study techniques (Wray, 1957, p.91). In the drive to increase productivity women's work has tended to be the main target for intensification. Each assembly operation is carefully appraised by work study methods, so that it can be performed in the fastest time possible. The standard performance which is set can be very fast indeed and most operations in clothing now have a cycle-time of under one minute.

In this reorganisation of the labour process to intensify women's work, it has been women who have caused many of the problems for employers' strategies for rationalisation. Although female workers tend to be grouped together as unskilled or semi-skilled operatives, there are women in the industry who possess very real skills, especially older women who have learned 'traditional' assembly methods. Whilst men's jobs have been subjected to both degradation and substitution, employers attempted to retain their female labour force, whilst degrading the jobs they were employed for. The problem management has created for itself has been how to persuade women that the work methods, devised by work study engineers, are better than the methods they have traditionally used.

It was this female resistance to new work methods which was one of the important factors behind the considerable industrial relocation that took place in the 1950's. As one employer reported;

It was rather the impossibility of adapting a labour force from traditional methods to mass production

line operation. For cost reasons such a system was becoming vital to our future well being. We had attempted to introduce it and had been forced to abandon it, partly because of our inadequate premises, but chiefly because of worker resistance. Our labour experience probably holds for the clothing industry in general; in traditional clothing centres it is very hard to break with traditional methods (Hague and Newman, 1952, p.54)

Relocation of the industry has continued since the 1950's, away from traditional clothing areas⁽²⁾ to areas such as South Wales and Yorkshire - coal mining areas - where there were no alternative employment opportunities for women, and where miners wives provided a ready supply of unskilled, 'green' labour (Community Development Project/CDP, 1977, p.74). The move away from traditional clothing areas was not so much to avoid organised trade union resistance to deskilling, but rather, deeply entrenched notions amongst women about how a job should be done.

Not all clothing firms have relocated of course, and even now women put up a fight, not primarily in defence of skills, but through a sense of pride in the quality of their work;

Oh God, all that bickering. You see I had to show the girls that they had to do it this way, and you've got the girls who've done it for years and years, and they thought they could do it as quick and perhaps sometimes they could, their way. They'd say we've always done it this way. It was hard to convince them that this other way was quicker. A lot of the older ones rebelled against it....The young people that go in our trade now don't ever learn the

clothing trade through, they only learn part putting a pocket on or putting a fly in, or sewing a leg seam and someone in my job has to know the job right through from start to finish of a pair of trousers. When such as I retire or a few more like me, it will be just dead, there won't be anybody to train because the people aren't brought up to know the job.

Yet there still remains assembly processes which require skill and judgement (Huws, 1982; Reeves, 1970). This is true of the stitching of pockets, sleeves and collars, where the operator has to position and manipulate the fabric as it is stitched. These operations have a longer training period than any other machining operation of up to six months⁽³⁾ and have a longer cycle time of three minutes. But the female operatives have to work just as fast and just as intensively, and as Edwards and Scullion (1982) have also noted, the ability to work at high speed is a skill inadvertently created by such intensification. It is informally recognised as such through the particularly long training period for some operations, yet is not explicitly acknowledged through gradings or wages. Women's work comes under the generic category of semi-skilled and covers a vast range of operations.

Despite these changes, the level of mechanisation in the clothing industry has not effected a significant shift away from a labour intensive production process. It is not an automated labour process - 'what still counts in the fashion trade is the hand that guides the pieces of limp cloth through the classically simple sewing machine' (Campbell, 1979).

The intricate capabilities and flexibility of human labour cannot always or easily be replaced by machines;

As early as 1976, Singer introduced an industrial sewing machine, the Centurion, with a memory capable of working and repeating more than a hundred different sewing tasks at the touch of an illuminated control panel. This machine can 'learn' a sewing task from a skilled operator going once through the process which would normally have to be repeated for each article produced. If widely adopted, such a machine would appear to have major implications both for employment levels and for the skills required of clothing workers. However, no evidence has so far emerged that it is being adopted and sources in the industry are sceptical about the likelihood of its replacing traditional methods in the near future, giving both technical and economic reasons for their views. It is argued that a reduction in machining time is relatively unimportant compared with the time spent in handling fabric and positioning it ready to be machined, something for which no technical substitute for human skills has yet been discovered; that the machine would not be able to 'ease' together two edges of fabric of slightly different lengths, as a skilled human operator can (however accurate the electronic cutting, fabric will continue to shrink and expand variably as the result of changes in temperature and humidity); and that many of the small firms which make up a large proportion of the industry...are unlikely to be in a position to invest in new technology (Ursula Huws, Interim Report, 1980, p.58).

For the time being at least, it seems that the many operations undertaken by women do not lend themselves to automation,⁽⁴⁾ and women provide an irresistible combination of flexibility, skill and low cost.

If there are elements of women's skills on which the industry still depends, this is not so for men's skills. Once assembly work became women's work, men in the industry have mainly been employed in the cutting room, the stock room and in supervisory roles.⁽⁵⁾ In the face of the deskilling and feminisation of assembly work, the cutting room became a male stronghold. Men lay the cloth, lay the pattern on the fabric, mark the fabric and cut it. The craft basis of these operations was also undermined by the introduction of machines in the interwar period, but until recently technical developments in the cutting process have been limited and elements of skill and job control remain. For example, the introduction of the bandsaw has mechanised the cutting operation, but male cutters successfully incorporated such technical change into their existing skills and job definition. The bandsaw requires a great deal of concentration, certainly looks dangerous and an error would be expensive since several layers of cloth are cut in one operation. It is a moot point however whether its operation requires the three year apprenticeship (once seven years) which the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers insist upon. Women have done this work, but informally, and usually in small non-unionised factories.⁽⁶⁾

As men's jobs have been deskilled and lost, the cutting room became a kind of retreat for men. Inside the cutting room men have defended their wages and skill differentials, thus illustrating how skill may be socially constructed in the context of changing technology. Skill is as much about job control and wage levels as it is about technique. Unlike women, men in the cutting room are employed on time rates, and largely determine their own pace of work. Whilst the recruitment and

training of cutters has operated informally through men already employed there.

This level of job control and autonomy would be unthinkable for women's work but, up until recently, management have had to put up with it and have avoided comparability with the rest of the shop floor, through the isolation and segregation of higher paid workers. Once a factory has been rationalised or 'engineered', it is an anomaly in the extension of managerial control to have certain groups of workers outside that system of control. Potentially the cutting room can now be drawn into the rationalisation process. Micro technology has revolutionised the possibilities of the cutting process. Equipment now exists which will perform the entire laying and cutting operation automatically and destroy the remaining vestiges of men's skills. Such equipment is too great a capital investment for the small sized firms which typify the industry, but it does lay the basis for future amalgamations and concentration of capital, both of which will, inevitably be developed further in the future (Garment Worker, August, 1972; Huws, 1982, Roche, 1973, p.208).

The effects of this new technology on men's jobs is already becoming apparent as some of the larger clothing manufacturers invest in such equipment. The introduction of computerised cutting equipment in the Leeds and Doncaster factories of the Burton Group, led to the entire cutting force being made redundant (Garment Worker, January 1979). Similarly at Hepworths a cutting system costing £250,000 'has meant that a team of girls are now doing jobs which were traditionally a male preserve', as well as destroying fifty men's jobs. (Guardian, 8.7.1980). The 'girls' take twelve weeks to train. As before, technological change has provided the basis for the deskilling of men's work and female substitution. As women's work, the cutting job is defined as semi-skilled, but it does represent an increase in women's skill. There is a firm in the North of England which cannot

afford the kind of capital outlay for this new cutting equipment, but in the meantime it has removed the wall between the men in the cutting room and the women on the shop floor - at least preparing the way for future change.

This erosion of skill that has occurred in the clothing industry has arisen from a process of deskilling. That is a management strategy which not only seeks to substitute less skilled labour for skilled labour, but importantly, to wrest control of the labour process from labour itself. Precisely how deskilling occurs will depend on the specific conditions that exist within an industry. There will be variations from industry to industry and from firm to firm, but within a range of strategies available to management there are two possible emphases. One is to exert pressure on labour itself and to maximise efficiency of effort through reorganising work methods and extending the division of labour. The second possibility open to management, is to replace human labour by machines.

The use of work study and the mechanisation of production are strategies often employed in conjunction with one another, as has occurred in clothing, but the weight of emphasis will be determined often by factors outside of management control. For example, sometimes labour organisation is so strong that it can make work study impossible (Goodrich, 1975), and labour's control of production can only be significantly broken by the introduction of new machinery (as for example in the printing industry). The use of machinery, on the other hand, is governed by how much capital is available for such investment and whether it is adequately compensated by reduced labour costs. Where particularly cheap labour is available there may be no particular incentive to replace labour with expensive machines. Deskilling, as a range of managerial strategies, occurs in an uneven and eclectic way, rather than as a pervasive and driving logic.

The clothing industry has always characteristically been labour

intensive with low capital investment. Narrow profit margins, a frequently changing product and highly competitive markets have militated against capital investment. The ways in which deskilling has occurred in the industry have been conditioned not so much by trade union organisation or labour resistance, but by the limited capital resources available and by a need for a particularly flexible labour process. Fashion and seasonal changes and an unstable market mean that there are regular changes in the product and production process. This calls for a readily adaptable production process, and human labour is more adaptable than machinery. It has long been the case that if wages can be kept at rock bottom levels, small producers with little capital equipment can be very competitive and profitable (Roche, 1973, p.203). Consequently the long term trend for concentration in modern industry tends to have largely missed clothing, which has typically remained based on small production units. With a wide-ranging variety of product - light and heavy clothing, men's, women's, and children's wear - the methods of production are diverse and unevenly developed. Sweatshop and modern factory exist alongside each other.

Whilst the labour process remains so labour intensive, labour costs are the main costs of production, and the drive to increase productivity has focussed on an exertion of pressure on labour itself, rather than through the introduction of machinery (Massey and Meegan, pp.41-62). Men's skills in the industry have been rendered obsolete over time, by technical change, but intensification and deskilling of female labour has been a more contradictory procedure. As for men, women's skilled work has been broken down into simplified and unskilled processes and women have been introduced as unskilled labour on the processes once undertaken by men. However, not only have new skills inadvertently been created by deskilling, but considerable elements of women's skills remain. Their work is not defined as skilled - women have no real elements of job control - but nevertheless

their skills are still very necessary ones for the industry. Indeed clothing has both created and maintained that dependence on women's skills, through the organisation of the labour process and setting low rates of pay. The two are linked.

Pay, Conditions and Trade Unionism

Women have never succeeded in organising to define their work as skilled work, or to secure decent rates of pay. Low pay, the intensification of work and weak union organisation have always been the features of employment in the industry, and it is not without reason that the industry has not entirely lost its sweatshop associations (North Tyneside CDP, 1978a, p.41). Although some improvement in pay and conditions was achieved in clothing during the 1950's and 1960's, they have remained, relative to other industries, very poor, and from the late 1970's onwards, economic recession has effected a rapid deterioration of pay and conditions in clothing.

Where factories are unionised, pay is usually based on nationally agreed rates negotiated by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW) and the Clothing Employers Federation. There are additional local voluntary agreements, and there are of course many non-unionised workplaces where wage rates vary with individual employers. Wage Council regulations set the minimum rates of pay for the industry as a whole, that is the lowest rate that can be legally paid. The fact that clothing is a wage council industry has done little to improve wages, for although the council sets the minimum rates, they often do little more than ratify 'voluntary' agreements made between the union and the employer (North Tyneside Community Development Project, 1978a, p.42). Minimum rates very often become the going rate, and even in unionised factories, the Wage Council minimum provides the basis for negotiation (Roche, 1970, p.162). The extent to which wages earned exceed the minimum rate will vary according to how far

the union is able to negotiate a better rate - and the union is not strong - and how hard women work. Clothing employers favour a payment system which combines a particularly low basic rate with a productivity bonus. Any woman who comes out at the end of the week with a good wage, will have earned every penny of it;

Well to bring that money home you have to work like heck for it and sometimes you didn't dare even to go to the toilet because every single minute counted, and I'm a bit dodgy on my nerves and I used to get all het up, to try and keep my numbers going to keep my wages up.

Low rates of pay are only part of the problem. The method of payment is the other. Piece work of one form or another has long been a common payment system in the clothing industry, but since the 1970's, 'science' in the form of time and motion study has been introduced with a vengeance, and the NUTGW have found themselves negotiating agreements which they do not fully understand. (Garment Worker, March, 1973; Roche, 1970). It is quite common for workers not to know how their wages are calculated. The most common payment system in the industry is a payment by results scheme which sets a 'standard performance' for each operation. This is defined as;

The rate of output which qualified workers will naturally achieve without over-exertion as an average over the working day or shift, provided they know and adhere to the specific method and provided they are motivated to apply themselves to their work. (Quoted in Roche, p.163)

Thus work study devises methods of work by which a garment can be assembled in the fastest possible time. This involves breaking down the

assembly process into a sequence of simple operations, with a 'specific method' established for each operation. Then it can be performed at high speed, over and over again, and by a semi-skilled operative, trained into only one or two such operations. Skilled workers are bitterly opposed to such methods, mainly because of their loss of control and the intensification of the pace of work, but also because of the inevitable loss of quality which they have always regarded as integral to their skill. The desired rate of output, or standard performance, which is to be 'naturally achieved' is encouraged along by a bonus payment.

Such methods of work and payment keep the labour force divided and competitive. A system of payment based on an individual productivity bonus is perhaps the major force mitigating against the union's attempt to build up a cohesive and organised workforce. The management has its greatest stronghold and the most powerful weapon in the bonus; the union is powerless to break it and the workforce desperate to achieve it (North Tyneside CDP, 1978a, p.43).

This combination of basic wage and piece work bonus makes up an economic formula presented by management to provide incentive and maximise productivity. It has been women's work that is subject to this form of payment. Basic rates are kept low and women find that in order to maintain their wages, they have to work harder and harder. They cannot win. Piece work is not a system of reward for increased productivity, it is a way of pushing wages down. Payment decreases proportionately as output rises, and women receive only a portion of their increased productivity (Alexander, 1980, p.27; Royal Commission on Equal Pay, 1946, p.50). The standard performance and bonus is not necessarily a system that rewards increased output, but rather where the failure to reach the standard 100 performance results in a drop in wages. For the women concerned it can mean 'sweating golfballs' and still not being able to reach management's

production targets (North Tyneside CDP, 1978a, p.40).

Although it need not be the case, the introduction of a standard performance can mean a reduction in wages as the system is widely abused.

A woman describes what happened in her factory;

Some of the girls were earning reasonable money
before it was 'engineered', now their wages are
out by about £10 a week.

Some clothing employers 'claw back' wage agreements by setting an impossibly high standard performance. A standard performance is based on capability tests which can be used to push and push at what can be naturally achieved. A supervisor explains how they are done;

You see you get a works study - I suppose you know about that - capability tests and that, but when work study has a capability they do it on say twenty or forty garments at a time, and they set an amount that they can do in that time. Well that's alright you might get a good high performance out of that person, but you have to do that 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, keeping that pace up. It's impossible, nobody can be expected to work at that rate.

A standard performance is not being based on what can be achieved over a working week, or a working day, but over little more than an hour. The result of this abuse of capability tests is the most appalling conditions of work;

I think it's getting worse, it's getting harder and harder each year and I'm glad I'm not on the machines because I don't think I could cope with what they've got to do. You'll get one girl and she's sewing labels on pockets all day, that's all she does all

day. The numbers they have to do now are outrageous I think. Now before, that girl had about 240 labels per hour to sew on, now she has 390. They've fixed certain attachments to the machine and they say it's quicker, so they put the numbers up. Now I know I'm going to flog those girls to death to get that number out.

This intensification of work is not by any means confined to back street sweatshops, rather it is the 'normal' practice of 'modern' factories. Despite an increase in the capital composition of the industry clothing remains locked in labour intensive production methods. Consequently, wages loom large in the daily life of the industry. For management, they are costs which need to be pegged; for women it is the pay which is increasingly harder to maintain.

Just as it has been women's work which has most been subjected to intensification, so it has been women's pay at which management continually chip away, and trade union organisation has not protected them from this. Rates of pay are always being re-negotiated in the clothing industry because of regular changes in the product - different styles and different fabric can be more or less easy to work - as well as changes in work methods. More often than not it is women's pay rates that are most subject to negotiation because they make up the majority of production workers, yet the male dominated union structure invariably means that women's rates of pay are usually negotiated for them by men, who themselves are not subject to the productivity deal under negotiation (see also Brown, 1973).

Where men have managed to retain elements of their craft control however, management have been able to exert only minimal control through payment incentives. Skilled men are paid on time rates, since their work is not easily measurable by work study, and they have bonuses negotiated over

different fabrics and styles. Organisation is an important distinction in the determination of men's and women's pay. Whereas men organise collectively for a collective weekly bonus for the entire cutting room, 'the women we can pick off one by one' (Manager of Garment Factory). The difficulties of confronting aggressive managerial control should not be underestimated, but the tendency for skilled men to view their interests as separate from the rest of the labour force does leave women wide open to attack.⁽⁷⁾ The clothing industry does not see a great deal of female militancy, but in the Leeds clothing strike, 1970, women's anger was directed not just against their employers, but also against male trade unionists who they felt were not representing their interests (Rowbotham, 1973, p.94).

Women's membership of the union is uneven. About half the industry's workforce is unionised and women make up about 90 per cent of the membership. The organisation of female labour has tended to occur in those branches of the industry where men and women are employed, whilst branches such as light clothing, which has an almost entirely female labour force, remains slow to unionise (Garment Worker, May 1970). Men dominate the union hierarchy both in the National Executive and at a local level. (Coote and Kellner, 1980; Garment Worker, January, 1976). The scope for women's participation is limited even if they were interested. As well as branch meetings being held at times which are difficult for women to attend, the Community Development Project study of North Shields noted that although five clothing firms in the area had 900 union members, there was no union branch in North Shields. Not surprisingly therefore, 'the union, despite high membership, is weak, and on the whole makes little difference to these women's working lives' (North Tyneside CDP, 1978a, p.42).

At an official level the problem of low pay for women has not gone unnoticed;

Low pay for women is still regarded as being inherently a less serious problem than low pay among men, despite the fact that average earnings for women remain substantially below that for men. The assumption underlying such a view, that the man should be the major breadwinner in the household is not compatible with any belief in equal rights for everyone irrespective of sex (Garment Worker, February, 1977).

The NUTGW recognises the social problem of low wages amongst women, the inadequacy of Equal Pay legislation, and how female wages depress wage levels generally. All through the 1960's, the union put the resolution to the Trade Union Congress urging equal pay for equal work, it has also been noted that 'the implementation of the (Equal Pay) Act could often upset traditional differentials' (Garment Worker, April, 1975). Yet the only real strategy that has developed against deskilling has been for skilled male labour to struggle to differentiate itself from less skilled labour, to defend skills by preserving pay differentials. Paradoxically, it is management who are undermining the difference between the pay of men and women. This process, though, is occurring not through any re-evaluation or upgrading of women's work, but through technical innovation and the reorganisation of the labour process to attack the skills of previously highly skilled men. The NUTGW cannot both significantly improve women's pay rates and maintain men's pay rates by maintaining differentials. Its commitment to the latter implicitly accepts the distinction of men's and women's rates and management's definition of women's work as being of low skill value. Such a short term strategy has long term effects for both men and women in the industry. If the union accepts the rate for the job as, in effect, a 'woman's rate', it usually

means that the rate for the job has been set at a particularly low level, it becomes immaterial to management whether that job is performed by a man or a woman. As the NUTGW general secretary (Jack Macgougan) recognised;

If the reclassification of jobs in the industry brings about a situation where you have a rate per hour against an operation, be it male or female, as a minimum rate, then I think you could have this tendency, especially where there is a shortage of female labour and a paucity of male employment, for men to come into jobs now looked upon exclusively as women's (Garment Worker, July, 1970).

Pressing is an example of where this can happen. In factories which have introduced automated pressing machines, pressing is undertaken by both men and women earning equal rates of pay. Yet this 'equality' comes about through a rather complex process. Once pressing was men's work, but as it was rendered less skilled through the introduction of machinery, it increasingly became work performed by both men and women - only women's rates of pay were lower. Legislation for Equal Pay forced some rethinking of this situation. Men were removed from the job, but when automated pressing machines were introduced, they 'killed' any basis for comparison with the job of pressing as it had been previously undertaken. These machines render pressing a machine paced operation which involves little more than machine feeding. Once new gradings and new rates of pay were set for an essentially new job, management re-established pressing as a job for both men and women. In this instance, Equal Pay legislation has provided the imperative for new levels of rationalisation and further deskilling.

Equal Pay legislation cannot be fully operable when it rests on the principle of comparability alone. The NUTGW recognises the inadequacy

of legislation for securing equal pay for women and, rather, argues that women's wages have to be improved through collective bargaining (Garment Worker, October, 1977). Such legislation assumes a levelling up with men, whereas the trend in clothing has been to effect a levelling down of all labour to minimum skill and wage rates. Employers need a formally segregated work force for as long as there is the possibility of comparability between workers. Once rates have been set at low levels then segregation is not important. The clothing industry could not have afforded the implementation of equal pay in any real sense. At its present level of technical development it only survives because it can pay low wages. Equal Pay, rather, has meant, for a time at least, a loss of men's jobs where men and women might have been employed alongside each other, for example on pressing, trimming and hand sewing (Roche, 1973, p.204) and indicates some reasons for male trade unionists apparently low commitment to equal pay for women.

Labour force Composition

The Industrial Training Board for the clothing industry, noted that the industry 'lives or dies on its ability to attract and keep labour' (Clothing and Allied Products ITB, 1972, p.2), but what it has really been concerned with has been the ability to recruit cheap labour. As has been already indicated, this has meant female labour. In 1951 women made up 78.6 per cent of the labour force, and by 1976 this had become 81.1 per cent (National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, 1978).

The ideal female labour recruit has always been a school leaver. Quick to learn, not resistant to new work methods and not eligible for an adult wage rate. The reliance on school leavers has not been without problems however, especially in terms of labour turnover (see Edwards and Scullion, pp.53-89). Many leave before they fully train or reach full pay rates.

On average a trained operator stays in the industry for three and a half years (Clothing and Allied Products, ITB, 1972:4). Increasingly, school leavers have been hard to recruit, although still girls between the ages of 16-19 made up approximately 20 per cent of the female labour force (Winyard, 1977). The raising of the school leaving age has reduced the number of school leavers available to the industry, while the industry is not a very attractive one and parents are reluctant to see their children enter the industry (op cit).

Married women have provided other industries with a particularly cheap and adaptable labour supply, especially when employed on a part-time basis. Although clothing employs a lot of married women (60 per cent) they tend to be women who have worked in the industry for many years. Clothing has been curiously 'backward' in drawing upon married women's labour as part of any positive employment policy. Peter Potts of the NUTGW makes the same point; 'I do not think that the industry as a whole has investigated sufficiently the possibilities and prospects of older married women. There seems to be a mental block when it comes to the question of training the older married woman' (Garment Worker, November, 1974). In 1973, the Industrial Training Board for the clothing industry, introduced its document 'In Lieu of School Leavers' in which it considered for the first time the recruitment of married women for unskilled work. 'Until recently it has not been thought possible to train anyone over the age of twenty five as a flat machinist if she has never before used an industrial machine'. (Clothing and Allied Products ITB, 1973). In conjunction with this novel thinking, the Industrial Training Research Unit developed a series of tests to be used in the recruitment of older women to assess suitability for training. In this skill was no longer a relevant criterion, but rather speed, dexterity and the ability to receive instruction (Industrial Training Research Unit, 1975, p.3). The recruitment of married women has

not been taken up in any conscious way. Although individual firms grant all sorts of informal 'concessions' to female employees, as an industry there are few concessions for married women. There is little part-time work available. Only 12 per cent of the total labour force is employed on a part-time basis, which is lower than the average for manufacturing as a whole, (20 per cent), and extremely low for such a female dominated industry. It is largely assumed that the production process does not lend itself to part-time shifts. Firms tend to provide part-time employment only to retain skilled women. Perhaps clothing has been tardy about part-time work because it has other options open. Whilst the industry may not have utilised female labour and the family based sexual division of labour in the way that other industries have, it has nevertheless proved itself fully aware of women's position within the family household. The industry has always used women as homeworkers and out-workers and in the recession this has become widespread practice for many manufacturers. Clothing is well suited to homework. The low capital composition of the labour process means that the production process is so flexible that it is mobile. All women need is a sewing machine, and the use of homeworking is a traditional tactic of the clothing industry in its sustained need for cheap labour. Homeworkers can significantly cheapen the costs of labour; because technically self employed they are placed outside of the protection of factory legislation or union organisation (Brown, 1974). Without doubt it is one of the most exploitative forms of employing female labour, drawing upon women who for one reason or another are unable to get employment (Cragg and Dawson, 1981; Hope, Kennedy and DeWinter, 1976).

The real extent of homeworking is impossible to measure and its invisibility is part of the attraction. There had been a discernible movement away from homeworkers from the 1930's onwards, both because factory

production became more efficient and because it is difficult to control the quality of work that is contracted out. The practice has never disappeared however, rather it has co-existed with factory production. In the 1980's homeworking has once more become a flourishing form of production, and its growth goes hand in hand with the loss of jobs in the industry. In recession clothing firms have chosen to move out of manufacture altogether and into the business of orchestrating the labour of homeworkers (Campbell, 1979, Haringey and Lewisham Women's Employment Project, 1981). The London fashion trade has always made use of outwork and homework, but as recession has deepened so half of its output is now produced by women working at home (op cit).

Like homeworkers, immigrant labour has always been important to the industry. From the late 19th Century and early 20th Century immigrants from Eastern Europe supplied the industry with a great deal of its skilled male labour. Now however, it is women immigrants who make up a significant and distinctive labour force. They have all the attributes of female labour, combined with a potential for even greater exploitation through racial divisions. West Indians, Phillipino and above all, Asian women, are employed in the 'new sweatshops' proliferating in the inner-ring areas of Britain's large cities (Williams, 1972; Hoel, 1982).

Small clothing factories, usually employing immigrant women exclusively, started to develop in the 1970's in Britain and in recession have proliferated. They are no new phenomenon to the industry, which has always supported this sort of underbelly. They appear to do well in difficult economic times. They can be set up on little capital, and provide the market for cheap clothing. Many such factories are now also owned by Asian immigrants to Britain, who have skills in garment manufacture, and few alternative opportunities. Racial discrimination has forced both employer and employee into a particularly self-contained system of

production. Their existence is very precarious, bankruptcy and closure are frequent, but as one factory closes down, another replaces it. Asian producers draw upon an especially vulnerable labour force - Asian women. As immigrant women they will find it extremely difficult to find any other sort of work, and they often enter such jobs with little or no previous work experience and little knowledge of employment rights. Often female labour is recruited through personal, family and community networks and because of that, a degree of control over the labour force can be achieved which goes far beyond the usual wage bargain. Women are bound to their employers in a personalised way and are often steeped in obligation to them. Asian employers are often unwilling to employ white women because they can only be controlled by the wage rather than this personal obligation (Hoel, 1982).

The problems facing such women are enormous. A producer's very existence is often premised on the fact that he can pay his workforce as little as half the going rate. Moreover such producers are totally responsive to the market, and need to shorten or lengthen the working day as needs be, and are able to do so without earnings protection, or overtime payment (op cit). Despite the difficulties they face, Asian women have not been totally passive victims of such exploitation, and indeed have displayed great strength and commitment in fighting for trade union recognition, both in clothing and other industries. The needs of such women place extra demands on local trade union officials who cannot, or perhaps don't want to, cope with them. It is perceived as a major problem by the Garment Workers Union but to begin to deal with the problem they will have to go far beyond their usual activities. For the moment they appear somewhat out of their depth.

Strategies of Survival

The clothing industry has been in slow decline since the war, shedding approximately two per cent of its labour force every year. Since the late 1970's, long term decline has rapidly accelerated and job loss is now occurring at a rate of twelve per cent per annum. Competition has intensified and strategies to cope with that have themselves contributed to further job loss. The problems facing clothing are similar to other labour intensive industries. Low capital composition has been the underlying cause of low productivity and economic decline.

In 1975, on the recommendations of the Economic Development Council for Clothing, large capital grants were made available for equipping and training. The take up of such incentives has been very uneven. In 1976, capital expenditure per employee was still lower than for any other U.K. manufacturing industry, at £2,928 per head, compared with £6,089 per head for all manufacturing industry (Business Statistics Office, 1976). Although productivity has increased at a rate faster than any other manufacturing industry, it still has an output per employee which is only half that of all manufacturing industry (op cit). The rate of improvement really indicates the room for improvement, and the industry still places an emphasis on the intensification of work, rather than technical investment, as the way of increasing productivity. Its 'success' in exploiting female labour has created a dependence on it, both because of women's cheapness and their skills, and that dependency is proving hard to break.

The problem is that no matter how work study is used to intensify the labour process and increase productivity, the clothing industry in the U.K. has not been able to produce garments anywhere near as cheaply as its rival foreign counterparts. Since the war, clothing has become a major industry for many developing countries, and as low wage economies, they

have a huge advantage of significantly lower labour costs. They operate mostly under conditions of non-unionisation and are able to exert a degree of control over production that is not achievable in the U.K. (Elson and Pearson, 1981). It means that producers in Hong Kong and Taiwan for example, can price their finished garments at a cost that would only buy the cloth in Britain (Garment Worker, June, 1976). Or, as a Korean Airlines advertisement taunted, 'For the cost of manufacturing two shirts in Korea, this is what can be manufactured in Great Britain...'. The picture showed one shirt sleeve (Garment Worker, November 1975).

Import penetration deepened especially throughout the 1970's, to the effect that some retail markets appear permanently lost to foreign producers. Now, for example, three quarters of all shirts sold in Britain are imported. One way to deal with import is import controls, from within the industry there are persistent calls to save the British Clothing trade in this way. But import controls do in fact already operate. The first set of curbs on imports from the Third World and South East Asia were established in 1961 which limited the quantity of imported cotton goods. In 1973 these restrictions were extended in the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) to include man-made fibres, both textiles and garments. The original intention of such controls was to give the industry a period of respite from competition in which it could become more efficient and competitive. It was intended very much to be a temporary measure but in fact was renewed in 1977 and most recently in 1981, and now import restrictions have been in operation for 20 years. Without such controls there would have been even greater job loss, but they are not effective in any sense. They serve only to maintain an ailing industry rather than facilitate its modernisation. Nor have they succeeded in really restricting imports. Many foreign producers have been able to manipulate their export quotas, or find their way around them with false labelling and false certificates

of origin. But in the end it must be recognised that import controls are not the answer to the clothing industry's problems, nor the shortcomings of import controls the cause of the industry's demise. Some rival producers are not from the low wage economies of the Third World but from West Germany and Scandinavia, who are more technically advanced and more efficient.

The development of micro-electronic technology that is now available to the industry could provide some basis for a technical advantage over competitors. It is however very expensive, entailing massive capital outlay and any significant investment would have to be combined with further economic concentration. It is beyond the capital resources of smaller firms (which still make up the bulk of the industry) and only the very largest of companies with secure retail outlets are undertaking this kind of investment. The significant micro-processor based technology which is open to the industry is computerised cutting,⁽⁹⁾ and where it is in operation its effects are staggering. Hepworths who are pioneering suit cutting with computerised cutting control, have invested £2 million in such equipment and reckon they have improved productivity on their made to measure suits by 250 per cent (Trade Union Community Resource and Information Centre/TUCRIC, 1980). Their equipment which serves all their retail outlets, is operated by a team of six women, working on two shifts. It also represents the final obsolescence of men's skills in the industry. Yet still, such technology does not significantly diminish the labour intensive nature of the industry as cutters represent a relatively small proportion of the labour force (12 per cent). Some firms have combined technical changes with new marketing strategies. One such strategy has been to move upmarket - not to attempt to compete in terms of price of garment, but to produce high quality garments under exclusive labels. Both Austin Reed and Hepworths are producing and selling expensive clothes

for the expensive man, but even here however, foreign producers move in. Mujani designer jeans, promoted by Blondie, are made in Hong Kong, as is men's wear, produced under franchise for the ultimate name in haute couture, Yves St. Laurent.

Retail markets are crucial in the life of the clothing industry, and if the British industry has any future, the links between retailer and manufacturer must consolidate further. Marks and Spencer has been a very significant agent in the clothing industry and they have shown how this relationship could develop. Without them, the industry would have been even further in decline. Marks and Spencer's policy of buying British has arisen out of commercial necessity rather than any soft sentiment (Hird, et al, 1980). It has found a very successful retail market by selling guaranteed quality at reasonable prices. It can only maintain that quality by having very close links with its producers and exercising very tight controls over their production methods. For Marks and Spencer to be able to exercise that sort of control, producers have to be, on the whole, near to home. In this alliance between manufacturer and retailer, clothing manufacturers benefit enormously from Marks and Spencer's forward planning in production and retail, and get the nearest they can to a stable run. However, companies such as Marks and Spencer are first and foremost pursuing their own interests and profits, and can equally be responsible for the 'sudden death' of a firm if they decide to terminate their contract (Campbell, 1979; Rainnie, 1983).

But recession does not provide the ideal circumstance for restructuring and the same economic conditions which have forced companies to combine and seek shelter in each others arms, also opens the way to increased import penetration, and the proliferation of sweatshops, outwork and home-work. Rather than leading the way forward to a revitalised industry, some of the biggest clothing manufacturers have now opted to reduce or

close down altogether their manufacturing commitments and to concentrate on retail. Burton's for example reduced its manufacturing operations from ten to three factories, but retaining their biggest asset, their High Street shops. They run three hundred Burton shops, twenty Jackson the Tailor, eighty Evans, two Peter Robinson, fifty Top Man and seventy Top Shops and in 1979 they acquired Dorothy Perkins. In 1980 their trade levels were up 20 per cent and their profits trebled. In that same year, those retail outlets carried only 50 per cent of the output from their own factories and the rest was purchased on foreign markets. Hepworths have similarly made many closures in their manufacturing operations but have expanded in the High Street with three hundred retail outlets and record profits for 1979, 26 per cent up on the previous year (TUCRIC, 1980). What this represents is a structural shift from clothing manufacture to clothing retail. The largest firms are not disappearing, they are simply moving their interests. The pursuit of cheap female labour has become international, and directly or indirectly much of the manufacturing of clothing, once undertaken in the U.K. has been relocated to South East Asia.

Gendered' Strategies for Profit

In their study, The Anatomy of Job Loss, Massey and Meegan (1982) indicate the range of strategies industries may resort to ^{to} maintain profitability in recession. Whether a strategy of investment in new technology is adopted; or one of relocation of production; or one of the intensification of labour, will depend on the product, the market, competition, available capital and the technical capacity of new technology. The clothing industry has adopted all of these strategies in recession. Some large firms have extensively invested in new computerised pattern-making and cutting equipment, and have linked their new technical capacity to

marketing and retail expansion. (This is exactly what happened in the 1930's, which was the previous period for major technological change). They have again relocated, but often in order to expand, and as such firms are creating jobs, and it is hard not to see such 'high-tech' firms as the survivors of recessions. Small firms continue to thrive at the opposite end of the spectrum, but are doubtless a contributory factor in the rapidly increasing job loss for women in the industry (Institute of Employment Research/IER, Spring, 1982). Such firms may have a labour force of only ten or so employed women, but typically will be also contracting work out to fifty to one hundred homeworkers. It remains to be seen whether the medium-sized firms, like Robert Hirst, will be crushed in this period of restructuring. They do not have the capital of the large manufacturers, nor the deft adaptability of the smaller ones.

What is apparent is that although the U.K. clothing industry has survived in the post-war decades, in forms not dissimilar to 19th Century forms of labour process and 'sweating', *it has not been as archaic as it may seem*. Whilst the official preoccupation of the industry over the last three decades has been with 'modernisation' and 'development', reorganising its own relative backwardness and the underlying problem of low productivity (Clothing Economic Development Council, 1974), individual producers have not always had any real incentive to change the organisation or the composition of the labour force. They have successfully exploited female labour in a way that was absolutely premised on gender differentiation, and the sexual division of labour.

Clothing cannot be taken to be typical of women's work, rather the conditions are linked to the intense competition in which the industry operates, and present an enlarged version of the problems of low pay and segregation in unskilled 'women's work'. However, it does demonstrate

very well how the sexual division of labour may feature centrally in strategies for the organisation of the labour process; in strategies for production for profit.

It represents more than an instance of poor pay and conditions. This use of female labour and specific forms of exploitation have had implications both for male clothing workers and for the industry itself. The clothing industry has always used women as cheap labour, but since management's major thrust for breaking craft control has taken the form of eroding men's skills, women have also been a direct agency of deskilling. As a form of female 'takeover' it gave rise to direct and obvious hostility towards women and historically male clothing workers have organised to try and keep women out of the industry and out of certain jobs (Boston, 1980, p.164; Taylor, 1979). Men's strategies of exclusion later gave way to unionisation, but their ongoing defence of their skills, as male skills, remained a contradictory procedure. In common with skilled workers in other industries, the most widely adopted, defensive strategy against deskilling has been to maintain forms of differentiation between themselves and less skilled, cheap labour. In this male clothing workers have tacitly colluded with management in defining women as less skilled, and given legitimacy thereby to women's low pay and poor working conditions. It can be seen that for quite different reasons - both management and male clothing workers have had a shared interest in maintaining women in a segregated, female ghetto. For management this has been to avoid paying women wages comparable to men's, and for male clothing workers, segregation has helped to preserve their work as skilled work.

In the long-term however, such short-term strategies have worked against them. Their 'success' in defining women as unskilled, low paid labour, has made the threat of female substitution all the greater. Technical change has been largely aimed at men's skills, and where this

has been effected, women have all but taken over the production jobs once performed by men.

Women's labour has been needed both because of the nature of the industry's products - constantly changing ones - and the nature of the labour process which has been difficult to mechanise or automate. Combined with low capital resources and the availability of women as cheap labour, there has been little incentive to invest in machinery to do the work undertaken by women. This has however maintained clothing as a low capital industry with a low rate of productivity. The ongoing dependence on women's labour as cheap labour exacerbates all the problems of low productivity, yet it has always seemed a vice which the industry could not get out of. The clothing industry has incorporated the subordination of women into its own economic existence.

Notes

1. Men worked on sewing processes, both hand and machine sewing, well into the inter-war period; for as long as production was based on craft workshops. Very occasionally, immigrant men may now be found working on sewing machines, especially in family-run businesses.
2. Massey and Miles (1984) have indicated the way in which relocation over the last three decades has also effected the geographical distribution of trade union membership.
3. Although these operations have an official training period of six months, it may take up to a year for a machinist to reach standard performance.
4. It may be that more automated sewing will become possible, as the use of computerised pattern-making and cutting makes for greater precision of the cutting process. At the moment machinists rectify cutting errors as they sew.
5. The proportion of men in the industry has remained surprisingly constant given the rate of job loss in the cutting rooms. Men still represent approximately twenty per cent of the workforce, and this is because of the growth of managerial and supervisory jobs which men occupy.
6. It was an occasional practice before the Equal Pay Act, and especially in women's wear to use women in the cutting room. Since the introduction of the Act, it is unheard of.
7. The National Board for Prices and Incomes noted in 1968, 'our case studies have provided particularly striking evidence that management control of PBR (Payment by Results) is notably tighter where women predominate in the labour force'.

8. This also includes retail distribution.
9. The pattern-making process is also set to be transformed by new technology, but it is less relevant to this discussion of the organisation of jobs in the production process.

CHAPTER FOUR

RATIONALISATION AND REDUNDANCY

The previous chapter on the clothing industry outlined, at a sectoral level, the changes and developments that have taken place in the organisation of the labour process. This chapter moves on to provide an account of one clothing firm's strategies for survival in economic recession. It covers their attempts to deal with falling sales, diminishing profitability, and limited capital resources; long term problems which have been significantly exacerbated in recession. Their programme for rationalisation and reorganisation of the labour process, and the restructuring of the enterprise, led ultimately to factory closure and redundancy. Here, consequently, the rationalisation process is followed through its own momentum, to the management of factory closures and the impact of that on a predominantly female labour force.

The clothing firm, Robert Hirst, was established in the early 1950's and by 1970 it had expanded to five factory sites in the North of England. Best known perhaps for its regulation school raincoats, its factories have always produced a range of men's and boys wear, under its own labels and under contract for some of the large chain stores. Its success was largely in finding a market for a fairly standardised product. For nearly twenty years, men's overcoats and raincoats maintained an element of certainty despite the whims of fashion. This product and market stability was also reflected in the organisation of production, which remained remarkably static in this period. Only relatively minor changes were introduced in work methods and in the technical composition of production, and some reorganisation which began in the late 1960's was as much a response to the impending Equal Pay Act as a response to any market change. Nothing, however, stays the same forever, and by the early 1970's, fashion

began to creep into even the mainstream of men's clothing. Men gave up their overcoats and suits, for sports coats, anoraks, jackets and jeans. Robert Hirst found themselves in a situation of increased competition, falling sales⁽¹⁾ and no capital resources to be able to respond to change. In 1974, however, they were taken over by Carrington Viyella, the textile conglomerate who themselves were attempting to diversify their interests away from the declining textile industry. Carrington Viyella offered breathing space and capital for Robert Hirst to rethink their product range and to rationalise production with some investment in new equipment. They moved cautiously into a more fashionable, casual range of men's jackets and trousers and here they found some success, even though short-time working remained an occasional necessity.

But the merger with Carrington Viyella had other implications. Carrington Viyella's policies of expansion, diversification and takeover were similar to that of the other two textile giants Courtaulds and ICI. The difference however was that both Courtaulds and ICI began their reorganisation in the mid 1960's, which was combined with a strategy for the rationalisation of excess capacity and relocation both within and outside Europe (Commission of the European Communities, 1975). Carrington Viyella's programme took place in a very different economic climate. They moved into another ailing sector, and seemingly at that time, without a strategy for rationalisation. By the late 1970's Carrington Viyella, itself, ended up as an organisation made up of not only a wide range of diverse divisions, but often overlapping and competing divisions. Some of Robert Hirst's traditional market rivals for example, had also become part of the Carrington Viyella empire. By 1980, Carrington Viyella was in great difficulties, and embarked upon a programme of reorganisation, rationalisation and restructuring, and because of the overlapping divisions they had created, it meant a

transformation of the entire structure of the organisation; manufacturing, marketing, retail distribution and administration.

Operating under heavy losses and huge borrowing commitments, the company decided to take 'firm action'. Under a plan drawn up by an American business consultancy, it sought a strategy for survival. Inevitably this meant contracting fast and the last quarter of 1980 and all of 1981 saw an extraordinary programme of closures and redundancy. A report in the Financial Guardian indicates the scale of this;

Carrington Viyella, best known for its up-market menswear and household linens, yesterday announced a huge net loss of £31.6 million for 1980. Squeezed between a flood of cheap imports and reduced home demand, Carrington Viyella has made savage cuts in an effort to survive. Nearly half of its 113 operating sites in Britain have been closed or shrunk and over a quarter of its workforce - 6,400 employees - have been sacked. A further 1,000 jobs will go before the group completes its closure plans....Carrington Viyella's £31.6 million deficit is unlikely to be repeated since most of it came in closure costs of £21.5 million (Guardian, 26.2.81).

One year on, Carrington Viyella's programme of radical 'surgery' had offered the group the promise of a future; which the Financial Guardian again reported;

Optimism over the prospects for the Carrington Viyella textiles group as a result of the drastic reorganisation and rationalisation programme undertaken in the past two years was expressed by the chairman, Bill Fieldhouse, at the Annual Meeting

yesterday. Mr. Fieldhouse said that Carrington Viyella would benefit in 1982 from the actions taken in 1981. In the past year operations at 14 sites had been closed down and reduced in scale on another four sites. In the period 1980-81 a total of 55 sites had either been closed down or rationalised, an indication of the scale of surgery which the group, whose very survival was in question two years ago, had undergone.... In 1981 the demands of extricating the group from the legacy of the past had detracted from its capacity to develop new business but the Board was now confident that this transformation had now been completed (Guardian, 11.3.82).

A Strategy for Recession

~~As far as Robert Hirst was concerned, this restructuring led to the~~
closure of two of their factory sites, in Harrogate and Castleford, in December 1980. The hundreds of jobs lost there were only a fraction of the thousands of jobs lost within the Carrington Viyella group during 1980-81. The decision to close these two sites was made in the autumn of 1980, and only after a range of possibilities had been mooted. Peter Chambers, a Robert Hirst director, explains;

The point was the plans changed so much anyway, they didn't have a master plan, they had many master plans, at every meeting they changed their minds. And it wasn't just the fact that they didn't know what they were doing, although there was a lot of that, it was people trying to fit themselves into the new structure

and if it didn't suit them personally, they would of course be against it. And some of the closures were made on such sketchy information. We had a firm of American consultants, and they came round and interviewed everybody and went to all the units, and I had to give them a run down of all the factories that I'd been connected with, and I was with them I would think, about an hour, and I'm sure much of what I said was used because nobody else knew about things as intimately as I did, and I consider that this bright 25 year old American, took away this information and on this kind of rather sketchy, chatty information, factories were closed, it's really frightening. No doubt they would say that my information was just a little piece of a jigsaw....

This highly personalised view and the following account of the factories closure does illustrate some of the intractable dilemmas that management strategies for reorganisation have to face, especially in a situation of recession and intense competition. Rather than forward planning for profitability, reorganisation sometimes looks more like short-term moves for survival.

The Harrogate factory was the administrative headquarters of the Robert Hirst firm as well as the site for the manufacturing of overcoats and jackets. It had been in operation for over 25 years and was the 'home' of Robert Hirst. Of the five factories in the firm, it was the last to be rationalised or 'engineered' and was regarded as inefficient. Right up until the time of closure, new work methods were being introduced⁽²⁾ although not without difficulties. Management were working on an

inadequate budget and the workforce there, predominantly older, skilled men and women, were not very responsive to those changes. A large number of Harrogate employees tended to see rationalisation as the cause of Robert Hirst's troubles rather than a response to them;

I think what spoiled Robert Hirst in my opinion, in the first place, was the time and motion men, they killed it. Everybody was happy until then, everybody was earning a decent wage and they were putting more heart into it. Then they got these time and motion men and they were at the young ones to do more. Of course they could do more but it wasn't half done, and the young didn't know whether they were coming or going. They couldn't reckon up, they couldn't figure out the points in numbers. Some left and got other jobs. Half of those young ones were real good little workers. They'd have been good tailoresses. Well I think that started the trouble.

At one stage there had been plans to transform Harrogate and to make it into one of two administrative centres for Carrington Viyella and to produce a small output of high quality garments and to utilise the skills of the existing workforce, but in the end such plans came to nothing.

(At one point) Carrington Viyella had decided to have two administrative headquarters....one in Manchester and one in Yorkshire, and Harrogate seemed to be the right place to have the Yorkshire one because it was already set up. Carrington Viyella had decided to structure the marketing in two ways. First of all they were going to have a Marks and Spencer operation and then an own brand operation

which would be quite distinct - 'own brand' meaning our own sales force going out to sell to individual shops our own brand. So different personnel would run these two headquarters, and it seemed logical that they should be separate. And then unfortunately for the plans, the managing director of Robert Hirst, who was the king pin in all of this, decided that he couldn't go along with being the 'own brand' managing director, because he didn't think the structure would work, so he tendered his resignation, and then the plans changed and then they moved the whole plant to Manchester, to two different places in Manchester (Peter Chambers).

The decision to close the Harrogate factory and offices was finally arrived at through a range of different criteria. It was not operating efficiently and the site which they owned, unlike others which were rented, would have some market value. It was off the main trunk road network. Additionally the management team at Harrogate were not to be easily drawn into the new structure of Carrington Viyella. No matter what their new titles were within the Carrington Viyella group, they would cease to be in charge of their own firm and their non-co-operation contributed to the failure to devise any alternative and workable proposals for Harrogate's future.

The criteria for closing the Castleford factory had been quite different from those applying to Harrogate. Within the group of factories, the Castleford factory was regarded as a model of efficiency, and the young manager there, the blue eyed boy of the firm. It was a 'lovely little factory', small and efficient, producing about 3,000 trousers a

week. It had been in operation for about ten years. Its labour force was much younger than Harrogate, all women and less skilled. Castleford was closed almost because of its success; in order to expand and concentrate the production of trousers in one place. Production was transferred from Castleford to a factory at Tadcaster, a new site owned by Carrington Viyella, with the physical space to make long-term expansion possible;

I'll tell you the official line, it was that Castleford was a small factory producing 3,000 pairs of trousers a week; not a million miles away at Tadcaster, there is another factory which potentially could produce 11,000 or 12,000 pairs of trousers, but is currently producing 5,000 so it seems logical, if you want to maximise the potential of one of the factories, it's got to be Tadcaster (Peter Chambers).

Capacity considerations were only one aspect of the decision making process. Clothing manufacturers are well aware that their operations and developments live or die according to their ability to secure good retail outlets. Carrington Viyella had been linking its own reorganisation with a movement towards integration with large retail distributors, especially Marks and Spencer. Ian Grant, the former manager of the Castleford factory, indicates how the securing of retail outlets might be regarded as more important than efficiency in the short term;

When it came to making trousers it boiled down to a choice between Tadcaster and Castleford....Now, on almost every count, Castleford scored over Tadcaster. It was more efficient, however you measure efficiency. Whether it was on the numbers of garments produced, the number of people who produced them, the quality

of work, work in progress....But at that time Carrington Viyella were desperately trying to get into the Marks and Spencer market in trousers. We do a lot with M & S, but M & S didn't like the Castleford factory, because it was small and a bit grubby and the ladies toilets weren't really up to M & S standards, the canteen wasn't very clean and they didn't like the cook...that sort of thing. Castleford just wasn't an M & S type of factory, but this (Tadcaster) is. The toilets are reasonable....It's a nice little town to come and visit and Castleford isn't.

The Climate of Redundancy

The Harrogate factory had gone on to short-time working after the summer break 1980. Unsold garments piled up in the stockroom, but — — — — — neither this nor the proliferation of rumours of closure, nor the knowledge of widespread closures elsewhere, prepared the way for the event. Management at the Harrogate factory did create a sense of uncertainty, by letting the workforce know they were not doing well;

I think they they knew they were really inefficient because I used to bandy comparisons around like 'they make a jacket in 100 minutes in Ireland and you make one in 120 minutes'.

But at the same time they had begun to 'engineer' the factory and although it was on an impossibly low budget, it put off fears and suspicions;

We just started to reorganise the Harrogate factory and people were saying, as they always do, when we were doing it, that they wouldn't be spending money

on reorganising if they were going to close the place. And I knew differently, but I had to go along with it and do my best to carry out with enthusiasm the task which I had been set (work study director).

The first move towards redundancy - although few, including the union appeared to read it as such - occurred one month before the closures were announced. The management of Robert Hirst called in the area representative of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, and announced that they were no longer going to be bound by the wage agreement that they had settled at Harrogate with the introduction of new work methods. Under this agreement Robert Hirst had provided a guarantee of previous earnings, that is, the new work methods and increased productivity targets would not be a device for reducing wages. It was a way of trying to make the new work methods they were introducing, more acceptable to the workforce, but the fact that the guarantee existed at all says quite a lot about Robert Hirst's style of management. They regarded it as an acceptable cost for increased productivity. The work study director could be quite ruthless in his application of 'scientific' technique but he did not consider wage cutting part of that;

Just before the news broke, and I'm talking of within a month of the news breaking, we got the union representative in and we withdrew this agreement...The high earners are people with more than 100 performance. We know that an operator who used to be a big earner will not be a hundred performer she'll be 110 or 115 performer and so they got an increase by those 15 points....The idea was to save money per unit, not that wage costs should be lower...by doing more

for the same wage bill or slightly higher wage bill. Which I think is acceptable, in my terms it's acceptable, I can go along with that, but I can't go along with the fact that the wage bill is going to be cut...I disassociated myself from this in front of the union, I said I wanted no part of this and that I would do as I was told, but somebody else would have to tell the operators because I wasn't going to do something I disagreed with. So this we did, we got all the operators into the canteen and the production director (usually I would do this kind of thing) he had to do it.

This ending of the guaranteed earnings agreement affected the women and one by one they were called into the personnel office, where they were asked to sign a new agreement. For the majority of women⁽³⁾ it meant a drop in pay. The union did not oppose it, nor did they offer the women any advice or support over what they should do. A supervisor explained;

They went onto a different piece work scheme, the time and motion thing was different and you hadn't any choice, the unions said we had to go on it. The idea was to do more work for less money, which of course didn't go down well...

Only one woman refused to sign it and she was in fact one of the two shop stewards at Harrogate. Whilst she fully appreciated its implications, she perceived herself in an individual struggle with management over it, and was prepared to leave rather than sign the new agreement. She never considered it as an issue for collective or union action;

Yes, we had to work a lot harder - I mean you

worked hard normally but you had to work even harder. They gave you so long to build up our speed, then they would take you in the office and say you had to sign like a new contract....They had me in the office twice and tried to get me to sign a new contract, but I refused and I was prepared to leave rather than sign....A lot of them signed it and it was a shame really. They lost out on their redundancy and that.

This new agreement had been accepted by the area union representative, so for this woman, or indeed any of the other women, to take it up as anything other than an individual issue would have meant taking on the union as well as management. The significant of this withdrawal of the wage agreement, which guaranteed previous earning levels, meant that the subsequent redundancy payments could be calculated on the basis of reduced weekly earnings of the operators.

The redundancies were officially announced on the 2nd December 1980 and by 19th December, both the Castleford and Harrogate factories had ceased operations. The union area representative was informed of the closures, over dinner, just days before the official notification. There was no question of consultation or negotiation. Management regarded the union as weak;⁽⁴⁾

There was nothing much the trade union could do.

The redundancy terms were better than minimum.

Instead of the normal week per year it was a week and a half. They got pay in lieu of notice even though there was some notice. So the redundancy terms were, if not generous, a bit better than minimum. I think the union in this

industry is a bit shell shocked anyway. It's just something that they accept. It's just something that happens every day

and the local trade union official shared that view. The most that could be hoped for was a reasonable redundancy package;

We got a good deal. We've got no muscle, but you see, we're nearly all women.

Employees at Harrogate received 10 weeks payment in lieu of notice and were paid up until the 2nd March 1981, whilst employees at Castleford received 4 weeks payment in lieu of notice and were paid up until 2nd January 1981.⁽⁵⁾ Most, but not all,⁽⁶⁾ were entitled to redundancy pay and holiday pay. The manufacture of coats and jackets was transferred from Harrogate to Carrington Viyella, Northern Ireland, and the trousers from Castleford to Carrington Viyella's factory at Tadcaster. Management were relocated to other factories within the company, but often under conditions of demotion and with no more advanced warning than production workers. Some senior management resigned from the company.

The official notification ended an extremely unsettling and demoralising year for the Harrogate workforce. They had seen the introduction of new work methods, time and motion study, a new wage agreement, short-time working and finally closure;

Well, after we came back off our holiday, we had two weeks off for summer holiday, and they said when we come back that we had another week. I remember the week's holiday and the government had to pay us that week, and then after we came back off our holidays we started doing short-time, like 3 days a week, and it went on like that until we got nearly to the end of November. We were slacking really out and

it went down to one day a week. We were making jackets but we weren't selling them. Then about three weeks before Christmas we got told we were going to be made redundant and we were all called to the cutting room and told there. It was really awful. I came home and told me mum and she couldn't believe it. She said, 'well why does it have to be our factory?'

We didn't know anything exactly, for a year there was talk, same as everywhere else. Work was slacking off, then they started taking people on but we could see that there was no work for these people they were taking on. Nobody said anything officially and if any of us asked - 'oh a load of rubbish' - you know, to put us off. It went on for

~~----- a whole year, people were getting fed-up and you -----~~
 could see the girls weren't doing their work properly. Their attitude was 'why bother they're only in the store room'. They could see the store room filling up with coats not being sold. Well it was getting pretty evident when they started on the three days week.....Some of the girls got so that they didn't want to come in - if there was a bit of work and it was their two days off, they'd say 'oh do you really want me to come in?' They'd say, 'oh it's not fair, I was in last week. Why can't so and so come in?'

Castleford had not had the same kind of forewarnings;

Castleford had always been extolled by everybody as being a lovely little factory, very efficient and very good quality, and nobody could believe that they could be so stupid as to close that, but they did. So I think that they were stunned when the news came out. (Peter Chambers)

But clothing workers are used to working intensively, at high speed, and pressure. So that for them, the first sign of trouble is inevitably a 'slacking off' of that pressure, and that didn't happen;

The work stopped all of a sudden and things don't stop like that, it runs down. We only found out afterwards that work was being detoured to this other factory.

Some results of reorganisation

It is with irony and some bitterness that former employees of Robert Hirst have been able to chart the outcome of Carrington Viyella's decisions. The factory at Tadcaster which had taken on Castleford's work was beset with problems. To quote one ex-manager;

Tadcaster's doing just trousers. But whereas the potential is 11,000 or 12,000, they're actually doing 5,000, so that place is a 'white elephant'. They've currently got about 5 production engineers trying to reorganise and some of them I know personally and they're good guys, but at the same time as trying to organise it, they're having to make all kinds of funny styles, and each time they have the stall set out, there's a new style comes in, so there's been no value engineering, which is the rationalisation of styles, so that

small variations can be accommodated into a kind of uniform product. That hasn't been done, nor is it intended to be done, so it's going to be very very difficult to get that place efficient.

The former factory manager at Castleford, himself transferred to Tadcaster, had experienced the problems first hand, and explained why the anticipated output had not occurred.

Well they'd just closed Reliant Slacks, and they did about 3,000 a week, and they'd closed Castleford doing 3,000, there's 6,000. At that time this place was doing about 5,000 a week. So they thought that they could pack it all into one. In fact practically all of Reliant's trade went. Actually most of the work that we do here now is what we did at Castleford. It's

the Tadcaster work that we've lost. Tadcaster was quite well in, and did a lot of work for C & A and Burtons, but there's hardly any work for C & A now and none for Burtons. We didn't get the M & S contract. Most of the work we do here is Robert Hirst work. It's galling really.

The market for men's trousers, has in fact contracted further and even existing markets have been lost.

A considerable irony was that Tadcaster had a problem of labour shortage, and one which had never been anticipated.⁽⁷⁾ Although clothing has always been beset by the problems of labour shortage and high labour turnover, in recent years employers have enjoyed an unusually stable labour supply because of a contracting job market.

Traditionally that's been the thing that as soon as there's been a crunch - they don't like the rates, or they fall out with the supervisor - off they go, but in the last couple of years, the labour turnover in all our factories has really fallen (Peter Chambers).

Carrington Viyella at Tadcaster had always managed to recruit locally, about 30 female production workers, but after having rebuilt and expanded the factory, they were forced to draw labour from a much wider area.

Labour is a hell of a problem here. I can't think why they built a factory here in the first place. It's a nice town but the labour just isn't here and there's no tradition of it either...Most of the people who work here, we have to bus in from Leeds, York, Garforth,

and even Castleford. Going back 12 months, we used to provide free transport and that was costing us about £30,000 a year and we couldn't keep it up. So we have to charge the girls, and they pay for it themselves.

It's still subsidised to some extent, but not a lot (Ian Grant).

So desperate did labour shortage become that early in 1981, Carrington Viyella ended up re-employing some of the women they had laid off just a few months previously. Ian Grant, approached some of his former 'girls' and asked them to try working in Tadcaster. Quite a few did, although as one woman illustrates, it was more out of loyalty for their former boss, than anything else;

He kept ringing me and ringing me, asking me to go to Tadcaster. He kept on and on and I think I did it more out of loyalty to him, he'd always been very good to me. It's £4 something a week on the bus, and it's a lot longer day than before, a lot longer.

After 6 months, most had left again. The travelling, especially in winter, became a strain, the conditions of work became harder and harder, and those that remained were there because they had little choice;

To be truthful I don't think I shall stay there much longer either, I'm very discontented. All the girls are fed up, but they're in a funny position. They can't put in their notices because they can't get jobs, but I know they would if they could.

Moreover the threat of closure remains, as a manager at Tadcaster reveals;

The sales aren't there to support what we're producing and I anticipate that we'll be on short-time, or there'll be redundancies here.

We could even close down. Of course Carrington Viyella would like to get out of manufacturing altogether....that's the way things are going.

In July 1982, the Tadcaster factory did indeed close down. The workforce was made redundant, some for the second time. The Harrogate factory site remains empty and unsold.

Strategies or Tactics?

The results of Carrington Viyella's decision-making process do question the extent to which they had a rational, forward planning strategy for

the organisation of production, and how far they responded to the immediate crisis with a set of short-term tactics. They did not anticipate that there would be little demand for a thirty year old factory site in Harrogate and in relocating and concentrating production in Tadcaster they did not foresee either that they would have a shortage of local labour, or that the market for their product was still rapidly declining. At a micro-level certainly, the decisions that were made within Robert Hirst and Carrington Viyella reveal how even crucial corporate strategies may be formed on the basis of personal interests and divisional rivalries. More than this however, the case study also indicates the constraints under which strategies for the organisation of production take place.

It is not the case, as Braverman appears to suggest, that strategies for deskilling, technological change and the organisation of the labour process derive in any straightforward way from the dynamic of capital accumulation. But nor does this case study correspond to Littler and Salaman's argument that there is not necessarily a determinate relationship between profitability and organisation of production (Littler & Salaman, 1982). Carrington Viyella did have a strategy for profitability. Massey and Meegan's central thesis in their analysis of job loss, is that strategies for the organisation for profit will vary widely in different industries and in different firms within the same industry. This is because different constraints will operate, due to variations in capital resources, technical investment and capacity, labour organisation, the nature of the product, its market and competition. Carrington Viyella were going for a strategy of the concentration and streamlining of production, linked to retail integration. Thus a strategy for closure cross-cut with strategies for the reorganisation of production and selling. The factory closures took place as planned with no union or labour force resistance; it was the larger planning for reorganisation that was less successful.

Many of the clothing manufacturers which Carrington Viyella have taken over, are now caught in a diseconomy of scale. Small production units remain a dominant and successful feature of the industry because they are adaptive and hence suited to the production of fashion garments.⁽⁸⁾ Provided small firms can secure retail outlets, small units with short production runs are a profitable form of organisation. At the other end of the spectrum very large production units, with high capital investment, large production runs and major retail integration are also very profitable. Many of these larger firms have developed in the last five years in conjunction with retailers (Rainnie, 1983). Carrington Viyella were caught between the two profitable forms of organisation. They were producing fashion garments on a scale that was too big to be quickly adaptive to change, and yet they were still too small, with too little capital investment to produce low cost units. They were facing a market which is dominated by a small number of larger firms and they failed to get in. What is also illustrated here, is the way in which strategies for profitability include more than the organisation of production, it includes market linkage. Those clothing manufacturers who have successfully restructured are those who have transformed the production and the consumption of their products.

Redundancy

The employees of Robert Hirst in the Castleford and Harrogate factories were almost entirely women, and their responses to the closures provided an opportunity to consider the impact of redundancy on women. Beynon and Blackburn (1972) have argued that women have a much lower level of commitment to work than men (pp.146-147) and this may mean that women are more passive than men in redundancy, and therefore more vulnerable to it. It is thought that women are less committed to work and ambivalent about job

loss because their lives straddle work and family, and implicitly are more rooted in the latter. Pollert (1981) certainly considered this to be the case when some of the women in her study were made redundant;

After all they were always highly ambivalent about their right to work - the young wanting to escape, the older ones riddled with contradictions and guilt...Half in the home, half in the factory, most women only needed a small shove to regard themselves as full-time housewives (p.228).

There are few accounts of job loss amongst women, but there is accruing evidence that the matter is not so simple (Wood, 1981). Militancy may have more to do with forms of collective organisation, and the conditions of specific industries and firms, rather than gender (Hyman, 1972; Purcell, 1979). Moreover there is little evidence that redundancy has a particularly radicalising effect on men (Martin and Fryer, 1973; Wood, 1981). Redundancy reflects the real weakness of labour in relation to capital and militancy and organised resistance to it are exceptions rather than the rule. There is some evidence that employers are selecting women to go first in redundancy⁽⁹⁾ (EOC, 1981a, p.10) but whether they do so in the knowledge of feminine passivity and ambivalence, or because women are invariably less protected in their jobs than men, and thereby easier to dispose of, is a moot point. Undoubtedly most women who have lost their jobs have done so without visible protest, but some of the most significant resistances to redundancy have been amongst women workers, often finding themselves in a situation where they are fighting their employers, their union, and the men they work alongside (Vaughan, 1981). The fact that this happens at all, suggests that simple explanations of women's passive 'acceptance' of redundancy rooted in femininity or their domestic role

will not do.

The redundancies at Robert Hirst occurred through the total closure of two factories, and the dismissal of almost all the workforce, men and women. There was never any question of women going first, in preference to men. In this instance, men and women were finally equal in their redundancy, with formally the same redundancy terms and entitlement. Redundancy pay is calculated on the basis of weekly wage, age and duration of employment with a maximum ceiling set at retirement age; 65 for men and 60 for women. None of the women at Robert Hirst came off better than the men, because they had lower pay rates and shorter service rewards, and there is now considerable evidence that the Redundancy Payments Scheme operates to women's detriment (Callendar, 1984; EOC, 1981b, p.7). At Robert Hirst, the women were cheaper to employ and cheaper to get rid of. There was no opposition to the redundancies, but it is possible to see how the circumstances, conditions and relations of work for women at the Harrogate and Castleford factories affected the possible avenues of response open to them. The form of trade union organisation and managerial control at work, and a general lack of support from their husbands at home, would have made it very difficult for these women to rise up in arms.

Union Organisation

The National Tailor and Garment Workers Union (NTGWU) organises the clothing industry and had total unionisation of production workers in the Castleford and Harrogate factories. Nationally, the NTGWU have the highest proportion of female membership of any union (90%) yet, not untypically it is dominated by men at every level. Most unionisation has occurred in menswear, where the male stronghold of the union is concentrated. It still leaves considerable areas of light clothing, in women's and children's wear non-unionised. Redundancy and closure is the most difficult situation

for any union to tackle and in this case notification came late and without there being any question, as far as management were concerned, that the redundancies were negotiable. The women from Robert Hirst were very critical of their union, and did not consider it a relevant form of organised resistance. Yet not because of their lack of commitment to trade unionism, rather the NTGWU's history of co-option and institution-alised practices has rendered it ill-equipped for the crises of recession and job loss.

The vast majority of female employees from Robert Hirst, recognised the crucial role of trade union organisation in securing better pay and conditions. One woman expressed this particularly forcefully;

I was a Tory, always was, I believed in free enterprise, and I believed you should work for what you get, this was my idea. And then I went on a factory floor and I realised just what the workers put up with and where they would be without the unions. It was like a door opening for me. I mean I couldn't have cared less about the unions, I wasn't interested, they were nothing but trouble. Then I realised that without a union I was absolutely nothing...

Their criticisms of and sometimes hostility towards the NTGWU, was not because they were opposed to trade unionism, but because they felt that they failed to meet the most rudimentary principles of democratic practice and communication;

Well the union did nothing to be truthful, it was the poorest union I've come across in any shop. When they went to meetings,

they'd come back and wouldn't tell you anything. It's like a secret squad. That's why all the silly talk went round, whereas if the union had told you how it was going, properly, there wouldn't have been silly talk, nobody knew what to believe.

They don't work for the people on the shop floor, they work for the bosses. Going by our representative here, I once had a do with him at our factory to be truthful. He came in about a dispute, and when it came to lunch time and we wanted to know what was going on, he sat on the staff table with the manager. So I went over to him and said 'Mr. Brown, we pay your wages and I see no reason why I should come across to you on the staff table to discuss our business' - So he said 'alright Mary I'll come and sit with you'. But he shouldn't have needed that.....He was too much in the office before he discussed with the girls; you knew it had been sorted out before he came to us. In fact he never went out unless he'd got something in his hand, either a pair of trousers or being measured for a suit. They never told us anything. Nothing, not even our own union woman, she was just as much in the dark as we were. I mean they should have known, they usually get together with the union

and discuss where redundancies are coming
 don't they? So either he was very slow,
 or he was keeping it in the dark.

It has become increasingly clear that prevalent forms of trade union practices do not properly represent the interests of female members, but the attitude of the Robert Hirst women towards their union is rooted far deeper than the fact that the union did not take seriously the issues that the women wanted to press. It is rooted in the history of the non-participative structure of industrial relations in the industry. This has meant more than the disaffection of its female membership, but that the NTGWU is no more able to cope with redundancy for men, than it is for women. The root of the union's impotence is that its activity has developed to focus almost exclusively on institutionalised forms of regulations with employers and having established totally formalised procedures, the NTGWU are not able to respond to either incipient mass demand or crisis situations. The NTGWU is not alone in these problems. It is a crisis that trade unionism is facing (Lane, 1982), and which female membership has highlighted, but the Garment Workers Union has followed this pattern of co-option, and institutionalised procedures more than most. Shop steward organisation for example is rudimentary and negotiations with employers are channelled almost entirely through full-time officials (Edwards and Scullion, p.43). These institutionalised practices have invariably ensured the continuance of male prerogatives and privileges, in one way or another⁽¹⁰⁾ although it is equally true that the union is not democratic for men either. Men in industry have been in a situation of fundamental weakness since the 1930's, and this is reflected in these forms of institutionalised forms of negotiation and organisation which are management's preferred forms of negotiation.

Consequently by the time the redundancies were announced there was

nothing to negotiate, other than to impart fatalism (as with the earlier revision of the wages agreement);

I don't see that they ever did anything really, they just more or less told people that they had to accept it. We didn't think that was right actually, we thought they could have fought a bit more to keep part of it, because at one time they were talking about keeping a small section of it open...They didn't seem to do much, they didn't fight....they were telling us to accept it knowing that at some of the other factories that they were more involved with, were going to be able to be kept open if ours closed...

We were very angry at first and then upset when we had time to think about it. We didn't want to be made redundant, we wanted to carry on working there. In fact there was a lot of talk that we'd put up all the redundancy money together to keep it open... But the union straight away started talking about redundancy money...they knew it had to go and that was that.

Through the fog of rumour and non-communication, many women, at the Harrogate factory certainly, had strong suspicions that closure was a possibility, and they made repeated enquiries to both management and union to find out what was going on. Yet at no time did the union push

for information, or take initiatives to pre-empt redundancy, at a time when Carrington Viyella had not formulated their final plans for reorganisation;

It was all in the air, but we knew. It wasn't
 • until the last couple of weeks that we knew
 exactly when it would be. The union was hope-
 less. They didn't do a thing! We asked our
 union representative what was happening - 'oh
 we don't know...'

By the time the trade union had received formal notification of the redundancies, it was just three weeks from closure and there was indeed very little that could be done.

The weakness of the Robert Hirst employees, or the NTGWU for that matter, did not arise from female passivity. It is clear that high labour turnover has been a particular form of female militancy (Edwards and Scullion, pp.53-63; Hyman, 1972, pp.54 and 119), and the Robert Hirst women frequently threatened to leave rather than accept poor working conditions, or, as in this instance, it was a strategy for retaining some element of parochial job control.

Well I had a row one day. You see you get
 used to your machine and I was moved and I
 wanted my own machine. I won't mention any
 names but this particular person said 'no'.
 So I just blew my top, which I didn't usually
 do. And I said, 'that's it, I'll give it to
 you verbally, that's my notice', and stormed
 off. Anyway I went to the ladies had a
 cigarette, cooled down a bit and when I got
 back, funnily enough my machine was there...

Moreover, there was a militancy amongst the Robert Hirst women, which, paradoxically, seemed rooted in their relative inexperience of trade unionism. They had none of the men's fatalism over the 'rules' of industrial relations procedure. They expected the union to represent their interests and to be democratic. All too often however, the union was not democratic, did not represent their interests, and did not take them seriously, even though they made up the majority of the membership. All too often their issues were not regarded as the real issues. In the face of such marginalisation, the women at Robert Hirst tended to by-pass the union, and fought individual battles. And that is the problem, women's weakness is rooted not in passivity but in lack of organisation. They rejected the union when it failed to represent their interests, but it leaves them without any real form of collective organisation, and is the cause of the individualistic resistances for which women are renowned. The female shop steward at the Harrogate factory saw clearly the implications of the new wage contract that Robert Hirst introduced, and moreover was prepared to fight against it, when the union was not. But she regarded it as only her personal battle and not an issue for all the female membership.

Paternalistic Management

It has been suggested that where women are employed, managerial forms of control deliberately deploy paternalistic and patriarchal relations to great effect (see for example Barker and Downing, 1980; Pollert, 1981); sometimes re-enacting the familial subordination of women, sometimes playing on sexual innuendo. Undoubtedly, male/female relations do feature in the workplace, but whether this represents a system of control is not always clear. Edwards and Scullion found that men were more responsive to managerial paternalism than women (p.108). In the clothing industry

there is a distinctive style of management which is controlling, patronising and paternalistic, but it is also 'concessionary' (see Freeman, 1982). They recognised that their 'girls' were the backbone of the enterprise and that it was in their interests to treat them 'well'. In exchange for a little flexibility in working time they get a hard-working, loyal workforce;

Because I mean it was just like family up there you know, it was a great place to work for. If you were sick, you could ring up and tell them, and they'd give you a couple of days in which to get a sick note. Or if you had any bother, you could go and see the boss and say 'can I go part-time this week and next, I've got a bit of trouble that's got to be sorted out...?' If the kids went down with measles say, you could ring in and tell them, and they'd say well report back as soon as you can. And in the summer time they were very good, they were smashing employers, especially for women.

They appeared to be helpful in ways that the trade union was not;

They did a good job really. We'd go to the office if we wanted to know anything and they used to tell us more than what we'd learn from the union.

Women at Robert Hirst appreciated the ways in which their management took them seriously.

He was straight, sometimes to the point of rudeness, now I appreciate people like that. If he thought you had a good idea to put forward, he'd

listen, and if you'd work, he'd do anything for you. He was very fair. He was a damn good boss. It sounds silly this, but I think people would do anything for him. He could say, I must get this, or I must get that, and you'd go all out to help.

The women were actually fond of their bosses and redundancy brought women and bosses even closer together, as they shared the experience of the closure of their factories.

They really got on better with the factory workers at the end than at any other time. I think it came as a bit of a shock to them as well. Mr. Holt worked hard trying to keep us going. From what we can gather there were some dirty tricks played. I think when they all get into these combined firms, they just don't care about you anyway. You're better off as a private firm, as we used to be - Robert Hirst. But they all started taking over and to me I think that's the beginning of the end.

The boss himself, he didn't want to close. I think he was related to the Hirst family, son-in-law or something. I know he cried, sobbed his heart out.

Mr. McBrian, who is a very nice person, in fact he cried, it was a very upsetting experience....It didn't need to go really, it was a profit making little place, that's what's so hard about it, on both sides, on workers and management.

Our boss, I was very fond of him actually,
he was a nice man.

The management of Robert Hirst had always relied upon a very personalised style of management (although very one sided, as the women would never have dreamed of reciprocating such familiarity), and in redundancy this was heightened. To see the managing director weeping was almost as disturbing as redundancy! With the closures they were sharing an experience that was seemingly out of the control of both of them. Management at Robert Hirst had also been summarily treated by Carrington Viyella, transferred and sometimes demoted, and were deeply affected by the closure of the factories with which they had long been associated. The local management, who were actually the ones closing the factory down, appeared as the hapless agents, and themselves victims of Carrington Viyella. In this situation militant organisation against redundancy would have been very difficult. There appeared to be no target.

It wasn't quite as it appeared. Management and workforce were not in the same situation. They had been compulsorily reorganised which meant both personal and work disruption and often a loss of autonomy and status, but they hadn't lost their jobs.... The managing director in fact resigned from Robert Hirst. He had been very angry over the closures. He was angry and upset over the dismissal of the workforce whom he knew, perhaps more intimately than most managers. But ultimately he left because he was not prepared to fit into the structure of Carrington Viyella after having been Robert Hirst personified. Yet his resignation seemed to seal the bond forever. He left with them and for them.

Mr. Holt, he resigned over the decision to close
Castleford, because he was so disgusted.

Our Mr. Holt, he was one of the bitter ones. He
wouldn't stay with the group. He was the chairman,

he was Robert Hirst, and he wouldn't stay
because of the things they asked him to do.

The problem was, not that women were duped by management and their 'smooth and invisible' form of control, as Pollert has suggested (p.157), but in this instance, management - on their terms of course - took women more seriously and were more helpful, than the trade union or the men on the shop floor.

As far as the male employees of Robert Hirst were concerned, they appeared more resigned to redundancy than the women. A small minority made it clear that their trade unionism was involuntary, 'I'm not a union man. I had to be in it' and the general response was 'there was nothing we could do'. This seems to confirm Kate Purcell's argument that it is the conditions of the industry and labour organisation which affects possible militancy and shop floor strength, not gender (1979, p.131). Yet more often than not, the men blamed their helplessness on the women, and their failure to generate militancy and resistance. 'The trouble is the women are just out for their holiday money' was the explanatory nugget proffered by one man who had himself been out of work for over a year and was supported by his wife in full-time employment. Such a comment illustrates both how an ideology can be sustained, despite contrary experience, and how women were almost driven into the arms of management by men's indifference and even hostility. It would have been very strange indeed if women had perceived their interests to be in collective organisation, in the trade union and with men.

In a different context, involuntary job loss has given rise to extraordinary militant and politicised action amongst women workers. In the Lee Jeans occupation in Greenock - and in 1981 a cause celebre of the labour movement - women did not passively and fatalistically accept their redundancies. Rather they have fought a long, sustained and well

organised campaign to save their jobs. This action was not instigated by the trade union who gave their support only after the beginning of the occupation, but rather was directed and held together by a small group of women, in a way that male dominated trade unions have failed to do (Ryan, 1981, pp.24-25). Additionally, the action of these women found real support in their homes and community. The high level of male unemployment in the Greenock region - twice the Scottish average - meant that three quarters of the Lee Jeans women were the breadwinners in their families (Guardian, 31.3.81). They had strong economic reasons for fighting the redundancies, but also were fighting them in a climate of some support from their men.

Whereas for the women from Harrogate and Castleford, the homefront was no more encouraging;

Well my husband - he wasn't very happy for me because he knew I liked the job and I didn't want to leave, but on the other hand I think he was glad in a way because he thought it was time I stayed at home a bit, he's always been a bit like that. He likes me at home because he always had to do the dinners, now everything's done for him when he comes home. He was pleased. But I miss my bit of money, my own bit...he lets me please myself, but he likes me at home. In fact he's started coming home for his dinner now (mid-day), and he never used to. He nips home for an hour.

Who would have supported them in a fight for their jobs? Therefore all they could share was shock and a sense of loss;

Let's face it, if they hadn't have made us redundant I'd never had finished, because it was a job - well to me it was no trouble and I loved it. In fact I was off sick two or three days before we actually closed down, and I went in, and all our side of the factory was empty. I sat down and cried. I remember Mr. Grant coming in and saying 'we all feel like that Mary, it's no use going on like that'. And to see me weep was amazing for them, because I'm a hard person, but just the impact of seeing that empty factory and knowing that you weren't going to go there and do that job any more. I don't think people realise.

You see you hear about this crisis and all these places closing but you don't realise because you're safe in your job. But when it happens to you, you think, oh God. The actual day when I finished, that's when it hit me.

Notes

1. In this period government incomes policies caused a drop in disposable incomes. Massey and Meegan consider that this too contributed to the rapid decline in consumer demand (p.40).
2. It corresponded closely to Massey and Meegan's characterisation of intensification in the industry; 'a very particular and "classic" form of intensification: a combination of small modifications and machines, of work-study, and of attempts at devising payment schemes and forms of work organisation that might encourage an increase in the pace of production' (p.49).
3. A very small number of women maintained their pay levels by working very much faster.
4. It seems very likely that management did take this into account when planning closures. Most employees at Castleford and Harrogate thought they had been closed down, rather than any of the other Robert Hirst sites because of known union weakness. The regional union official in the North East of England where the other factory sites are situated, is known to be very 'political'. However I found no concrete evidence that these considerations directly influenced management strategy.
5. This difference in the notice period served to the two factories was required by the Employment Protection Act (1975). Work places with over one hundred employees are required to give ninety days notice of redundancy.
6. Some younger women in both factories were not entitled to payment under the Redundancy Payments Scheme as they had not gained two years employment service since their eighteenth birthday.
7. Although this does appear to be somewhat short-sighted, it does indicate that other considerations are involved in relocation

plans other than the availability of a cheap female labour supply.

8. This does not preclude the use of new computerised technology. Hepworths for example uses new cutting equipment for one-off productions. A possible future development may be of highly centralised pattern-making and cutting processes but with assembly based on small units of production.
9. This is especially true for female production workers in manufacturing industries, but some qualification is needed. Perkins (1983) has shown that not only have women been kept on in low paid unskilled service work, women are preferred for this sort of work.
10. One of the best examples of this, is the 1970 Leeds Clothing Strike. The strike snowballed, when union negotiators sought a pay claim for women which maintained the unequal differential between male and female pay rates (Lewenhak, 1977, p.288).

CHAPTER FIVE

ON THE LABOUR MARKET

After the closure of the Robert Hirst factories almost all⁽¹⁾ the women from Harrogate and Castleford were back on the labour market looking for work. Job loss is one aspect of the total experience of redundancy and what also matters is the experience of the labour market; of job search; the duration of unemployment and the terms and conditions of any work that is subsequently found. The problem of unemployment in the 1980's is as much to do with the lack of job creation as job loss. The impact of unemployment in the 1960's and early 1970's was minimised by the availability of alternative work, and most periods of unemployment were relatively short (Stern, 1979). The labour market in the 1980's is marked by large numbers of unemployed and, perhaps more critically, by a large and growing number of long-term unemployed (Manpower Services Commission/MSC, 1983). It is the severe contraction of the labour market which causes longer periods of unemployment (Daniel, 1981) and although unskilled workers are still the most vulnerable to unemployment, skilled workers represent an increasing proportion of the unemployed, as their marketability disappears along with the industry that employed them.

This case study of factory closure and redundancy provides an opportunity to see how women fit into labour market conditions in recession. There is a tendency for the enumeration and evaluation of unemployment to be based on a conceptualisation of work which corresponds more to men's patterns of work than to women's. It is known that women are less likely to register as unemployed than men (EOC, 1982; Market Opinion Research International/MORI, 1981), but does this mean they are not available for work? It is known that women rely heavily on informal methods of job search (Chaney, 1981; North Tyneside CDP, 1978b) but does this mean

that they are not really seeking work? It is known that women occupy a very localised labour market and this lack of mobility may now severely restrict their opportunities for employment.

The women from Robert Hirst confirmed the 'typical' pattern of female labour market behaviour. Many did not register as unemployed either at the local labour exchange, or at local Job Centres. Many relied exclusively on informal networks to find new work and none were prepared to travel long distances to work. However, studies of the labour market and patterns of job search amongst men also indicate that both formal and informal⁽²⁾ agencies and contacts are used in finding work (see for example Granovetter, 1974; Lee, 1983; Morris, 1983; Sinfield, 1981). Informal methods of job search may be as important as formal methods, and Sinfield has suggested that it is a lack of contacts, as much as lack of skills, which maintains certain groups of workers in long term unemployment (p.47). It may be that women utilise informal methods of job search because they occupy a more casual labour market. Where men are increasingly being forced in a casual labour market they, too, rely heavily on 'informal labour marketing' (Harris, Lee and Morris, 1984). Moreover, men too are effectively confined to a local labour market. Men may be more prepared to move home for alternative employment (Mann, 1973), but recession and high levels of unemployment has rendered men far less geographically mobile⁽³⁾ (Sinfield, pp.28-34). What needs to be questioned therefore, is how far different labour market behaviour has been rooted in the different labour market positions which men and women occupy.

Registration and Availability for Work

Registration as unemployed is the first formal step to be made in job seeking, and in looking at how the women from the Robert Hirst factories approached this, it becomes clear that an evaluation of women's employment

that relies on registered unemployment only, is incomplete in its assessment. All employees from Robert Hirst had the opportunity to register at the time of the factory closures;

What happened was some people from the Job Centre came into the factory on our last days and gave us a little interview and put our names down on cards so we were more or less registered straight away. They gave us a card to go down the unemployment benefit place and they gave us a date after Christmas to go and sign on. They made us redundant just before Christmas and you couldn't really look for another job over Christmas.

Only a few took up this opportunity, and in fact, approximately a third of the women from Robert Hirst did not register at any stage of their period of unemployment.

Women who had been made redundant are a category of female labour most likely to register as unemployed. As working women, currently in the labour market they would already have defined themselves as economically active. This built-in propensity to register was offset however in this case study by the fact that all Robert Hirst employees received some pay in lieu of notice; ten weeks in Harrogate and four weeks in Castleford. This meant that they were not entitled to receive benefit until after this period of notice, so for another reason, the financial incentive to register was not there. Only a small number of women registered immediately on leaving work, with the rest registering anything from two weeks to three months after redundancy. Christmas, which fell shortly after the factory closure (19th December) was also a factor it seemed that was one more reason for deferring registration. As the period of notice expired, so registration as unemployed began in

earnest, but some women who found work within this time had not registered at all. Nevertheless, one of the most important reasons for non-registration amongst women generally is the married women's option, under which women are not entitled to benefit, and therefore have less incentive to register. This was the case in the Harrogate and Castleford sample, where most of the married women had taken advantage of the married women's option as a way of maximising their wage packets at a time when they most needed it. They had happily foregone their rights to social security benefits for the short term trade off of a few extra pounds a week in their pay. It was only on redundancy that they were confronted with the full implications of their choice;

I didn't register, I've never paid the full stamp you see, so there's no point. This is where they get away with it isn't it? We ought to register. I realise it now, I don't think enough was known. I don't think we were enlightened enough to know what the benefits were. I realise how stupid I've been. Everybody should pay a full stamp. It's all changed now and this is how it should always have been I think.

In fact, one or two women were prompted by the experience of being unemployed and benefitless to start paying a full National Insurance contribution;

It was really to make myself secure again from being made redundant again so I would have something coming in after I'd finished. It seems to have made me think about things like that. I don't think I shall ever feel secure again.

Although married women are no longer able to opt out of National

Insurance contributions, it is younger married women who have really benefitted from the 1977 changes. There are still many women left on the married women's option, since older women, and especially those over 40, do not necessarily benefit from re-entering the National Insurance Scheme. They may not have sufficient working years before retirement to 'earn' for themselves a pension better than the one they would receive on their husband's contribution.

The combination of no entitlement to benefit, and the knowledge of high levels of unemployment, meant that many married women from Robert Hirst, 'didn't bother' to register.

I wonder if there's an awful lot like me that didn't register. I didn't because with all this happening I just thought, oh well my age for one thing will go against me, there's so many youngsters unemployed, they're going to take the youngsters before the older people.

It didn't necessarily mean however that they were not job seeking, and this ambiguity has been identified on a large scale in the findings of the General Household Survey (1980) where it is estimated that almost half of all married women who are unemployed and job seeking, are not registered as such.

In itself, non-qualification for benefit should not have been a formal barrier to registering. It was possible for married women to register at their local employment office or Job Centre without claiming or receiving unemployment benefit.⁽⁴⁾ Yet there was a tendency for those women who registered to also be the ones who used the Job Centres and other formal forms of job search. Unregistered women tended to rely far more on informal methods.

Well to be truthful I've never been to a labour exchange or Job Centre in my life.

If I've wanted a job, I've just gone out and got it on my own.

Often women may appear as if they are not actively seeking work at all, as they wait for job information to come to them via family and friends on the local grapevine, and even sometimes from former employers (see Chapter Four, p.98)

I didn't go to the Job Centre, or look in the paper or anything. I think when you've been in the trade all your life, there's always connections. If there's anything going you get to know. You get to know of these things by word of mouth sort of thing.

Some women did not register, or at least put off registering because they did not want to be forced to take up a job that they didn't really want. It may also be that women are more liable to disqualification. A small number of women ceased to register after they had been disqualified from benefit for refusing jobs offered to them.;

I did register. I started getting unemployment benefit in February - I got about £27. I don't get that now though, I got suspended for refusing two jobs, so they didn't bother, so I haven't bothered with them. They offered me a job at Allerton, well that meant getting two buses which wasn't worth my while, and then they offered me one at Peterfords. Well I didn't want to work there because I've worked with him before,⁽⁵⁾ the manager, I didn't like him. I still look in the Job Centre every week though.

Although this woman was actively job seeking, she appeared to be too choosy to meet the criteria of availability for work laid down by the National Insurance Acts. Working women do have great pressures on their time because of their domestic responsibilities. A journey to work which necessitated two buses, could add two hours to the working day. Moreover, the cost of such travelling has to be found from a low wage. The combination of costs and time excluded many a job, as another woman illustrates;

There was a job in Leeds, in a shop. They were offering £55 a week. It was 8.30 to 5.30 and some nights six o'clock, and that was working Saturdays as well. By the time you'd travelled and paid your bus fare to Leeds, it wouldn't hardly have been worth it.

Unemployment registration amongst the men from Robert Hirst was a much more straightforward affair. All the men registered at some stage in their unemployment, and for men registration does not have the semblance of personal choice, although it wasn't any easier.

It's so degrading, especially at the labour exchange. Not only are they not helpful, they're sometimes hostile and humiliating. Not always, but I had no experience of being unemployed. I didn't know what you're supposed to do....

And like women they deferred registration if they could. Men reported that they 'had a holiday first' or had been 'waiting until after Christmas'. The point is however, men are required to register as a normal circumstance and they are assumed to be economically active even in unemployment. Most men will also qualify for some kind of state benefit, and not always on the basis of their National Insurance contributions, but because men are

assumed to be independent wage earners. Conversely, women are assumed to be men's dependents, unless they prove otherwise.

Like women, men restrict their availability for work, but in different ways than women and in ways less likely to disqualify them from unemployment registration. Whereas women are concerned about working time, men restrict their availability through their skills and wage levels. The more skilled men were, the longer they held out to find a job using their skills. All the cutters⁽⁶⁾ for example were still out of work twelve months after redundancy and knew that they were unlikely to find employment on the basis of those increasingly obsolete skills. Yet still they held out;

It's gone on for too long now. It's demoralising.

People ask you if you've got a job yet and what they mean is, why haven't you got a job. I've applied for two cutting jobs. I want a cutting job really.

Although the Job Centres encouraged both men and women to be more flexible in their approach to job seeking and necessarily to accept lower wages and less skilled work, men's self-imposed restrictions did not seem to accrue the same penalties as women's. Nor at any time would Job Centres expect men to descend into the female labour market.

Thus, non-registration did not mean that these women were not actively job seeking. It is a pre-requisite for claiming unemployment benefit and using the full services of the Job Centres. If however, there is no benefit to be had, nor are the Job Centres perceived as particularly helpful form of job search, then it is easy to see why women don't register. After all registering as unemployed is not much fun. Both men and women find it humiliating. More, to register, is to define oneself as one amongst millions, 'on the scrap heap', and that is

painful. Women are faced with a spurious 'choice' and one they shouldn't have, but they do use it to fend off the moment when they face the fact that they are redundant and unemployed. Whether registered or not, once women start to look for work, they define themselves as on the labour market, and not at home, and they are no more able to juggle with the irreconcilable facts of unemployment than men.

Job Search and the Labour Market

The process of job search, the period of unemployment, and the nature of alternative work is crucially affected by the conditions of local labour markets. Although high levels of job loss and unemployment is a national trend, there are regional and local variations in this. Certain industries, categories of labour and communities have been more affected by recession and the restructuring of the economy than others, and local differences in the labour market can mean that the experience of unemployment differs accordingly.

As it turned out Castleford and Harrogate provided considerably different labour market conditions, and although personal characteristics such as age, work history, skills and experience are all relevant in finding work (see Norris, 1978), it was the differences in the two labour markets which effected the major differences in labour market experience for the Robert Hirst women. At first glance Castleford might appear as a more difficult labour market in which to be job seeking. The rate of unemployment had been steadily increasing since 1979 and many closures and redundancies have occurred in the area, whilst Harrogate had a rate of unemployment far lower than the national average. However, a very important difference between the two towns was that Castleford continued to have clothing manufacturers operating in the area, and most of the women from Robert Hirst were reabsorbed by the clothing industry. Whereas

in Harrogate, Robert Hirst had been the only clothing firm in the area,⁽⁷⁾ and after the closure there was no opportunity to find work using their specific clothing skills. So in Harrogate the problem was not simply one of job shortage, it was one of a mismatch between job vacancies and the skills and needs of the former Robert Hirst employees. This had a considerable influence on the duration and experience of unemployment and the subsequent labour market outcome, and consequently both are assessed here in the light of local differences.⁽⁸⁾

Harrogate

Harrogate is a small town, fifteen miles north of Leeds. A spa town, it has been, in its day, a place for the sickly and the wealthy to pass their days. Much of that heritage is still visible and Harrogate is full of large, beautiful houses, expensive shops and luxury hotels. It is a town stamped with middle class gentility. As Harrogate's popularity as a treatment centre has declined, it has tended to redeploy its resources. Harrogate has more than its fair share of private residential homes for the elderly, and has developed as a conference centre and tourist spot for Yorkshire. Unemployment there is below the national average but so is employment. Traditionally it ^{has} been a town for retirement, not one in which to work, and in fact many people commute from Harrogate to work in Leeds, Bradford, Ripon, and other larger towns nearby. Harrogate does have a small long established working class community and the experience of the town has been one of few jobs and low wages. There is now very little industry in Harrogate. In the period that Robert Hirst closed down, ICI and Dunlopillo, the only two large employers in the town, also made many redundant. The service sector is now the main employer with jobs concentrated in shops, hotels, hospitals and residential homes. It is now very difficult for men to find work of any kind, and whilst there tend

to be more job opportunities for women, they tend to be confined to low paid part-time work, in cleaning occupations.

The Robert Hirst factory had been in operation in Harrogate for over twenty years, making at first rainwear and overcoats, and later, jackets. The factory workforce was predominantly made up of women, who were employed as machinists, operatives and pressers. A small number of men were employed as cutters and pressers. Many of the women from Robert Hirst were very skilled clothing workers. They had worked in the industry, sometimes that very factory, for some years and exceptionally for the industry now, many of them could 'make through' a garment. They often referred to themselves as 'tailloresses' rather than machinists. Although in recent years more and more younger women had been taken on, at the time of redundancy the Harrogate workforce was still made up of a significant number of skilled women in their forties and fifties (see Chapter Two, Table 3, p.42).

The factory was a very stable and close working environment, indicative of the lack of alternative employment opportunities in the area, as much as anything. Robert Hirst rarely had to recruit labour on the open market. Once employed there, people tended to draw in members of their families, so that the labour force was actually a network of mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, uncles, cousins and siblings...it was also the making of many marriages. When people said that the factory was like 'family' there was some measure of truth in that, as well as indicating their attachment to the factory;

I enjoyed every minute, 'cause all my friends were on that section. We used to have a right laugh and joke and I miss them all now. We could chat when we were working, that's what I liked.

I don't think I've really got over it yet,
 because you're missing something. There's one
 chap, he said to me - we seemed to talk more in
 those last few weeks - 'you know it's pretty
 rotten when you've worked all your life with
 the same people, you see them more than you see
 your own family, and then it's all gone'.

They could not expect to find that kind of working environment and
 connection again, but as it turned out the local labour market offered
 virtually no opportunity to find comparable work in clothing nor
 comparable pay and conditions.

Castleford

Castleford is a working class mining town in West Yorkshire, physically
 and culturally dominated by coal pits. The National Coal Board is the
 main employer in the area and in fact husbands, fathers and boyfriends
 of the women from Robert Hirst, were mostly NCB employees. There is now
 very little work for men outside of that. Employment for women in the
 area started to expand in the 1970's and numerous clothing factories and
 one large sweet factory moved into Castleford, drawing upon the labour of
 miners' wives. The recession has affected Castleford as elsewhere. Pits
 have closed down and the local sweet factory closed down its twilight
 shift - the only significant opportunity for part-time work in Castleford -
 laying off hundreds of women. The rate of unemployment in Castleford
 for both men and women has increased steadily since 1979.

The factory at Castleford made men's trousers and had been operating
 for eleven years. With the exception of the manager, the workforce was
 entirely women, predominantly in their early twenties. Unlike the
 Harrogate factory, Castleford was highly rationalised and very efficient
 and the machinists' skills, more limited to a narrow range of operations.

At one time the factory had a high labour turnover, as women moved from factory to factory to improve their wage conditions. By the late 1970's this began to change, as the number of job vacancies in clothing sharply contracted. In the last few years of its existence, the Castleford factory also had a very stable labour force. Although Castleford had nothing like the 'history' of the Harrogate Robert Hirst, it too was an extremely tight-knit factory. The factory/family connection was just as dominant and as well as being mothers and daughters, sisters, cousins, aunts and nieces, many of the women had gone to school and grown up together. The 'girls' were the bonus of factory life;

We all got on like a family you know. I think it was the best factory ever. Everyone was so close together and we all got on. I was just happy at Robert Hirst. We had a right good set of girls, everybody together, there was a unity.

Leaving Robert Hirst, both sets of women shared the experience of having enjoyed relatively well paid work, under good employment conditions. They shared an experience of the same industry and on the job market offered broadly similar skills. The difference was that there are still job opportunities for women in the clothing industry in Castleford, although very little indeed, outside of that. . Whereas in Harrogate there was no work available in clothing, and the women's skills died with the jobs.

Closing Options (1)

In Harrogate there was virtually no opportunity for women from Robert Hirst to find new jobs in the clothing industry and this made a substantial impact on their subsequent experiences of unemployment. It took them a long time to find work. The average period of unemployment was six months and a few women were still out of work eighteen months

after the factory closure. Their age didn't help, many of them were older women (fort-five plus), and as they quickly discovered, in a contracting labour market, employers preferred young people;⁽⁹⁾

There's so many youngsters unemployed these days, and they're going to take them on before the older people. The thing is there's such a terrific response to all the jobs. In the old days, they would get two or three replies, now they'll get a hundred.

Wherever you go now, they ask your age and most of them want younger ones and those that do want older women, well there's about sixty or seventy of us after it. They're wanting to take teenagers on because it's cheaper for them, naturally.

I applied for a job at the new supermarket and I've worked in a supermarket before. With my husband being in the Air Force, I've taken what's going and I've lots of experience. But it doesn't matter what experience you've had, they're all young girls that they've taken on.

It was older women who entirely made up the long term unemployed (over twelve months) in Harrogate, and age has proved to be a major factor in the experience of unemployment for men too, with older men having the greatest difficulties (Daniel and Stilgoe, 1977; Macleod, 1979; pp.76-77; Wedderburn, 1965).

Age was only part of the problem however (older women found work in Castleford without too much difficulty). The women from Harrogate Robert Hirst had been skilled machinists but since there were no local

job opportunities for clothing machinists, they were effectively on the labour market as unskilled labour. It is still the low skilled that bear the unequal burden of unemployment (Pahl, 1982; Sinfield, p.19) but without a clothing industry, this is what the Robert Hirst women became. The real problem for them was that they were deskilled by the labour market, and this tendency is increasing as more and more skilled workers are made unemployed by the collapse of their industries. As unskilled labour, they joined the many, chasing few jobs;

Have you been in there? (unemployment office). It puts you off - queues of them. Then the people who work there, they never seem to rush. You feel like saying 'come on, hurry up!'

I'm sick of looking in the Job Centre. Every time I go in there - they must think I'm crazy, I pore over every single one. I get the local paper but there's very very few jobs.

What jobs did exist were mostly cleaning jobs which they regarded with differing degrees of enthusiasm;

I knew I could always find something. I knew that if the worst came to the worst I could always go and clean for somebody, not that I like it, but I could do something if I was desperate for money.

It suits me fine. I'd said I'd never take a cleaning job but when you think about it, you're cleaning and polishing at home aren't you?

The only thing I will not take is cleaning, no way. I hate doing it anyway.

They were quickly made aware of the labour market conditions; of the lack of jobs, of the many like themselves seeking work and of the poor pay and conditions of the available work. In a small town they found themselves chasing after the same jobs;

You get to hear about jobs through the local grapevine; girls have been after jobs, or they've heard of a job and we all make a dive down here. We all went over to Ripon the other day, to a chicken factory. The chickens were put on to racks and tied up by their legs and the feathers plucked out of them. Another job you actually had to put your hand right inside, ugh...I thought, oh no. And it stank that place. One woman took a job there, she said she'd take it because she had a mortgage and no husband. Then we all went over Sports Fashions, a non-union place. He asked us what we'd been earning and we told him and he said, 'well you won't get that here'. They didn't even have a canteen. He said he'd got a room where we could make tea but we had to bring our own stuff so that meant carting tea, sugar and milk and your sandwiches every day. And you know what it's like when you get up in the morning. Especially for married women anyway. You get up, you get the kids their breakfast and men are worse than the kids... by the time you come to get your own sandwiches, well you can forget it. Robert Hirst had a super canteen. You could always buy toast and tea in the morning and they always put on a good meal at lunch-

time. Anyway I didn't get that job either. If you've had anything to do with unions they don't want to know you.

And the longer it went on, the more demoralising and desperate it became. Optimism gave way to desperation;

I went along for this interview and I got myself dressed up and everything and the interview was amazing. He said he'd about twenty more people to see and he said I'd be surprised at the people he'd interviewed, the stories they've told, they're desperate for jobs. And I just sat there and I thought, well I'm desperate, I need a job.

The only way these women, of all ages were to find work, was by being extremely flexible. Flexibility was the keystone to finding work in Harrogate, by accepting totally different work, different hours and invariably less pay.

Women found work in shops, hotels, hospitals, old people's homes, the army camp and even sometimes in private houses. They became shop assistants, nursing auxiliaries, cooks and cleaners, mostly cleaners.

I'm an auxiliary nurse at a private old people's home. I do everything, there are no SRN's you are the nurse. There's a cook and a cleaner but if I'm not busy then I help in the kitchen. I work from 8 o'clock till 2 o'clock. I have to work alternate weekends - he's (husband) not too keen on that. Fortunately I don't mind wiping bottoms. It's not very pleasant but for some people there's no way they'd do it, but I don't mind really.

It took me nearly three months to find a job.

I'm a chambermaid. We start at 8 o'clock and finish at 4.30 and our gross pay is £54 and by the time they take off tax and that I come home with about £45, and by the time I've paid my Mum, I've nothing left for myself. I come home from work and I'm tired out. I come home and I'm flaked out.

I'm working now, part-time but I'm working. I was out of work all that time. It's cleaning, well it's contract cleaning up at the Army camp. They put an advert in the paper and I just rang up and I got it without an interview. I'm just cleaning the billets out.

I'm a domestic out at the psychiatric hospital.

It's a job, I like it, but it isn't my job is it?

It isn't sewing.

Women were not only flexible in terms of the jobs and work they were prepared to do, but also in terms of the conditions of work, pay and hours. At Robert Hirst they had been mostly full-time workers on a full-time wage, working fixed, weekday hours. The vast majority ended up, not only in a totally different occupation and invariably on a reduced wage, but also working shift hours and part-time hours. Whilst most women were pleased to have a job of any kind, the hours of work caused them the most problems. Full-time work invariably meant shift work so either they were working shifts and causing havoc with domestic order;

I'm a domestic. I work forty hours a week. One week it's seven till four, with an hour for lunch

and the next week it's eleven till eight. Every other week I have Saturday and Sunday off. The other week I have Tuesday and Wednesday. My husband isn't too keen. He doesn't like me working weekends. It just doesn't fit in and it never will.

Alternatively, and most usually, they were trapped in part-time work.

Part-time work for women is assumed to be organised around women's needs for flexibility, to be able to combine their paid work with their domestic responsibility. Now whilst part-time work may be offered as a 'concession' to attract women, it is clear that is not the reason for its proliferation, especially in recession. One woman's account of her new job indicates how her cleaning work has been reorganised and transformed, from full-time hours to part-time hours, to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Her part-time shift hours include a split working day. It is clear that it is not part-time work that is flexible, but women;

I do 9.30 to 11.30 and then 2.00 to 4.30 every other day. It's quite good money, £1.59p an hour. They bring you home, so you're in town by 11.45 so I do my shopping and they pick you up again at 1.40. They used to be on government contract work out there, employed by the Army, but it was costing too much, so they brought in a private contractor. They're trying to edge all of them (full-timers) out and put everybody on the same as what we're doing. It's great, the hours suit me fine. I do Saturdays and Sundays, it makes your money up, they pay you time and a half. Last week I had Friday off then I worked

Saturday morning, had a break for a couple of hours at Saturday dinner time. I went and did all my shopping and brought it home, had a quick bite and then was back off again at 1.40. I got home about quarter to five and just came straight in and prepared the tea for them. I got all my vegetables ready and cooked my meat on Saturday, ready for Sunday, so that all I had to do when I walked in on Sunday dinner time was to put the gas on. I do twenty hours a week and it's £1.59p an hour, but with getting extra for doing the weekends, it's quite good money.

With a two and a half hour unpaid break in the middle of the day, such working hours are not convenient at all, but because working unsocial hours can boost low rates of pay, and because she can squeeze the shopping in between her split shift, it 'suits' her. She, and the shopping are flexible. It can be done as well on Saturday lunch-time, as Friday night. Here the sexual division of labour makes some sense of her working hours.

This is not always the case, and one woman who was absolutely dependent on her own wage, a full-time wage, was forced into taking two part-time jobs in order to earn something that approximated to a living wage. Even then, two part-time wages turned out less than one full-time wage;

I started in February at the old folks 'hotel', that was a part-time job and I came out with about £29. I was also working in a pub for four nights a week and I was coming out with £13 there. It was very tight. But then in July, I started at the General Hospital. I'm a domestic, the money's very good. Before tax it's about £85,

and I still do the pub job. It's a lot better now although I don't really like it. Well the actual work itself is alright. You can't really complain, apart from working weekends. I get one off in every three. It's hard work, physical work and you're completely on the go from the minute you come in to the minute you leave.

In another instance, a part-time job was combined with private enterprise;

When I first left Robert Hirst I started this cleaning job three mornings a week. She was very nice and the job was alright but it just wasn't me. I don't know I have enough of my own cleaning without doing someone else's. Then I got this job at the school and I finished with her a week before. It's doing the school meals. I work there from 11.30 to 1.30 five days a week. It works out at about £15.20 I think. I had it on the understanding that it's from term to term. Well they gave me a retainer, half pay, which they weren't going to give me. But at the same time they said that if I decided I didn't wish to take this post, I had to give them a fortnight's notice, which was silly really, because they said if the numbers weren't right they wouldn't be employing me. I've started my own business as well. I started that about the same time. I'm selling pots - pottery, I sell them at parties mostly. It does get a bit complicated. I've got to get a babysitter or take her with me. If

it's a church do and that starts at 8 o'clock
 then I can be away by 9.30 and I take her with
 me, but if it's a house do, I like to leave her
 at home with a babysitter because we most likely
 sit around drinking coffee and talking and it gets
 a bit drawn out.

When it becomes apparent that women are taking two part-time jobs in order to earn anything like enough money to meet their needs, then the idea that part-time work is organised to suit women's convenience, becomes a ludicrous one. Part-time work cheapens women's labour, casualises the conditions of their employment. An even more stark form of this casualisation of women's work is homework and one or two women from Harrogate did end up doing it. The local papers regularly carried advertisements for homeworkers but the majority of women did not consider it worth their while despite their difficulties in finding work. They were at least able to go out to work, whereas it does seem that the women most likely to take up homework are those confined to the home for one reason or another (Hope, Kennedy and De Winter, 1976). Mostly women would not consider homework because it was so exploitative;

I've taken sewing in at home, in the past, but
 I wouldn't do it now though. I went after one
 lot, it was scatter cushions, but you'd have been
 up all night to get those numbers done. He
 wanted thousands doing for a bit of a wage and
 the wage wouldn't have done me a bit of good
 because of the extra electricity. It would have
 taken me all my time to pay the electric bill.
 So I said no thanks. I think he's still adver-
 tising and always will at those rates.

But in fact there is always somebody who is pleased to do it;

I work on my own machine, so you're using
your own electricity but I'd rather do it
than nothing. I don't think I will get a job
unless I get a cleaning job. It's never more
than £1 an hour, but I can work my own hours.
I do feel isolated as regards not seeing my
friends and that.

As much as anything else it is occupying;

I suppose you could term it soft furnishings,
making cushion covers, napkins and table
cloths, all sorts of things like that. It
was advertised in the paper but I actually went
into where they were and they said yes they were
willing to take me on. They'd had hundreds of
applications so it was perhaps the personal
touch, me going out there. I said to my husband,
'well I've got nothing to lose. I may as well
keep occupied and see how it goes'.

It was homework which provided the only outlet for these women's skills;

You look back and think, it's just a waste. I mean
Mr. Holt rang me up once and he was asking me what
the girls were doing. I mean there's one girl in
a lottery box in town and things like that, and he
said, you could tell he was full up, 'what an
absolute waste of good girls', and that's really
what it is. None of them have gone back into
clothing, not because they don't want to. There
just aren't any jobs.

Closing Options (2)

Castleford, on the other hand, is a two job town;

It is not very good. You see the main industry here has been textiles and mining and now that they're taking the textiles away I don't think there are many opportunities for women. I think it's better for a man because you see it's a mining village and there are lots of jobs for men, but for women I'd say it's not very good at the moment. It's more a man's world round here.

There's nothing really apart from clothing. There's quite a few pits around but there's nothing else really. It's got to be quite a black spot, has Castleford on work.

On the face of it, the women from Castleford fared better. The majority of women found work within four weeks and some had found alternative work before they had even left Robert Hirst. Even older women found jobs, although it took a little longer, (up to three months) and twelve months after redundancy, all the women who had been job seeking were back in work. With the exception of one woman, they all went back into clothing. Once other local manufacturers knew of the closures they came to the factory to recruit labour. In Castleford, trained machinists are still wanted, even in recession. Indeed, the clothing industry continues to offer employment precisely because of the unstable economic conditions. In a perverse and short term way, it maintains its operations. As one firm closes down, another moves in mopping up redundant labour and even sometimes occupying the same factory site. Recession has created very

difficult trading conditions for the industry, yet provides ideal conditions for the supply of a cheap experienced labour force. It is still the case that small firms can be more competitive and resilient than larger ones and still new producers are tempted to try their hands.

The relatively short period of unemployment in Castleford was due entirely to the clothing industry's ability to reabsorb the women from Robert Hirst, even if as in one woman's case, it was not as a machinist.

We were told that Peterfords were setting on employees from Robert Hirst. They only wanted Robert Hirst girls because they knew what they were like. We did have a good reputation and so they were setting some on. But by the time I got back (after break for Christmas) they'd seen everybody and filled all the positions. I went to the Job Centre anyway and said were they still taking any on there and she said they were all filled, but I thought I'd give it a go anyway, so I went down there on my own bat and I just went to see the personnel manager, just to see if there was anything going. This is where my luck came in. The woman who's the personnel manageress, she also does the family planning so I knew her by sight. Anyway I was telling her I needed a job and she said how desperate are you and I said, well, desperate. She said there wasn't anywhere in the factory but they did want someone in the canteen. So I took it.

Their new conditions of work were not as good. Some women ended up

working in neighbouring towns; Pontefract, Knottingly, Featherstone, even Leeds and Tadcaster and although not great distances, they added time to an already finely balanced day, and costs, from a not over-large wage packet. In a contracted job market, women can't be too choosy, whilst employers can;

I was in the Job Centre and there was this girl from Robert Hirst and she was trying at this place because it was near her home. When she enquired about it they wanted to know what experience she had. And she said she could do all the way round trousers - she could make trousers - and they asked her if she could do anything on jackets and she couldn't. So they said she'd be no good, they wanted someone who had experience on how to make jackets besides trousers.

Quite contrary to the Harrogate experience, women from Castleford had no real opportunity for either part-time work or work outside of clothing. The labour market was absolutely inflexible. This was illustrated by one woman, who at the age of 39, married, with no children, decided that the redundancy was the opportunity for change. She wanted part-time work but eighteen months after redundancy, she was still looking;

I'm never bored but I miss the money. There's not a lot going and you see everyone's after part-time jobs. I mean I've done my whack. I've worked twenty-five years, but if something came up, part-time, I'd definitely take it. If Robert Hirst hadn't closed down I'm sure I'd still have been there. I liked it there, it was a lovely place. I'd have been pensioned off.

Castleford has never offered women a wide range of employment opportunities, but in recession that has become severely restricted. However, the conditions of recession have not only limited women's choices, and allowed employers to recruit from a larger pool of labour, in the clothing industry it has made possible an intensification of work under increasingly exploitative conditions. In one local factory, wages have been held down by the simple expedient of the threat of closure;

I mean they've got no rise at all this year, not a penny, so therefore those girls are working for less money. The union got five per cent but they won't pay it. They told them if they don't get 5,000 trousers out a week as from now, they'll shut it.

Now pay has been combined with impossible work speeds that even the most experienced machinist cannot achieve.

They were advertising in the paper, so I thought I would go and see. It was a nice little place, but in fact when I went down, this woman who was sat in front of me, said there'd been four on that job and they'd all left and I didn't know why, but I did after a bit! I had to do sleeve making and collar making. I had seventeen sleeves to do and forty-five collars in an hour. Well I could do the sleeves but I couldn't do the collars with it!

Whilst it was the case that all the women from Castleford Robert Hirst had found alternative work within a twelve month period, many women left those jobs, either 'voluntarily' because of worsening conditions or they had been made redundant again. Nearly a third of these women had

a second spell out of work within an eighteen months period. So although the women fared quite well in terms of the speed with which they found work, they were confined to one unstable industry with poor conditions and now with little or no employment protection rights. If the conditions of the clothing industry deteriorate further, the position of women employed within it will be very bleak indeed;

There's a lot of girls employed in the clothing trade now, who wouldn't attempt to go into clothing if they had any choice. You could talk to any of the girls and they'd say if they could get another job, they wouldn't stay there. Between you and me I've always said sewing was slave labour.

Deteriorating Conditions of Work

There was no question of these women from Robert Hirst going off-market in any significant numbers. They did however, end up in a range of jobs which represented a marked worsening of pay and conditions. Unemployment cannot be detached from this process. High levels of unemployment are one aspect of a general deterioration in employment conditions. Daniel and Stilgoe (1977) identified a degradation of labour that may occur in the labour market through unemployment. The higher the levels of unemployment, the more vulnerable the unemployed are, and it is of course equally true for men as it is for women. The men from Robert Hirst confronted similar problems in the Harrogate labour market. None were able to find new work within the clothing industry, and they became hospital porters, van drivers, salesmen, and in order to get work they had to accept a wage reduction.

When I first was made redundant a friend found a job for me at the Magistrates Court. It was a

very respectable 'civil service' type job, but the pay was low, £65 a week. I didn't accept it because of that. I never thought I'd end up accepting that kind of wage.

Only two men found work with pay comparable to their former employment at Robert Hirst. The rest accepted reductions of up to a quarter of their previous wage.

The women from Robert Hirst fully recognised how their experience of job loss and unemployment were part of a wider process;

If you want a job you have to take less money and that's it, or be prepared to take a job other than that what you've trained to do. That's what they're doing you see, they can take people on for less money now, get people for less. It's pushed the wages right down.

I don't think any of the closures are necessary. They say it's the workers that want more money, but it's not the workers. I had an argument with a director once. I was a passer and bad work had gone out. He sat there and was comparing us with Germans and how efficient they were, and I sat until I couldn't stand it any longer. I said, 'don't you blame the people on the shop floor, you're the people who are to blame. You people who make the decisions on how many these factories should turn out'. I said, 'when I first came here you wanted 2,000 pairs of trousers a week, then you wanted 2,500, then you wanted 3,000. But

you don't modernise the machinery, all you do is expect us to work that much harder, it's your British directorship!' It's not just textiles, it's being done throughout industry. They're investing abroad where there's cheap labour and they're keeping us down as far as they can. It's not just that you're years on the dole, even those who've got jobs, they've taken large wage cuts. If you get another job you have to accept less money. I think it's all done to bring our standard of living down. I do think it's Margaret Thatcher's idea with all this unemployment to bring wages down.

Although the labour market for women in Castleford and Harrogate turned out to be very different in terms of the jobs on offer, they both illustrate the inflexibility of the labour market. They illustrate differently, the same phenomena, the vulnerability of women to particularly exploitative forms of work. In the space of two years the women of Robert Hirst have moved from being skilled clothing workers with relatively good pay and conditions, job protection and trade union organisation, to occupying low paid, insecure work, with non-unionisation often a condition of employment.

Although men are also subjected to the same deterioration of their working conditions, they do not have the acute vulnerability of women. 'Women's work' and 'women's pay', in fact defines the baseline conditions for men's work and women know that;

Women can get jobs if they're willing to do dirty jobs, like cleaning. Men won't do that, that's a woman's job. Men won't work for that pay.

For women, there are no such parameters and in recession the manipulation

and exploitation of the sexual division of labour, has found new depths.

Notes

1. Small numbers of women went off-market because of pregnancy, deciding to retire early, or through sickness. For a range of reasons, it is very common for redundants to withdraw from the labour market. Harris et al, in their study of redundancy in the steel industry, found that one-sixth of their sample went off-market in the post-redundancy period (p.16).
2. Formal and informal channels of job search, Harris et al have defined thus; 'The formal means are state-owned employment/ labour exchanges (job centres), private employment agencies and public advertisement. The informal means are person to person contacts, or chains and networks thereof, which may be facilitated by institutions entirely unconnected with the buying and selling of labour power at the formal level: religious and political associations, pubs, clubs and of course networks of kin relationships' (p.5).
3. The real extent of men's mobility is questionable. Sinfield has shown how house prices alone would deter mobility, and Wedderburn's study of railwaymen proved them to be a highly localised labour supply (p.104). She did suggest that white collar workers may be more mobile than manual workers.
4. At the time of this research fieldwork, it was still possible for women without entitlement to benefit to register as unemployed. However this changed in October 1982, following the recommendations of the Rayner Report. Some 100,000 people who had registered but were not entitled to benefit, were no longer entitled to do so. They no longer counted as unemployed. It was mostly self-employed men and married women who were affected by this change.

5. One of the penalties of women's use of quitting as a form of registering protest, is that in a particularly restricted labour market they may well move around most of the employers in the locality.
6. Age was not an obvious factor here since some of the cutters were young men. Their ages ranged from twenty-seven to sixty-three and yet they all remained out of work.
7. There was one other clothing factory in Harrogate, but which employed only twelve women and cannot be taken to represent alternative employment. Whereas not only were there other clothing factories in Castleford, but in all the neighbouring towns. A wide geographical area east and south of Leeds has become a new location for the Leeds clothing industry.
8. This local labour market information has been built up from personal visits and information supplied by interviewees, the local press and personnel from local Job Centres.
9. Cohen (1982) has suggested that adult women are a preferred source of labour to school leavers. There is no evidence to support this, although it may well be true for some forms of part-time work.

CHAPTER SIX

FIVE WOMEN

The following chapter comprises 5 women's accounts of how redundancy affected and interrupted their lives. Personal circumstance at the time of redundancy, is clearly a crucial factor in determining how job loss is experienced. One woman, for example, had a baby, but although her life has been transformed, those changes are primarily connected with motherhood, rather than redundancy. For another woman, the redundancy coincided with the break-up of her marriage, and for her the experiences of isolation and financial hardship arose from both events. Yet despite these very individually experienced situations, there are shared themes running through the accounts, and indeed through this thesis. These women talk about the inadequacy of the male wage as a sole source of income and this is especially highlighted by the now common occurrence of their men being out of work. They show how they felt the loss of their own wage, not just as the loss of income, but as a loss of independence. They demonstrate how the combination of paid work and unpaid work in the home can only be achieved by an exhausting 'routine' in which men do not participate. Above all, they indicate how work is axiomatic to their lives and redundancy does not present itself as an occasion to return to the home. Even the two women who are not in work, understand it as a temporary position; until the children go to school or the job market picks up. Rather redundancy is an interruption of women's working lives.

Susan Peters

I was a back seamer at Robert Hirst, that's the back seam of a pair of trousers. I'd measure them up and sew the seam down. I was also shop

steward. I started in the clothing industry before I was married but that was in Leeds and I found it a long way to travel and so I started to work in shops. I worked in a man's shop and a draper's shop so really I'm quite experienced for quite a few jobs. I've always worked, I've never stopped working and I don't think I could. I can't stay at home all the time, because I'm not a visitor you see. I can't go round talking to people, not even family. If I'm at home I get really bored. When my girls were small I used to work on a night time. I waited until they were about 6 months and then I worked at night, in the fish shop next door actually. I worked there until they were old enough to go to school. I never left them until then. Once they were at school I went back to full time work. They're good girls, they've never caused me a minute's trouble, they've been healthy, they haven't had much illness and my husband has always worked regular days. He's home by 1.45. so he's been at home when they've come home from school. They've never been neglected. I've never had to leave them with anybody.

Then when they went to school I managed a general store, it sold everything, and I did that for 4 years. Then my father got ill and because I was the only daughter I had to look after him. After he died, I had a sort of nervous breakdown and I didn't work for 9 months. Then a friend told me about a job going at Robert Hirst and I went down and asked about it. I was there for over 5 years. I was happy there. I think everybody gets fed up with work some time or the other, especially a woman, the pressures of home, you think you'd like to stay at home, but I always feel it changed my life that job at Robert Hirst. I wouldn't say boo to a goose when I first went there. By gum it brought me out and now I'll always stand up for myself. I think it was the women. It was an upsetting experience when Hirsts closed. You never think you're going to be made redundant.

There was only one person in our household who was made redundant and it was only a matter of months before I got a job, but in some households there's two or three people out of work and that must be terrible. I've been married 17 years and so we had our home and everything. We just had to live, which we could do on my husband's wage. I've not been one for debts. I've always been careful that we should try and live on one wage. When I got made redundant it really made me think. We managed alright because we weren't buying a house then, but I thought well you come to lose £50 or £60 a week coming in and it's a lot of money if you've got commitments for that money.

I registered with the Job Centre straight away, well after Christmas. I didn't get any dole money at all because at the time I was only paying a married women's stamp, but now I've been paying a full stamp. Something's better than nothing isn't it? It seems to have made me think about things like that. I missed having my own money. It made me feel guilty about buying anything. Really I got a bit low that way because I wasn't earning a wage. Or if I did, I felt guilty. You definitely lose your independence. I suppose it depends on the standard of living you want, but when you've got a family, you need two wages.

It's not been as difficult for me as it has been for some of the other girls, because I've done other jobs, but I've had a lot of interviews for a lot of jobs. There's nothing much going in this area apart from tailoring and one or two shops. There's a sweet factory but that's on the brink of shutting. I was out of work for about 2 months and then I went to Peterford's. I worked there for about 5 weeks. I left because I couldn't stand it. You see at Robert Hirst it was piece work, but at least you fetched your own work and you pushed it away when you'd finished with it, so you got that break. Whereas at Peterford's you went in on a morning, you sat on a chair in front of your machine, they fetched

your work to you at your side, and they took it away from you, so you never moved. They hadn't had a rise for three years and things like that. So they started to talk among the others and they asked me to become union representative and I didn't want it. It made it a bit difficult for me really, I think that's maybe why I left.

I didn't have another job to go to. I'm having a little bit of trouble with my nerves. I think once you've had trouble with nerves it comes back. I wasn't too good really so I had a couple of months at home again. I must admit I quite enjoyed those few months off. It was summer and I lay out in the back garden all afternoon. I think better of myself for not working all hours and trying to fit things in, but in my mind I was worse off, worried because I was trying to stretch the money further. The summer months weren't too bad because I was gardening but these winter months if I'm in the house, I feel a bit shut in. I'm glad to see the end of this year, it's not been a good year for me. I was very settled at Robert Hirst, you get up in the morning, you go to work, you come home, you know what's going to happen, you get into a sort of routine. I've thought about it a lot. I didn't like being without a job because I've always had a job. I can't really say I'm a housewife, because that isn't what you're doing for a job is it? Well, it's a job, but it's not a paid job as such.

Whether it was the effect of the redundancy I don't know, but I decided not to go back into tailoring at all. I enjoy sewing but I have lost faith in the industry I think. So I found a shop job, as check-out operator in Asda. It was part-time, 5 afternoons a week and I got about £34 a week. I was getting about £55 at Hirsts. Anything was better than nothing but I'd have preferred full-time work. Two teenage daughters take a lot of keeping. Well after working as a part-time checkout operator they just asked me if I wanted to be a supervisor, full time,

I've been doing it for about a month now. I'm the supervisor of the checkouts. There's about 24 girls doing different shifts, some afternoons, some just weekends, it's spread out, so that the tills always have got someone on them, they're never vacant. I work out the shift rota, their hours and their wages. It's lovely. They're nice girls and I enjoy working with them. It took a while really for me to settle down because I liked the girls at Robert Hirst and I didn't seem to be able to find a situation like that again, until now. It's a well paid job, although there are hours that you don't get paid for. I get nearly £80 a week, I bring home about £56 after tax and everything. I have a full day off in the week and half a day and Sunday as well. They're lovely to work for, and they look after their staff. There's just one thing that I'm not keen on and that's the late nights. I have to work one late night a week and I'm there before 8 o'clock in the morning and it's 8.15 at night before I get out. It's very tiring and I have to do that once a week. I get one weekend off in three - it's better than most shop jobs.

It came at a good time really because we've had a bad patch this year, with money. My husband was off 4 months from work with his back. He's never been off sick with anything before and it was terrible because we didn't know what sick money was or how to deal with it, so it was a good job I had a job because we didn't get any help from anywhere. We had just taken on this house over 10 years so it is a big amount to pay every month and the bills just rolled in, water rates, ordinary rates, electric... The Coal Board did give him make up pay but it only worked out that he was getting £50 odd a week, which is not a lot. I mean on Friday night I spend £37 or thereabouts on what I call my big shop, just on Friday nights. It goes nowhere does it? My redundancy money - it was about £1,000 altogether - has all gone! It went towards buying

this house and some went towards our holiday. I manage the money really because my husband is not a very good saver, and he's quite happy with that. His money gets paid into the bank and we have our mortgage and things paid out of that. For food we just draw so much out and he has so much for the car and that and whatever's left we put into the building society, it works like that. I go out to work to provide for clothes, the car, holidays and things like that. We just couldn't do it if I didn't work.

I get tired but I try and organise myself. When I was at Hirsts, I used to do the shopping on Friday night after work and then Saturday and Sunday I used to get really stuck in. I used to wash on Sunday, I used to prepare my meals the night before and just leave instructions for my eldest daughter, she's very helpful. My husband's not bad but he's not very domesticated. He'll wash up and things like that but he can't cook and he wouldn't clean, but he's very handy around the house, he's just built me that kitchen extension. Then with part-time work, I had my mornings at home to do a few jobs. I'd cook a meal on the mornings, stew or anything. I'd do it in the pressure cooker, prepare all the vegetables and get things done so it's all ready you see when I came home. I've always been like that because it does save time. You just have to do things when you've got time. But now as far as the routine of the house is concerned, I haven't really got back into the swing of full time work yet. I haven't got a routine at all. I keep trying and I think well it's my day off tomorrow and I'll do so and so, then I'll get some visitors, or something happens, or I have to go somewhere. I cook a meal every night. I have to because the girls only take a packed lunch to school, they won't have school dinners and I have my brother now. He's just getting divorced and so he comes here for his meals as well. So I have to cook a meal of a night and by the time

you've cleared away, washed up and that, your night's nearly over. I think with full time you learn to keep going. I sort of think if I sit down, I won't get up again, so I try and do what I can before I sit down. But I find it tiring. I think it's being on a part-time basis for those months and I'd really started to enjoy it in some ways, having half a day at home and half a day at work, and I could do what I liked in the evenings.

I wouldn't ask my husband to do anything in the house because I know he wouldn't be able to do it really - he'd try because he's good really but I don't want to put too much on him. My eldest daughter is very good, she's terrific really. I've only got to say 'I could do with doing this' and she'll say 'I'll do it Mum'. I don't know how I'd manage without her. Mind you when you've got children in the house, it's not the same as having two adults. You've got so much more to clear up after. Really I suppose I work full-time mainly for them. I want them to do well at school. What I really want is for them not to have to depend on anybody. I want them to get a good education, something at the back of them, so that they can look after themselves, they don't need anybody. I think it goes back...I was only 16 when I lost my mother and I was the only girl, I had three brothers and I had the housework and a job to do then. When I got married I had my own house and my father's house. It's something that I don't want my daughters to have. I didn't have anybody to push me with my education and that's why I think I've done it with my two girls and I've been lucky because they're both very very clever, both of them, I'm so proud of them. I've always made a lot of them with school. I've always been interested in their work, I've always gone to every open night and that. I just want to make them settled and they can be self-sufficient if need be. I suppose that's my life.

Phyllis Collins

I was a machinist at Robert Hirst, making up linings. It was part-time but it wasn't far off full time. I used to work from 8.30 to 4.40. I think I used to bring about £35 to £40 home. It worked out to just over £1 an hour. I started there 12 years ago when we moved from Keighley. I didn't know anyone here and I got really depressed. My little lad wasn't more than 2. I had worked in Keighley - they used to have an evening shift - and I thought I'm going to ring this Robert Hirst up to see if they've got an evening shift. Anyway I did and they said they were sorry but it took them all their time to fill the machines during the day never mind about an evening shift, but he said if ever I could get through the day to go and see him. Anyway my nerves got worse. I think it was being couped up and not knowing anybody. I enquired about putting Peter in a nursery and I got him in one that took him at 3. So I rang up again and I got the job. I lived on Maple Avenue then. It was walking distance to the bus station on the Leeds Road and I used to pass the nursery on the way, so it was quite handy. He loved it too. I think it did him good because he wasn't any trouble going to school. Then after work I'd just get off the bus, pick him up and walk home. I was there ever since.

We were all upset when it closed, it took a while to sink in. To be quite honest I kept thinking that they'd send for us again. I didn't register as unemployed. I didn't pay the full stamp. It's just something you don't usually do when you're working and you've got kids. They didn't seem to accept it from married women anyway, because you're always on and off when your kiddies are little, there's always something the matter. I wish I'd paid it now, but you don't realise at the time, that little bit coming in would have been better than nothing. I've tried for certain jobs as I've seen them in the paper. I didn't look at first. I thought

I'd have a little time at home and my daughter was getting married. I've tried once or twice at the hospital where my friend Mary is working. I've tried for a machinist job although I didn't really want sewing. I've never been in the Job Centre. I suppose I'll have to try in there but my friends go in there and some have got jobs and some haven't. I look through the papers. There are one or two who keep their ears and eyes open for me. If a sewing job came up, I'd take it for the sake of having a job. I'd like to work over at the hospital though, it's only over at the back of us. Now with bus fares, it's a bit ridiculous going too far. It was costly enough when I was at Robert Hirst. It depends on your wage, if you're not getting a lot it's not worth paying a lot out in bus fares. I'd like a job close to my own home. It's not just the cost. Time adds on to your working hours. If you don't finish work until 4.45 and you've half an hour bus ride, it's going to be 6 o'clock by the time you get home. I think it gets more desperate to look as time goes on. The first few months were like a holiday. I never thought to look. I think I feel it a bit more because we had a wedding in August and it took the money that we had. I feel now that I need a job more than ever to try and get back on our feet.

It's difficult on one wage, you've just not as much money to go round have you? We never go out. We didn't go out much before. We like country music, both of us and if there were groups on at a club or anything, that's when we went out. We did go out on Saturday to see Andy Williams at Scarborough, and that was a real treat because we haven't been out for months. I felt guilty though because I felt we shouldn't be going. I think it's a bit harder living in general but I do miss not being able to afford to go out if you want. I have to make do now a lot more, and probably a lot more as we go on, if things don't get better. It makes you wonder how far it can all go. If it had happened a few

years back, it would have been a lot harder, there were four of them to feed then, but now my eldest son lives away, and my two girls are married. I've still got Peter at home. He'd liked to have gone in the Navy, but he can't get in so he's going on to further education. It would have been better if he'd got into the Navy. My husband works during the week at the further education college, but on Sundays he has this other job at the hospital. He's a chef, well actually he's a baker by trade, but he's a chef as well. He gets paid into the bank every month, just over £300 a month and he gets £12 for Sundays. I used to use my wage packet first. I never kept any money for myself, it all went into the house. Now when I was working it was easy, but since I finished work we aren't getting that extra money coming in. Some of my redundancy went on my daughter's wedding, the rest has just gone on living. I used to try and put something away each month out of his wages, but I couldn't.

I'm doing this bit of soldering now. I wouldn't call it work. Last week it brought about £12 I think. It has all come about by accident. It's my daughter's work actually, she was doing it and not getting it all through. She works full time and she was doing this at home in the evenings. They were waiting for her and she asked me if I wanted some to do. I said yes, I would help. It's nothing guaranteed. They might not want anymore after today. I didn't think it would last as long as this. I thought I would have to get a job after Christmas, but anyway he's kept ringing up. I'm doing plugs right now. Like all homework you have to do about 200 to earn about £1.25. I don't do a right lot, because as I say it takes quite a long time to do not many if you know what I mean. The most I ever earn is about £15 a week. It just helps with the weekend groceries. It depends on how many I do, and how many they want. I'd say I do about 4 hours a day. Sometimes actually, in

the evenings, if I'm on my own, I knock up a few for morning. You see when you're working at home you can do that, you can do it when you want. I don't class it as a job actually, not for the bit that I earn, so I just say, I'm just at home, I don't work. Actually I was speaking to my sister-in-law only this weekend, she'd rung up and she said, 'are you still not working?', and I automatically said, 'no'. But I don't tell folk about it, very few, because I don't class it as a job. If I was earning £20 or £30 I would, but some weeks it's only £10.

I wouldn't get a proper job doing this. They're all young girls and they don't pay a right lot. My daughter doesn't like it. It's a case that she sticks it because there is nothing much else to do. It would be no good me trying to get a job down there. I don't enjoy doing it, but to be honest I haven't tried for anything for ages and this (homework) might be one of the reasons. But I keep thinking things will pick up, so I'd wait a bit, which I still think they probably will in time. There seems to be a few more jobs around than there used to be. Sometimes I'll say I'll have to really start looking again. I must seem right lazy, but I've always worked even when kiddies were little, so I'm not lazy - I'll say it's my age. Mind you, in the winter, when all the snow comes and the rain, I'd sit and I used to look out and I'd think thank goodness I haven't got to go out. Now even in the summer when it comes right nice, I'm able to go and sit outside.

I've got more time now. I get up and get Peter off to school. He goes for about 8 o'clock and then I sit and have my cup of tea and a bit of breakfast. If I do it as I should do, I get this (homework) out of the way early so I can finish after dinner time and then just tidy up. I might watch a film on TV or sit with my knitting. Nearer tea time, I have to start and do the tea. My son comes home at about 4.20 and my husband will be in about 6 o'clock. Usually I have tea ready for

o'clock and then keep his (husband's) warm until he's home. Otherwise Peter's starving. He's right lanky, like a bean pole and he's always starving. On Wednesday, my husband works late, it's his night for the evening class, so we don't wait for him and me and Peter have our tea early. I used to clean and that when I came in from work and at weekends. My husband used to do a bit but he never bothered really and it doesn't worry him now! I used to do my washing mainly Sunday mornings because he goes to work then. Now I do it all as I come to it. I do it when I'm ready.

Being out of work, I think it gets worse as you go on. I think you lose your confidence. I find that. When I see something in the paper I dread having to go. I'm alright when I get there, but I go through terrible things while I'm going. I really felt sick having to go for that last job, but once I sat down and was talking to him, I was alright. I just think it's confidence and I'm not one for changes anyway. I just like to plod on in my own way. The longer you're out of work the less confidence you've got for going and trying. I think we all need to work. I like to work. I'd prefer to go out to work than be at home, even if it's only part-time. I'm not one for stopping at home. I don't like going out socially much, and I won't even go into town unless I'm forced to, but I like to go out to work. I've worked all the time I've been married. I've never been off as long as I've been off this time, even when the kiddies were little. I think that's why I looked forward to being off at first, but it wears off. But to be honest, I think I've stopped looking. It's just gradual, you get out of the habit, you don't bother. My husband used to tease me. He'd say 'go on, you don't really want to go back to work'. We've managed alright. I don't worry about it, but I mean we just manage, there's nothing left.

I don't got out a lot. I don't even go out a right lot for shopping

actually. Because part of my husband's job is buying in for where he works at college and with us living away from town, he'll say 'do you want anything from town?', and he just picks it up. I suppose it doesn't help any. Well you think it's helping, but as time goes on it doesn't really. I think I've really got to push myself and try to do something about it. I see a job in the paper and I think that'd be alright, but I don't do anything about it. Yet I like to go out to work. It's just because I've been here that long my confidence has gone. I've got funny that way. I don't go visiting really, I've no one to visit. My friends have nearly all got jobs, the ones that I bothered with anyway and none of my family are close by, so I can't go and visit my sister. We've no transport now, the car's off the road. I don't really know when I last went out. I think it was around Christmas time. Then again there's not a lot of money to go out spending.

I would like a job. I can feel myself getting into this routine, and I'll have to snap out of it. I know that it's just picking up courage to snap out of it. But you don't just get jobs now, you have to go crawling for them. I hated it at the beginning. I was bored to tears. Every day I used to get fed up, but you get used to that boredom gradually, it's a way of life. I don't know whether I could face a lot of people now. I worried over you coming. I used to feel lonely, but there again I'm used to it. The radio is never off and I talk to my animals. I always have done. I wouldn't say I feel lonely now, six months ago yes, I got that fed up. I don't think about it when I'm on my own, but when my husband is in at night, he soon falls asleep if he's sat, and sometimes I say 'I'm fed up, I'm on my own all day and then you're asleep at night'. When I'm on my own I don't notice it so much I only notice it when someone is there, and I can't talk to them, it's more annoying. It's better to be on your own doing your jobs and letting

your mind wander.

Mary Leason

I was a supervisor at Robert Hirst, I had been doing that for about 9 months, and before that I had been a machinist. I was also shop steward for about 10 years, but I had to give that up when I took the job as supervisor. I'd been with the company since I got married, before my son was born, and that's going back about 27 years. I left when I had him and then I went back. There were quite a few of us in fact that had worked for the old Robert Hirst. When I'd left school, I worked at the Canadian Treasury in Lancaster and it closed down. Well, there wasn't a lot of work then so I went to work at the underwear factory and that's how I started in clothing. It was all there was at the time. Then I got married and came here and I went into the same trade at Robert Hirst. When I left to have my son, I started working in the College, cleaning in the morning to get some extra money. When he was 5 I started back at Robert Hirst. To begin with, I didn't go in until 9 o'clock but it was full time.

They'd offered me the supervisor's job before, but I wouldn't take it because it meant loss of pay for me. I was getting £80 a week in the supervisor's job but when I was on the machine I was getting about £96, so it was a big drop, but that's because I was fast and I could earn that amount. To someone else it would have been a promotion and a pay rise, but to me it wasn't. The main reason that I took the job in the end was because of the state we were in. Carrington Viyella started introducing 'minutes' which was alien to Robert Hirst even though they did have a piece system. That was to be expected really because nearly all the factories are on minutes now and with me having been shop steward I knew a lot about it.

I got about £3,000 in redundancy, but that included ten weeks wages in lieu of notice, so it was about £2,600 really. We did invest my £3,000 in Grannie Bonds. You could say we invested it, but really it's gone this year in loss of earnings. Up to starting this job 5 weeks ago, I've earned this year, £480, when I should have earned £4,000. Look at it that way. I registered as unemployed as soon as we finished, the week before Christmas, but I wasn't entitled to any benefit. I knew I wasn't, because I'd been paying a married woman's stamp. I thought there was no point in paying the full stamp really. A few years ago it changed and I could have gone onto the full stamp then, but at my age, with 10 years to go before retirement, it wasn't worth paying. So we were left living on his dole - you see my husband lost his job before me.

It's a terrible thing being made redundant and after all those years. I don't think it was the money, actually he got more redundancy for 8 years service than I got for 20. Really I think what hurt me most was that I've always worked, all my life. I've always put a lot into my work and I think I had this feeling of being finished. It's a terrible feeling and you can't know it unless you've experienced it. I got fanatical over the housework, I got silly over it really. I was just trying to fill my days and it got ridiculous - I'd go looking for bits on the carpet! I used to go out with the dog. I used to go up to the shops every morning. But I felt as if there was a shadow hanging over me. I didn't enjoy going out socially anymore, it spoilt my social life. I just felt as if I'd lost someone.

At first I hadn't been too worried. I'd marvellous references. But then I started looking for a job. I went for a job at Woolworth's, it was only a 16 hour job and I thought I'd get it, but I didn't. Then I'd written to the hospital because there was a friend of mine that works there and there was a vacancy coming up in the linen room for a machinist.

Well I thought I'd all the qualifications and the man who was in charge took me down for an interview before the job had been advertised. Everything seemed alright and I was just waiting to have it confirmed, but when it came to it, they decided to give it to a young girl. In fact she was one of my girls from Robert Hirst. Seemingly, the Health Authority had sent out a circular to take young people on. It's my age you see....I was dreading another birthday. If you can put down 49 that's not too bad but once you get to 50, you might as well be 58, it strikes people the same.

Well I tried everywhere. I wrote everywhere. Believe me, there can't be an employer in Harrogate that hasn't got a letter from me somewhere in his drawer. I was out of work for 4 months and that was the worst time. How many times did I go to that Job Centre! One morning they rang me up and said to be there the next day, not later than 9 o'clock because they'd got me an interview at some place. When I got there the interview turned out to be for 11.30 so I had to sit in a coffee bar for two hours, it wasn't worth going home with the bus fares 25p each way. I told them that I'd never do that again and that they could arrange the interview first and then I'd come. They said they couldn't do that and so I said well I wouldn't come again, but I did.

Anyway, finally I got this job at Key Electronics. It was just a morning job, 8 o'clock until 12.30. Believe me when I walked in there that morning I nearly died. They were lovely people but dirty. I mean we weren't clean at Robert Hirst, but it was chemicals you see and the smell! I didn't think I'd stick it but I did. I sort of brainwashed myself into it, more because it was somewhere to go for a morning. Anyway, I'd started there in April and after four months, half of that place went and I went with it. I was made redundant again. I was out of work for about six or seven weeks. Then I got this job in catering

at the hospital. I saw it in the paper. There were 40 or so after that one little job. We make up and serve up the meals. It's right alien to me and hard work, but I quite enjoy it. I like serving the patients. The pay is not good. The other girls make up their pay by working weekends, but I only work Mondays to Fridays. Well I say I don't do weekends, but I am working this Saturday and he's also asked me to work next Friday night, so that means I'll get home at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and then I'll have to go out again when I'm worn out, but I don't like to say no.

I do this job and I'm pretty quick but I'm a novice compared to the others. Sometimes I feel like a kid. Well it's a job I'd never have considered at one time, but now I'm glad of it. So you try, and you daren't say no to anything. Really I should say employers should have it made now, because anyone who's been made redundant, they are only too eager to please.

I'm a lot down on money now. I'm working $32\frac{1}{2}$ hours a week for £39 which isn't a lot is it, and that's paying the cheap stamp. It would be even less if I was paying the full stamp. It's supposed to be part-time but it's not is it? It's only 30 hours in our contract but he's asked us to come in half an hour earlier every day. He's putting in these extra hours to get the work done but he hasn't put it into our contracts. Well what he did say, quite honestly, he was quite fair, because I was on about how 7 o'clock wouldn't do me, and he said well if I could get in for 7.15 I'll pay you from 7 o'clock, because with you not being full time I can't pay you overtime. So I get in for about 12 minutes past. So it's really a question of whether you're better off changing the contract or keeping it this way. If it changed I'd really have to be in for 7 o'clock.

I start, as I say, just a bit after 7. We start straight-away on

the breakfasts. Making them up, loading them onto the trolleys and then we go up onto the wards to serve them. We get it all in again, get everything back down to the kitchen again and wash up - we've got a big dishwasher - and clear up. At 10 o'clock we have a coffee break for ten minutes, but we try to make it half an hour, otherwise we're working $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours with only a ten minute break. Mind you we really have to move to get that break. Sometimes we don't get it at all, it depends how many of us are on that day and who's on. But usually we do, if we go really fast and I mean fast. The sweat's pouring off us and we've no clothes on under our overalls. It's so hot in there, I can't imagine what it will be like in the summer.

After our break there's the kitchen to be scrubbed down, cookers, surfaces and walls. They get really filthy and greasy. We have to do that before we start on the dinners. We try to get the dinners up as fast as possible, because the sooner you get them out, the sooner you can finish. We get them laid up by 11.30, and we're up on the wards by 12 o'clock. We can't really give them out before then because no one's hungry. I think five minutes to twelve is the earliest we've ever managed. But sometimes you have to go and find the patients before it gets cold! We serve them up, clear them up as soon as we can and get the trolleys back down to the kitchen. We're not supposed to move the trolleys really, it's been classified as too heavy for women, but we usually do it. You can never find a porter when you want one but there's always someone off with back trouble. Then we wash up and clear up the kitchens again. We finish at 1.30, except that we never do, it's more like 1.45, but we only get paid until 1.30, and that's why we go so fast to get finished, I'm not kidding the pace is really fast. I used to think sewing was fast. There's no way I'll keep this up. I'm pretty tired when I get home.

Sometimes I think I'm an idiot. When I wasn't working I got into a routine and I just can't break that routine. So I come in one day and I'll do the bedroom and one day I'll do the lounge, one day the kitchen and so on. No matter how tired I am, I'll do it and fit in the cooking and washing as well. So I have my routine when I come in, get a quick lunch and I work until 4.50 so really I could be working full time, but the difference is that by quarter past five, I've finished for the night and I've got my weekends when I'm more or less free. When I was working at Robert Hirst I'd come in, tidy up, and by the time I'd done the meal and washed up, it would be 8 o'clock and I'd be tired out. He'd help a bit, but he doesn't have a lot of time. Really I had to do all the housework at weekends. Now I have a nice routine. I've got used to having my afternoons and weekends free, but I suppose if I worked full time now, I'd still come home and do my routine.

I never wanted part-time work, it just happened like that I suppose. But I'm grateful to have this job, very grateful. I know I couldn't manage off his wage, some people have to and I sympathise. We've got to be more careful. I did mind losing my independence. I felt that I was taking what he earned, although we've always shared everything, I just felt that I wasn't pulling my weight.

I've had to change my lifestyle. I-mean I get up now at 6 o'clock every morning. Well he has to as well, because he takes me to work. We've always been used to a holiday at Christmas but now I've got to work Christmas Day and New Year, they both fall on a Friday, and I work Fridays. I miss the people from Robert Hirst, we worked together so long that we'll never get that sort of relationship again. You may go to another job, but you can't feel your natural self somehow, perhaps I will in time.

I do like this job. I didn't think that I would. They're very nice

people but I come home exhausted. I liked the supervisors job and I would like another job like that. I don't really feel like going back onto a machine now, although I always said that I could stay on a machine until I was 75. I mean they did used to stay on the machines until that age, but I don't think I'll be able to do this when I'm that old. I think I've got used to having less money and I find that I have more time to myself. So I do like that, but I mean things could change again. He wasn't out of work long and he's working for the council now, but you know what a state they're in. They've been asking for early retirements and now they're after voluntary redundancies. So you just don't know anymore.

Anne McKenzie

I was a passer at Robert Hirst, that's quality control. All the finished garments came to me and I'd put them on a dummy and I had to inspect them to see if there were any faults. I used to get about £45 to £50 for that, take home pay that is. I used to think it wasn't fair because the passers got a percentage of the machinists' output, so if they had a bad day, we had a bad day. But I liked it there. I was there for over 5 years. Funnily enough, my mother worked there when I was a kid. When I first left school I went to work in a building contractors firm as an office junior. I worked my way up and ended up on the switchboard which I liked. I started when I was 16 and left at 18 because I was pregnant. I got married and left work as well. Well I worked right up to having Lucy, then I didn't work again until she was about 2. Then I put her in this day nursery and I got a job in the Milk Marketing Board in the laboratory. It was nice there and it was just along the road. I was there for three years until Lucy was 5 and went to school. She went from nursery school to school and then I had

to do part-time work. I've worked in an hotel as a domestic, I've helped in schools at dinner times with the school meals. I worked for a while with a small clothing firm round here. Then I went down to London and lived there for about 3½ years and Lucy went to school there. I worked for a blouse manufacturer. I enjoyed doing that. Then I came back here and I got the job with Hirsts through the employment office. So I've always worked really, there were just those couple of years I didn't.

There had been a lot of talk about closing down, but I don't think I was thinking that far ahead. Really we did quite well with redundancy pay and I thought it would keep me going for a while. I thought surely I'll be able to find a job. I've never had any problem before. Then all of a sudden I was out of work. It happened all so quickly and actually when I sat there and thought I wouldn't be going back any more, that's when it hit me. I wasn't too worried because I knew I had this money to rely on. I got £1,000 all told, which wasn't bad, and I thought if I didn't get a job in 3 months then I could sign on and I was entitled to benefit. But really I thought I'd get a job and I didn't. I went after so many jobs and had so many interviews. In shops, all kinds of shops, and then there was a job for a care assistant in an old people's home. I applied for three jobs in old people's homes, in fact. I couldn't believe it when I went for these interviews, the number of people after them and it was always the same thing, 'Well, we have so many more people to interview, we'll have to let you know, and if you don't hear from us by such and such a time, then you can take it that you were not successful'. This used to go on and on. You'd set off for these interviews full of confidence and when you came out - it was terrible.

Then of course I had domestic problems. You see we were divorced

in 1974, and that's when I went to live in London. When I came back we lived together again for another 5, nearly 6 years. I think they were the happiest times, we were more happy then than when we were actually married. I was working full time and I had £40 going into the bank every week which I could save, or spend on myself and Lucy, or on the home, because we could live on his money. We used to go on holiday while I was working at Hirst. We got some good holidays, which we wouldn't have been able to afford if I hadn't been working. We used to go out a lot socially, we had a nice car and we were able to buy clothes. Then all of a sudden everything just seemed to crumble, it all folded up, he left, he recently got married again, I lost my job. I felt shattered because I had nothing left... I was here on my own. I was sitting in the house all day, all night and I was really down and I used to think, if only I could get a job, and I did try....the two things seemed to happen together.

Financially it was very hard. You see when he left me I was still at Robert Hirst and on short time. I was working 3 days, 2 days and sometimes only one, so my wages were really down and that was the only money I had. Lucy hadn't left school then and the only other bit of income was the family allowance. I think we were existing on under £40 a week and that was with the family allowance. Of course I had the rent rebate which was a big help, and the rest I used to try and allow for. I used to think, 'God, the gas and electric bills', they'd always come at the same time. Then of course there was the telephone. I didn't want to give up the telephone because I do feel as if I've got contact with people, because I don't go out at all. In fact people would find it hard to believe, I never went out. Then there was the rental on the television, but thank God, I didn't owe anything to hire purchase. I do smoke. I used to buy cigarettes and that was the only

thing. It was a bit better when Lucy left school and we were both unemployed. I had earnings related that was added on which made it a little bit more - it worked out as £52 a fortnight. And then when Lucy left school she was able to claim straight away and her money was £30 a fortnight. So that's what we were living on. She got her money the opposite week to me, so that by the time it came round to getting her money I was there with my hand out sort of thing because mine had all gone. I'd put my redundancy pay in the building society at first, and I was trying to live off the other money that I got, severance pay and that - about one hundred odd pounds. I thought that would see me through over Christmas, but from February some time I started dipping into the building society.

It was nice during the winter, not having to go out in the bad weather. I didn't have to get up early in the cold mornings, that was the only thing I can honestly say that I enjoyed. It's a long time from December to August. I decorated, I spent quite a lot of time decorating. I used to find things to do in the morning, it was the afternoon that dragged. But I used to go out walking with Ben (the dog). I used to go miles. My mother lives around the corner, and I'd go round there. I decorated her flat whilst I was off. Towards the end they were just long days, especially if you didn't see anybody. I did the garden, nobody else would do it, so I had to. I relaxed and sat in the garden when it was a nice sunny day. I read the paper, read a book, oh I must have read hundreds of books. I think I only went into town once a fortnight, when I had to sign on. It was the only time I went into town because I didn't have any money.

Then, you won't believe this, having been all that time without a job, I got two jobs. So I had to sit down and think about it, which was the best one. One was at the hospital, as an auxillary in the

psycho-geriatric ward and that meant shift work and travelling. The other was in a supermarket and that would be just a walk around the corner. Anyway, I wanted the hospital job, I took that one and now I'm glad I did. The shifts don't worry me you see, because I've no ties. I do two shifts; 7.45 to 4.15 and 12.15 to 9 o'clock. In a week you do alternate shifts. You only work 37½ hours a week. You're still getting your time off even if you have to work Saturdays and Sundays, you get two days off in the week and every so often you get a long weekend. I get tired because it's hard work, they're not patients that are in bed. They're not always old people, some of them are young. They're lovely people and I do like the job.

You need a sense of humour for this job. There was one patient who was going through this aggressive stage and I had her on the toilet. She must wear trousers this particular lady, she gets agitated if she's showing her knees. So I had her on the toilet and she bent down pulling her trousers off and she said she'd seen mice running around behind me, and she shouted 'Oh don't let it come near me, I'll kill it', and she hit me over the head with her slipper. It knocked me off my balance and my cap was all bashed in. She was all pent up you could see and she went like that....and clawed my face. Well I came out of that toilet with my hat bashed in and my face dripped with blood! But you can't bear them any malice, they're like children. You get others that are more sensible and they're like mothers to the rest of them. You get them going off hand in hand together and they'll say 'We'll be going home now, we'll just get our coats, we'll see you again sometime', and they trot off down the ward hand in hand. They can't get out, it's locked you see. Sometimes I come home really shattered. By the time you're ready to come off you think 'God, let me out of here!' Sometimes if you've had a bad day you think 'God, for what I'm earning'. Some

days to be crude, you can be up to your armpits in shit! You do get all the dirty jobs. Everyday you earn your money.

We don't earn a lot. Now when I first started the job they told me it would be 6 weeks before I got paid and I thought, I can't go on all that time. Anyway they said I could ask for a loan and they said £100 loan would be no problem, they ended up giving me £60. Well it was ridiculous and I was borrowing off my mother and I mean she's only on a pension herself. When I finally did get my pay, I couldn't believe it. I had £199 for 6 weeks work. They had taken £178 stoppages off me. There was the £60 loan, but I'd paid £71 income tax, £17 national insurance, £22 superannuation, plus the transport and union fee. So that left me with £199. Now the council wants a statement of earnings so they can assess whether I'm still entitled to any rent rebate! I'm sort of getting used to the money now. The hourly rate is £1.69 and I get a basic pay of £275 and then additions, weekend duties and evening duties and that, bring it up to £322 a month, but then by the time everything is taken off I end up with £221 to put into the bank. But all the girls are the same, we all grumble about pay. But we won't be coming out on strike, not in our ward. We all agreed not to because in a psychiatric ward you just can't leave them. I mean it's like walking out on a room full of children.

I manage fairly well because being paid monthly, one advantage I find is that I've got that lump sum to pay off bills. I'm always overdue, but at least I can pay them. I have to make my money last the month, so I have to sort of work it out and plan. I've never got any spare. But I'm not worrying about money like I did before. As long as I can keep working, as long as I've an income, I know somehow, I will pay my bills. If I have to leave one to pay another, I'll do it that way. The telephone got paid, even though I got the disconnection card.

Now I've got the gas and electric again. I will have to pay them out of next month's money, that'll be £70, then there's the television rental, so really the first £100 is always spoken for in bills and the rest of whatever I get will be for living. I've let the TV slide for two months and I owe my mother £60.

I always used to go to the hairdressers, because I did like to have my hair done. I used to have it streaked out but I can't afford that now. The only reason I go to the hairdressers now is to have it cut. I don't buy clothes for myself, I don't actually go out to the shops anymore. I think it must be a year since I actually bought myself anything from the shops. I got one of these catalogues this year and that's the way I have to do it. I'm hoping that I should be able to afford a night out and a hairdo.

I still don't go out a lot socially, for the first few months I was sorting myself out, but I don't go out now because I'm not bothered at the moment. I could go out with the girls I work with, there's quite a social life up there, but I don't really bother much. By the time I get home from work, if I'm on lates, it's 9.30 and I'm tired. I've had a long day and I'm glad to be home. At the moment I'm happy as I am and it suits me working these kind of hours, what else would I be doing. Now I'm working, I'm enjoying my freedom. I've started to enjoy my home again, enjoying the fact that I don't have to answer to anybody. The money that's in the bank is my money and I do what I wish with it. I'm quite happy. It's a lot easier now that it's just me and Lucy. I don't have to rush in and start cooking meals, and she's good. She does quite a lot of housework and she'll do the washing. She leads her own life, she has a boyfriend and he's a nice boy, but I'd hate it if she married young like me, that would really upset me.

I'd hate to be out of work again. Sometimes I may go into town with

Lucy because she has to sign on and when we go into the labour exchange, I feel it...it brings it all back to me. I mean one day I might not want to go on working, I don't know, I might get sick of the whole thing. But I think I'll always work. I've always been so independent even when I was married. It was a case of having to be really. A job like this would be difficult if you're married, if your husband's at home weekends and you're at work. I don't want to stay like this forever though. I'd like to think that somewhere I could start a relationship with somebody because I don't want to be on my own all my life. In terms of meeting someone and having a relationship, or getting married again, I just can't see it. Sometimes when I'm coming home from work, I think well that's another day over. Sometimes I feel a bit let down coming home and there's only me and the dog, I think he's my best friend at the moment. That's sometimes how I feel, but I don't really let it get me down. I feel as if I'm missing out on something sometimes, but then again I don't. I value my independence. I'd like a man to take me out and for company, but I don't want to be washing his socks.

Rachel Lloyd

When I left school I worked in a florists for a year. I'd already been working there on Saturdays. Then I went to Robert Hirst. My friend had said they needed someone. When I was on stitching I was earning about £80 a week, but just before I left I went onto vents, and then I was getting about £55 a week. I didn't mind it when I was doing edge stitching, there was no problem, but vents! They said it was because I was left handed but I don't think it was, it just never clicked the job, at all. I used to get big rails of coats back that I'd done wrong. I think I'd been on edge stitching so long, I was used to rushing them through. I was trying to rush vents and I was cutting them up to the

armhole. It used to make me sick because I was getting told off every day. I couldn't get it right. I would have left in January anyway. I was pregnant. So it worked out right for me. I think I was the only one it benefitted really. It was funny really with me being pregnant, because all the time the rumours were going round I was thinking, I hope we do, because it meant me leaving with a lot of money. Really I felt sorry for all the girls because they wouldn't be able to get another job. I got nearly £1,000 in redundancy pay and everything. When we did get redundant I was really bored from that time to having Tracy. It was three months and it was horrible.

I didn't register as unemployed when I first left work, but I did when I had her. My husband - he's a plasterer - was unemployed at the time you see, so he could have looked after her. He was unemployed for 10 months and I was getting worried about money then. It was hard. He was getting £22 a week and when I signed on I got the same. I went after 2 or 3 jobs but then he got a job when she was 3 months old. It was horrible before he got that job. We got behind with rent and everything. With being pregnant and all, I wanted all this baby stuff, and on what he was getting (Unemployment Benefit) you couldn't do it. A lot of my redundancy went on big stuff, like the cot and pram and we had a little bit left over and we bought things that we knew we'd never be able to afford again. We both had clubs at the time, so we finished them off so we wouldn't have any debts at all and we'd got a wardrobe on HP so we paid that off. We finished paying his motorbike off that he had then. I still owe my mum £50 from then. I always had people helping, my mum used to come down and give me stuff, food and that.

We used to have a lot of arguments. All we ever argue about really is money. I think if we hadn't have had her then it would have been worse - well it might not have been because I'd have been able to get a

job. He liked to go out a lot, well he still does. Not night-clubbing every night, but he goes out quite a lot, and he couldn't afford to do anything really. For about two months I don't think we had a proper meal. We used to have beans on toast or egg and bacon, or something. It was ages before we had stewing meat or anything like that. We used to plod on really, we just got used to never having anything. Even now I have to watch my money. It takes some getting used to. Now I think, 'I'd better not buy that'. I've sort of got used to not having my own wage. I don't miss it as much as I did. Anything I want now I have to ask him for it. It used to get me depressed at first, knowing I hadn't got £5 to buy anything. I never go out anyway so I don't need anything new really. I think I might have done part-time if Robert Hirst were still going. Sometimes I think I wouldn't mind getting a part-time job, because Pete's mum said she would always look after her for me. But then with having Tracy I wouldn't just go out and do anything for money, it would have to be something I really wanted to do. I 'phoned up about one, a sewing job, but I thought it would be as boring as the one I was doing at Robert Hirst really. I wouldn't want to just leave her, especially now, you'd miss everything that they're doing. There's no point anyway now, I've just found out that I'm pregnant again.

Now we've got Tracy there's a lot more housework to do. Most things I don't mind, but ironing I hate. You have more time as a matter of fact, but it goes that quick you don't notice it. I find it easier now even though I've got a baby. I can take my own time doing it, whereas when I was working, I'd get home at 5.15 or something, and straightaway do the tea, then wash up and then I'd have to start everything at night, washing and so on. Now I can start when I want. There's a lot more work now, but it seems to equal out. You've got all day to do it, when you've got the time. When we were both unemployed he didn't do anything

then, I was 7 months pregnant and still had to do everything. After about 2 or 3 weeks I used to say 'you're off work, you should be doing it'. When I stopped nagging he started to do it. Then we shared most of the time, although I think half the time it was boredom. Women can occupy themselves more than men I think. Women will do anything. They'll go and rake a cupboard out or look around shops, but fellas don't. They just tend to sit there and stew in it, when they're out of work.

He was a great help to me when I first had Tracy. He used to take her out and get up in the night to her when I started to bottle feed her, and get up first thing in the morning with her to feed her. She's so good for him. They always say girls go for their dads, but sometimes it gets me really mad. I don't feel so pushed out now because she does play him up sometimes but I think if I went back to work and left them two together, I might as well not bother coming back home, just leave them to it. He gets her up in the morning whether she's awake or not. He'll change a nappy, but not a messy one. I thought it was a novelty at first and I thought it would wear off but it hasn't. He's really good for a fella. He's right short tempered most of the time and he quite surprised me really when we had her how different he was. I thought he'd be one of those that would moan about the noise all the time. It was a bit hard when he got a job because I didn't know what it was like looking after her all day. When he's unemployed he does everything, meals and what have you, but whenever he's in work, he does nothing.

Well he's out of work again actually - not long really, about a month. He got made redundant again. I'm not quite sure yet what we're getting (in benefit), we should be getting some supplement and that. It's not so bad because with him being in work for that while, we got paid up with bills, but when the next big electric bill comes, we'll

have to rake round to pay that. But it's been alright this time really. Before we were only getting about £30 a week for us all and she was so little then and she was still having such a lot bought, her own sort of food and that, but now she has some of what we have. I think because Pete didn't have a job for a right long time, it was a matter of making the most of it while it was there, sort of thing. Get things paid up because we know he's going to be out of work again....it's happened that many times. My mum still helps out. Like at Easter, Tracy only got one Easter egg, and everybody bought her little socks and dresses and things like that.

I miss the company from Robert Hirst, because working in a factory full of lasses, I think it was just a good laugh all the time really. We were working but we never sat and seriously worked half the time. When I first left work I missed it more. There were a few of them that went to the hospital and I used to think how they'd all be down there, like we were at Robert Hirst, in fag room, smoking and laughing and messing about, but I don't know really. I could never go back to that now, not that sort of job at Robert Hirst. The same thing over and over again each day. I think that's why you have such a good laugh in a place like that, because if you didn't you'd just go loopy with frustration. I miss the lasses I suppose. At work it was all fellas and going out to the pub and dancing and that. I miss lasses nights out, we used to have some good ones, you know, loads of lasses on nights out. I don't know, my friends are different now to what they were then, everything's changed so much. Now it's all baby talk all the time, kids and that and how different they are and what one's doing. The two really good friends that I had, they're still in full time work and they work together so in a way I felt a bit pushed out from them because I was leaving to have a baby and they think babies are boring. I've changed

so much in what I do and their lives haven't changed at all. All I've got to talk about to them is her, because that's all I ever do you see. It's like when she started walking, I told all my friends - 'she's walking now', 'oh yes' they said....and yet to you it's the biggest thing in the world.

There's no way really I'm going to work again, not until she's at school anyway. Not with two. Well I don't think I will. When I was signing on I thought I might get a job, I won't be a housewife - I didn't really think of myself as a housewife anyway - but that was before she was walking. There's more to do now. We go to the swings and run about on field. I enjoy looking after her more now. I don't want to miss anything really. When she's at school and maybe this next one's at playschool, I'll maybe get a morning job or something. I think I'd need to then to fill the gap. I wouldn't know what to do all day, there'd be nothing to do except normal housework. I think before, we needed the money so much, and that was the main reason I wanted a job. I mean we could still do with the money, but I think it's not worth giving up - I mean sometimes she drives me nuts but most of the time it doesn't bother me. It's funny really because I know this woman and her little girl is only a month older and she's always saying to me 'don't you miss being able to go out and not having to bother about baby sitters', as if she really hates it, being a mother. I just say no. I mean as soon as she was born, I just accepted it as part of my life now. Sometimes when I'm talking to her it makes me feel guilty for enjoying looking after her.

I get these parents magazines and I read in there about these women whose houses become prisons, you know and I can't really understand what it's like. But I can imagine it really getting on top of you if you don't see anybody else, you're on your own with them all day. It's no

wonder you get those child batterers and that. Because I mean she's really good most of the time, for her age and that, she's quite good to look after, just a bit stubborn, but they all are, but I've seen some kids that would drive me nuts. I don't love it all the time, there are times when I could easily dump her off at my mum's for the weekend when she's getting on my nerves. I think most of that is because I'm pregnant and I've got so much on my mind, so much to do.

I get out quite a lot. I think if I didn't know anybody to go and see, I'd hate it. There's my mum, and Pete's mum and my grandmother and they're my family that I go and see. I see them about once a week each. Then I've got a couple of close friends that I know really well, that I used to know years ago, school time. I don't like stopping in. I get everything done in the morning, and then go out especially when it's nice weather. The days go quickly really.

I feel I never want to work again, well not at the moment. To me it seems sort of humdrum now - working. When I first had Tracy I used to love just going out in my own time to see people and things like that. I always say if I ever went back to work I'd never go back on piece work, where you have to get so many out by dinner time and all this. That's one thing I enjoy about not working, doing it in my own time, at my own pace. I could never go back to that sort of job at Robert Hirst. I think really I wouldn't like to go back to the routine of work. You still sort of get into a routine even if you're at home all the time, ironing builds up, beds all need changing and stuff like that, but I wouldn't really like to go back to work, you know, get the same bus every day at the same time. I think I get more fulfilment out of looking after her than doing a job where I'm doing the same thing every day. If I did go back to work it would have to be something really interesting, really different.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A WORKING LIFE

This chapter looks at the impact of a period of unemployment on the lives of the women from Robert Hirst. Unemployed women are rarely the subject of investigation. There are particular research difficulties in looking at unemployed women, both in terms of enumeration and categorisation, and for these reasons unemployed women may actually be excluded from research (Roberts, 1981). The danger of such omission however is that it is easy to assume that there is not a problem. Male unemployment, on the other hand, may often be assumed to be a condition of almost pathological disorder;

First there is shock, which is followed by an active hunt for a job, during which the individual is still optimistic and unresigned, he still maintains an unbroken attitude. Second, when all efforts fail, the individual becomes pessimistic, anxious and suffers active distress; this is the most crucial state of all. And third, the individual becomes fatalistic and adapts himself to his new state with a narrower scope. He now has a broken attitude (Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld, 1938, p.378, quoted in Sinfield, p.37).

Whilst this stereotype does not correspond to research findings (Pahl, 1982, p.91), there are reasons to suppose that there may be differences in the experience of unemployment for men and women, comparable to, and arising from, the differentiation of men and women's employment.

If male unemployment is assumed to be a problem of great proportions, it is because of an implicit understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of work in a man's life. The loss of a man's wage usually means the loss of the major family income, and male unemployment is a major cause of increasing family poverty (Bell and McKie, 1984). However the problems are not solely economic. In a work orientated society, unemployment means the loss of structure, and meaning in daily life. Most importantly, work dominates men's sense of themselves, as men (Cockburn, 1983; Tolson, 1977), and unemployment can hit at the very roots of men's self esteem and masculine identity. Men are socially defined as wage earners and family breadwinners and it is through employment that they fulfil their male role. More than this, Willis (1977) has argued that the wage form is a crucial expression of masculinity. The male wage packet he suggests is a 'symbol of machismo' (p.150). Consequently unemployment for men represents a lot more than the loss of a wage as an income, it is the loss of a breadwinner wage, an economic and social role, and a place in the world of men. Work and masculinity are absolutely interwoven and in unemployment men are more than workless, they have lost the very point of their existence as men, to work and support a family.

Almost by antithesis, the assumption made about female unemployment, is that women do not suffer anything like the same problems as men. This is because firstly, the loss of a woman's wage will not have the same economic effects on the family as it is a secondary income, and secondly, the female role and femininity is not primarily sited in paid employment. It is possible to construct this view because of the context in which women have entered paid employment. Women now make up a large proportion of the workforce and are in employment for most of their adult lives, with only a relatively short break for childbirth and childcare, yet (as has been discussed in Chapter One) the increased participation of women in the

labour force has occurred without significantly eroding the ideology of domesticity and maternalism, which squarely sites women's role and femininity within the home and family. Although there is recognition of women's paid employment, it has remained tethered to the family in ideology and in material fact, by women's unpaid domestic work in the home. Whilst women seemingly straddle the spheres of paid and unpaid work, it allows both for the idea that women's relation to paid work is different from men's, and that in unemployment women do not suffer as men do. Simply it can be claimed that in unemployment, women are economically supported by their men, and occupied by the domestic. If anything, women's unemployment might resolve the implicit tension of their double life. As in employment, so in unemployment, gender ideology comes to the forefront to interpret women's experiences.

As more research is undertaken on the experience of unemployment, it becomes clear that unemployment is not a singular experience and the impact of job loss varies within the context of varying personal circumstances. As Pahl (1982) has stated, 'unemployment will mean different things to different people in different times and in different places' (p.91). This should be equally true for women. The women from Robert Hirst were not a homogenous group, and they provided the possibility to interrogate the differences between women (and between men and women).⁽¹⁾ These women were variously married, single, divorced, and widowed, of a range of ages, and with and without dependent children. There were considerable differences between women in the extent to which they could be supported and occupied by the family. It depended both on whether women had a family to support them, and whether they were at a point in their life cycle where they could, or would want to be reabsorbed by the domestic. It was not necessarily the case at all that the family, and women's domestic role within it, could reconcile women to their job loss. There

cannot be a single experience of unemployment shared by all women, rather there is some variety in the dominant patterns of experience.

Supported by the family?

The most common assumption that is made about female unemployment is that it does not cause the same financial hardship as it does for men. In fact a number of women did not have men to support them (See Appendix Two, Table 2). Whether single, divorced, separated or widowed, such women were dependent on their own wage earning capacity.⁽²⁾ It was these women on their own who were the group most vulnerable to poverty through job loss. They only 'managed' by having unheated houses, going nowhere, and eating little, as the two following recounts illustrate;

I was earning about £90 a week at Robert Hirst and I found that quite adequate. When I signed on I started with £27 a week with earnings related, now I get £25. I am very tight at the moment. The rates come in, I had to pay those, then the water rates have to be paid. I've just got in the electricity bill and the gas bill will be in next. I make sure that I pay the bills first before I have food. I've always done that. I have meat on Sundays and that's all. During the week I get fruit and vegetables and they are my main source of food. I might have a couple of slices of bread or some bread rolls from my neighbour and I'll use those. I don't get out. I miss the money and I miss the work. It took me out of the house and I wouldn't need to use any gas or electricity. I don't put anything on at the moment but if it gets any colder I will have to.

I didn't get much redundancy because I left and then went back again. It just paid the rates. Well when I first went on the dole, I went to the Social and I said to the girl 'how do you expect anybody to manage on that?' She said 'I know it isn't much'. I said 'I live on my own, I have my rent to pay, I have my rates to pay, my electric and my gas, four essentials'. She wrote it all down and she said 'that leaves you with £2.15p to live on'. I said 'how do you do that?' Well I'm just scratching about. I'm at rock bottom.

When it can, the family did offer support to unemployed members, be they wives, husbands or children;

It probably wasn't quite so bad for myself and others like me who were married, because we had our husbands at work. It was a case of adjusting really.

Well I got rid of the car, but I've not had real difficulties because my wife's the main wage earner now.

I didn't think I'd be able to manage so me mum said if I ever got stuck she'd help me out so that eased it a bit you know. Me mum and dad said not to worry and if I couldn't afford to pay me board or owt, they'd keep me until I found a job.

However, the most common experience for married women was that their family households were not able to support them in this way. Nationally, only one in five men in work are the sole 'breadwinners' for their family,

and very often male wages are too low to provide all family needs. This was reflected in the case study and in Harrogate and Castleford a woman's wage proved to be a crucial contribution to the family household income, so that even with a man around there was not a woman, nor a household that did not notice the absence of her wage. On the whole it was not a case of destitution, (although it might become so over a long period), but of nagging worry. Some newly married women found themselves faced with financial commitments that they knew they couldn't meet on one wage.

Well we'd just got married, and we're buying the house and I didn't know how we were going to cope.

When I was first made redundant and I thought I was never going to get a job, then I felt very guilty and cried, thinking that we weren't going to be able to manage.

Married women with dependent children were confronted with what they always knew. A man's wage is not enough to live on.

Well my husband's not on a very good wage. I just do without. I don't buy the things I used to buy. When a woman is working I think you put a lot more into the house. We used to eat a lot of meat. The boys liked steak and chips and things like that. Well they don't get it now. They get mince and they get beefburgers and they get sausages. When I was working I could do it but I can't now, but they don't moan. When I've run out of money and I say 'right it's beans on toast tonight', they never pull a face. They're not that sort of family that will moan.

When you've only got one man's wage coming in,
it's a terrible worry...you're always scrimping.

Without exception these women, and men in fact, felt that two wages were necessary to maintain a family household, and where there are no longer two wages being earned, considerable difficulties were experienced. Rather than being concealed, the benefits of a woman's wage were very visible. A husband's wage tends to pay for the big regular bills, mortgage, rent, fuel, rates and so on, and the women pay for the daily and weekly items, food, clothing and transport. They are not insignificant 'extras' and when the income for this expenditure is lost, it has to be found from some other source. It is not always easy for the one wage to meet all of the outgoings as financial commitments are made on the assumption of two regular incomes. Moreover, it is not unusual to find husband and wife both out of work;

Well it's been difficult. He's been drawing
unemployment you know but we've had to dip into
his redundancy and we didn't really want to.
We've managed to pay our bills, but we've just
had to go without things. It's been hard, it's
obvious it's going to be.

But women experience much more than financial hardship through the loss of their wage. Not only has a woman's wage secured a better standard of living for the family, but for women themselves it has brought financial independence within the family. Women from Robert Hirst directly attributed their independence to their paid employment and the loss of this independence can prompt a personal crisis, commensurate with that men experience over the loss of their breadwinner status.

For once in my life I feel as though I'm being
kept and I've never had that feeling, I've always

been very independent, so now I tend to ask his advice on things whereas before I'd have just done it. I've felt it terribly that loss of independence. I've never been kept by anyone and I think it's terrible. Sometimes he'll say 'is that your second packet of cigarettes today?' Well at one time I'd have said 'well who's buying them?' but I can't now. I say 'oh well I'm not buying one tomorrow'. You lose your independence.

I don't like being dependent. My husband is very good, but it's not my money.

I think I've got a pretty generous husband. If I'd have said I wanted to go to Leeds for a day but couldn't afford it, he would have given me something to go with. But I missed having my own independence. I did miss that a lot, being able to get ready and go where I wanted and do what I wanted and buy what I wanted.

I got so fed up by the end. I missed having a bit of money in my purse that I could call my own.

Occupied within the family?

Because women combine their paid work with their unpaid work in the home, it is easy to construct a female experience of unemployment, where women 'return' to the domestic and the family and therefore do not suffer in the way that men may, with a surplus of unstructured, unfocussed time. An extreme version of this retreat back into the family during unemployment,

is for a woman to have a baby, and a small number of women from Robert Hirst did in fact have babies after being made redundant. However it is difficult to establish a direct casual link with redundancy and motherhood since the women were of an age when they'd have babies anyway. The pressures on women to have children are always enormous;

We had a couple of friends and they'd already had babies and then came the Christmas parties and getting drunk and everything like that and Pete's mum saying 'oh isn't it time you started a family? What's wrong with you? Don't you love each other or something?'

and job loss can provide that extra incentive;

You see at Christmas because I didn't have a job, and I thought I wanted to try anyway, and we decided. We'd been married for three years and so we decided to start a family.

Pregnancy and childbirth gives rise to a period in women's lives when they are least rooted in the labour market and are centrally located in the house. Motherhood is a legitimate alternative to working, especially if work had never been enjoyed;

I've always wanted to finish work, for the last few years I've wanted to pack it in but I just kept going. My husband thought it was a shame it was closing down but he was glad because he's always wanted me to stop at home. He always has, from us being married. He just likes me being here when he comes home from work.

Yet, motherhood may be double edged, for women face many of the problems of unemployment; isolation, boredom and the loss of their wage. The

following comments illustrate how babies can be both the cause of isolation and at the same time seem to make it easier;

I miss my friends. If I hadn't got her and I'd have been at home all day by myself, not had a job, I'd have been bored stiff, but with her I'm alright.

Well I went out on Saturday night and that was the first time for a year. My mother babysat. I enjoyed it but I've always been a homebird, I like stopping in, it doesn't bother me but I do miss time on my own now and again. I miss the girls.

The bonus of staying at home with a child is a more leisurely day, over which women have some autonomy and control and a marked contrast to the intensified work that they have just left;

I think I have more time now. I definitely don't get bored but I do have more time on my hands, when I can sit down and have a cup of coffee and just relax for a bit, even if it's only fifteen minutes, which is one thing I couldn't do at work.

The second wage is badly missed however, so much so that the decision to give up work doesn't always end at childbirth. These women wavered over their decision not to work and financial need was weighed against practical difficulties. Pregnancy did not necessarily prompt an immediate redefinition of labour market position. All the pregnant women claimed maternity benefit, or unemployment benefit (depending on their entitlement) up to and after the birth of their babies. They remained technically in

labour market long after redundancy, and often several months after the birth of their child. The combination of the practical difficulties of working with a child, and an ideology of motherhood which made women feel they should remain at home to look after their child, finally led all the new mothers to the decision not to seek work. Yet that shift of emphasis in a woman's life does not occur easily or quickly, and a lot is given up. In the end the decision to remain at home is resolute, if with periodic hankerings, in the face of what is really, not much of a choice.

I think you need two wages, definitely, but we are managing on one. We've never gone mad, we've always tried to live on so much a week, but with the little one we spend more. There's a place near here and they've been advertising for night-shift vacancies, Monday to Thursday and it's been in my mind to go. But I talked it over with Jim. But I've worked long enough and with him being so small I'll wait. I'll go out when he starts school if I want to.

Well we manage on one wage, we have to. My husband he got made redundant and he's just got a job, so it's been hard for us. You daren't dip into your redundancy money because you need it for bills. He was out of work six months. I did think about getting a job when he got made redundant, but then I thought it wasn't really fair of me going out while she was a baby, so I changed my mind. When she goes to school I'll probably get a part-time job, but I wouldn't leave her with anybody now. When she's at school, yes.

There's no way I'll go back to work now I've got him because I'd never leave him for someone else to bring up. I want to bring him up on my own, well with my husband of course. I can't see how some mothers can go in for a baby, have it, and then palm it off on someone else to look after until it goes to school.

There was one girl where I worked, she had a little boy and three weeks after she had him she handed him over to her mother and was back at work, full-time. I think the first couple of years are vital really and they grow up that fast. And I thought, well she's not even going to see him grow up. My grandparents brought me up and I can truthfully say there's more of a bond with them than there'll ever be with my parents. I think that's what's influenced me in waiting to bring him up myself. I don't even think of getting a job now.

Not all young women were ready for babies. One nineteen year old explained why she had not opted for motherhood;

If I'd been a bit older I could have had a baby, but you see I'm nineteen and we need some new doors on this place.

and illustrates how a retreat into, and occupation within the family is neither possible nor wanted by the majority of women. For young unmarried women it makes no sense at all,⁽³⁾ for work is all important in providing money and social independence outside of their families;

I miss the people. Work is company, its meeting people. When I've been working I've quite enjoyed it but when I'm out of work it's not very nice. When you're working at least I know that I've got some money of my own to spend.

Whilst the domestic is all too ready to ensnare them;

I do all the jobs that a housewife would do. I do most of the housework and the shopping and the cooking. I sometimes do the washing, but she doesn't really trust me with that. My mother works until five o'clock, so when she comes home she likes to relax.

I find it very depressing and I have these phases where I burst out into tears and everything because I get right upset about not working. Me mum doesn't help. She gives me work to do around the house.⁽⁴⁾ I suppose it does help her because she goes out at eight o'clock so it does help her a lot if when she comes home she has nothing to do.

Even amongst married women with families, there was a certainty that they could not afford not to be wage earners, nor would they want to be fully occupied with the family. There is however a very distinctive response to redundancies amongst married women. It is an opportunity to have a 'rest'.⁽⁵⁾ It is not something that would have been chosen, but in the event if it happens, redundancy is a release from an exhausting life, in the factory and in the home;

Well to bring that money home you had to work like heck for it and sometimes you didn't dare

go to the toilet because every single minute counted. You daren't otherwise the minutes ticked away and that was the worst thing, because in .12769 minutes you had to do so many trousers...it knocked your number down and then you had to work to try and get them up again. Even then you couldn't really go too mad because I cut a few chunks out of my fingers now and again. It used to be terrible. Not very much got done because as soon as I came in I'd cook a meal, but that was my lot. I just used to sit in front of the fire. I must admit I did like being off work.

I don't know how I did it. I used to have a routine. Mondays I used to come home and do upstairs. Tuesdays I did down here, Wednesdays I washed. I did my dad's washing as well and I did his bungalow out on Friday nights. Well I still do that. But then I did it all after I'd finished work. I did the shopping on Wednesdays, it's late night then. I still do that, but I haven't got a routine at all now. I've gone to pot!

Given the pressure of their lives, it is impossible for women not to have an ambivalent response to job loss. In the early weeks many cupboards were cleared out, rooms redecorated and curtains washed;

Being at home was nice to start with. It was nice because I was able to pick up all what I

hadn't done, or what I'd have to fit in between working. Things like having a good clear out and emptying cupboards. All the things you put off.

I had plenty to do at first. I decorated all upstairs.

I'd been promising to decorate the place and this year I got it done. I've decorated inside and out. I've started tiling the floor now.

Women do occupy themselves with the household and perhaps more readily than men can, since women already have a place and occupation there, and men do not. But in the longer term it is not an alternative to employment. They miss their wage;

It was actually a bit of a break at the time, a welcome break. It's when the money runs out that you feel it. Naturally I thought it was a bit hard, you get used to going out to work and having that independence and that money. You don't feel it so much at first because the redundancy carries you over for a certain period. When you've caught up with things at home, that's when it begins to tell. It's the money, prices still keep going up and bills have to be met.

Moreover, they are essentially working women, and work provides more than a wage, it provides social meaning. Once the pressure eased, household jobs were done, all the problems of surplus unstructured time emerge. Boredom sets in as the common experience.

You don't miss it straight away you see, you've got your redundancy money....Then I got everything done and then I got bored. I couldn't stop all day long in the house. I wouldn't like to spend all day in the house clearing up, every day for ever.

Although working women never seem to have enough time, when they are unemployed they have too much time, without structure and in isolation;

I got bored but now that I'm working again I realise I shouldn't have been really. But you miss people. You sort of tend to live in your own little world.

The previous pace of life is missed. A working life is one which is fully engaging. Unemployment can appear to be the end of everything;

I've been doing a lot of knitting to pass the time. You get up in the morning, give them their breakfast, then you decide you're going to start your housework, you know you've got no need to rush it, so you linger, you do a bit more than you usually do. You take your time going to the shops, probably meet up with the neighbours that you haven't seen for years and stop and have a chinwag with them. Come home, do the tea for the men coming in. I'd rather be rushed off my feet. When I was working I used to come home, dash to the shops, a quick flip round the shops, come home start the tea, flash round with the Hoover and duster. I'd dash up and have a bath and be off somewhere for the evening. Now I seem

to be missing out on everything. When you've
worked all your life, and you come to this point,
you just feel as if your life's come to a standstill.

The fact of the matter is that although the sexual division of labour within the family appears almost unchanging, women have changed rather a lot. Women still undertake most of the housework, but in itself - housework - is not the root of female identity (see Oakley, 1976). Women's role is now rooted in the social relationships of family and work. This growing significance of work in women's lives is illustrated by the fact that the majority of the women from Robert Hirst could not, whilst unemployed, make a meaningful life out of the domestic.

The impact of unemployment on women, can only be properly understood by a consideration of the meaning of work in women's lives. Male unemployment is understood in this context, whereas there has been a tendency both to underestimate the importance of work for women, and to fail to appreciate the differences between women. Paradoxically, it is younger women who most conform to the ideological representation of femininity. Although in full-time work without the same domestic commitments or responsibilities, they are the ones least rooted in, and committed to their paid employment (Pollert also notes this amongst the women in her case study). Sharpe (1976) has argued that girls start anticipating maternity and homemaking in adolescence (pp.173-4 and p.206). It was the case that the younger women from Robert Hirst, single and married, have the most invested in the 'promise' of femininity. As young working class women they had few options. Jobs were not chosen, they happened;

They kept asking you what you'd like to do and
I kept saying I'd like to work with children and
they kept saying wouldn't you like to work in a
factory, and I ended up in a factory. At the
time it was the only thing going.

I thought of being a model.⁽⁶⁾ I was a beauty queen you see, but my mum wouldn't let me. I'll stay in tailoring now, the money's good and me and my boyfriend are almost engaged. You can always get work in tailoring.

Their low wages keep them in the family, where they have little autonomy.

She's right funny about me going out, with me being the only girl you see, she doesn't realise that I have go to out, I'm eighteen you see. One minute she's saying please yourself, the next minute she's trying to stop me going out. I never bring boys home.

An often stifling existence within working class family life and in unskilled work is escaped through an ideology of romance and marriage. Their release will be through a man and children of their own. It is in fact their only real option and romanticism convinces them that their marriage will not be anything like their mother's, and their family quite unlike the one from which they need to escape. They are both 'saved by and locked within, the culture of femininity' (McRobbie, 1978).

For young women the span of working time before maternity, is one in which a husband is found and a home put together. Paid employment is a financial necessity in this process, but all the while they are marking time whilst the withdrawal from is anticipated. For young married women this may be a clearly defined goal, or only a vague assumption about the future. The potency of this dream of femininity is illustrated when it sets the expectations of even single young women, even when their reality indicates no reason for it.

I don't have a regular boyfriend, but I've started saving me bottom drawer.

It is older married women, those who return to work after a period of full-time domesticity, that reveal a strong commitment to work. This is often concealed by the fact that paid employment has to be fitted in with looking after children and undertaking the unpaid domestic work of the family household. Yet although domesticity has life long implications for women at this point in the life cycle, it becomes a diminishing part of a woman's life. It is easy to continue to define women in terms of the domestic, as sometimes the sheer quantity of the work involved, and the constraints it imposes seem enormous. Yet it is women's paid work which has provided the basis for female economic and social emancipation.

The Dual Role

If women's job loss is really to be understood in the context of their dual role, then the interplay of the two spheres of family and work need to be established, rather than assuming that the family is the dominant sphere. The concept of women's dual role itself, records fundamental economic and social change. It is child-bearing which biologically divides men and women, but it is childcare and housework on which hinges the socially constructed sexual division of labour between men and women. Whilst the responsibility for childcare and housework remains women's alone, it both defines women's place in the home and justifies it being there. Yet even this seemingly intractable domestic division has changed. Housework once justified a woman's existence in the home. Women gave up work on marriage to perform a feminine role, which was essentially to service the wage earner. Now in itself, domestic labour is not a reason for women remaining at home. It is small children that require full-time caring, but as they grow older, a woman's role broadens, so that in addition to providing a domestic service, women participate in the task of wage earning. This second entry into the labour market is the

predominant female working pattern, and also typical for many of the women of Robert Hirst (see Appendix, Table 3).

When I had our family I finished work and I stayed at home for nine years. I didn't believe in leaving them and going out to work. I stayed with them because I always got pleasure out of them. It was a bit of a struggle. Then when my eldest was nine, I went back to work, part-time. I worked 9.30 to three o'clock. I used to take them to school, pick them up and bring them home.

I left work when I had my first child. Then with nobody about (to help) I didn't work at all. I'd nobody to fall back on, like grannies. So I took my first job when they were at school. my youngest was seven. It was great because I worked from ten o'clock to three o'clock and all the holidays I used to have off. I think it's essential for your children to know that you're there.

I started when the children started school. They were good they let me come in when I could and then as the children got older, I gradually worked up my hours.

I went back to work when she started school at four and a half. I worked in Woolworths for two years. The manager let me go in at 9.05

because I had to take Suzanne to school and then a new manager came and we had to be behind the counter by nine. Well, that made all the difference to me. I left and went to Robert Hirst. I went part-time. They were good like that, but it was worth their while really. Sometimes they got more out of someone who worked thirty hours, than someone who worked forty hours.

It is unusual for women to return to full-time work after having a baby, simply because it is practically too difficult. If however decent childcare arrangements can be made, it is often easier to combine full-time work with very small children. School hours dictate women's hours, whereas the provision of care for pre-school children can be more flexible.

When I had my daughter I was home six months. We'd just got used to living on one wage and then he was out of work. A friend of mine looked after Anna, so I could work. My husband was not too happy about it, but he more or less accepted it after a few weeks. I was full-time at first and when she started school at five, I went part-time.

These women's remarks are revealing of both the pleasure and struggle of full-time childcare and the gradual way in which women re-enter work. Women 'build up' the time spent in paid work as their children get older, but the management of both paid and unpaid work is so finely balanced that the co-operation of employers is crucial. Five minutes difference in starting time can determine whether a woman is able to do a job or not. These women have participated in paid work insofar as existing childcare provision allows it, and the practical limitations are quite explicitly

linked to ideas about motherhood;

I don't believe in women leaving your children.

I do think a woman needs to be at home until a

child starts school at least. I think they

miss a lot, they miss their babyhood.

Riley (1979) has argued that the restatement of the ideology of motherhood after the Second World war, propped up the State's failure to meet women's need for pre-school childcare provision.

The personal account of Rachel Lloyd in this case study indicates that childcare can indeed be very rewarding and pleasurable, especially in contrast to much of the soul destroying, boring and monotonous work that so many women are forced into. It can be one of the most positive and rewarding periods of a woman's life, but many problems arise with the privatisation of childcare; isolation and the lack of choices. In the absence of socialised childcare provision, if women want to return to work before their children are at school, they have to both find private solutions and face possible ostracism. At school age that changes. The State takes responsibility for the education of children from the age of five, and then, as an unintended consequence, both makes it alright for women to leave their children, and provides socialised childcare; millions of women in Britain have entered paid employment by the back door.

Once the period of the intensive care of children is over, the next stage is to provide a decent standard of living for them and that is purchased through the women's wage. In the 1950's and 1960's, women, working-class women especially, began to return to work to acquire for their children the education, experiences and opportunities that they themselves had never had (Jephcott, 1962; Zweig, 1952). Married women return to work, not for themselves, but for their children, and

femininity is saved. Work is not a negation of women's role, rather the 'new femininity' includes paid work, as one aspect of being a wife and mother.

When I first started going out to work, I had the four children at home. And with four children growing up they were quite expensive. For instance my eldest daughter wanted to do typing and shorthand, and my money paid for her to have lessons.

I mainly went back to work so that we could afford a holiday, but then Steven was at school until he was eighteen and so was my daughter and it was very hard. I don't know what I'd have done if I hadn't been working at that time. They couldn't have had what they did really.

I've always worked because I've had to. I don't know where the idea that women work for pin money comes from. When my sons were young they both had a good education, both of them had special tutoring which I couldn't have done if I hadn't worked. I couldn't have given them the education if I hadn't worked, it would have been impossible on one wage. People work because they have to work, I don't think anybody does it for any other reason. I think it's always been essential for anyone who wanted the better things in life, for a woman to work as well.

The full significance of women's paid employment, is not manifest, even to women themselves, because of the ideological parameters in which it is set. The return to paid employment is justified as a contribution to the family needs, not something for women themselves. Almost by accident paid work has provided women with independence which only becomes apparent in extreme circumstances.

I've had to do these things. You see I've got seven children. I got married at sixteen and I'd had five of them by the time I was twenty-one. He was a seaman, my husband - my first husband - and he came from Skye. Well the women walk three paces behind their husbands up there. Then he started drinking heavily and when he was at home it was nothing to him to drink a bottle of whisky in the morning and then start ructions in the house. He set fire to the house once with the kids in it. The trouble really started when the kids started to grow up. The girls were about fourteen and wanted to go to dances, buy clothes and wear make-up and all that, and men get awfully jealous of their girls. He wouldn't let them go out and chased the boys away. So anyway I didn't see why my kids should have to put up with that, so I left. I had seven kids when I left him and they were all going to school. Since then I've always worked to support them. I've never claimed any money off him because I didn't want him to know where I was.

Moreover, although women recognise the independence they derive from

their wage, the emancipating qualities of waged labour are hardly that apparent, when for women it is combined with an enormous quantity of unpaid domestic labour. Women's paid work is made possible by a finely tuned, highly rationalised domestic 'routine'. Aided by pressure cookers, electric oven timers and late-night shopping, women perform and undertake an exhausting work load. It has been intensified and reorganised, but not reduced or shared;

I do as much as I can before I go to work in the morning, because I'm so tired when I come home. I go out at lunch time, we only have half an hour, and do the shopping. The big shopping I call for on my way home. I tend to prepare the meals the night before. Washing I do at the weekends. Big jobs, washing windows and ironing, I do on Sundays. I'm not a religious person.

When I get up in the morning, I've not much to do because I've done it the night before. I get his shirt and things out, and I do the breakfast things before I go to bed. When I come home from work on the night time, I do an evening meal. If I have some washing I do that then. If it is summer-time I peg it out, if not, I put it out the following morning before I go to work. Friday night I go to the late night opening to do the shopping, my big shop, and the rest will be done at the weekend. I've accepted that I have to do it and that's it.

I think if you sit and think, oh I've got to do so and so, it makes you feel worse, whereas if you get on with it, it's soon done.

Women perform a bone-grinding schedule of work without any significant assistance from men;

If I was ill he'd do it, but because I'm at work and he doesn't want me to go out to work, I have to fit it in for myself. I wouldn't ask him. It would be an excuse for him to say, 'if you can't do your housework, don't go out to work'. I'd have to be ill, I'd have to be dying! He's washed up sometimes. If he wants to get to the sink and I've not washed up, then he will.

Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon he might wash up, but he's hopeless. It's harder work trying to get him to do it than doing it yourself.

He doesn't do anything unless I ask him. He'll wash the pots and leave them draining. I'll say to him 'you can bring the washing in'. If I didn't say it to him, it wouldn't dawn on him to do it. It's not that he's lazy, it's just that he doesn't think. I think it's more or less my fault. I did everything from when I first got married and I think if you do that you sort of burden yourself.

Where men do participate, they tend to be rather selective in what they do;

He likes cooking. He likes to cook a meal, but he wouldn't wash up, won't vacuum, nor make the beds. He's not domesticated.

There was only one case of a husband doing most of the housework, and there is a reason for this unusual behaviour;

My husband does the cooking, he makes the dinner, plus he tidies up for me, vacs round, makes the bed. He does the basic things everyday. I'm lucky that way. I think why it came about was, unfortunately when he was seventeen, his mother was taken to hospital with TB and my husband was the only one you see, so he had to buckle in and look after himself and his dad. So he had a pretty good training.

Contrary to Young and Willmot's (1975) assertion that men are increasingly helping with domestic labour, the evidence here is that men on the whole, do not participate in their own domestic reproduction. Rather they require special attention themselves;

I've worked all my married life, except for those months when I had Anna. He's the sort of person who likes to feel he's being looked after. As long as he's got clean things to wear and he's got a meal to come home to, then I'm giving him attention and in that respect he's alright. But if I didn't bother with him and he thought I was just getting on with my job.. He sometimes turns round and says 'don't get doing too much, you'll make yourself poorly'. I do get run down. I have to take extra iron and calcium sometimes.

Men require the kind of servicing, which in the end forced one women with grown up children, to change her full-time job for a part-time one.

My husband would have got worse. You see when I was at Robert Hirst I came in at 4.40, and he came in at five o'clock, so it worked out nicely. I was here to do his tea and his breakfast. With the new job I was working until eight o'clock of a night one week and starting at seven o'clock in the morning the other week. I tried always to have something in the oven for when he came in and things like that. I'm lucky really because he doesn't say 'you can't do this or that' because he knows if I really want to do it, I'd do it. But he was getting a bit mad. It quietened him down when I said I'd get a part-time job.

There are probably both class and generational differences amongst men in the amount of housework they will undertake. Castleford, in particular, is not just a working class town, but a coal mining town, the very heartland of masculinity (see Dennis et al, 1979). Amongst young married couples without children, it was noticeable that men did a little more housework than their older counterparts, but once a woman stayed at home, having had a baby, there was a slide into a more orthodox allocation of the domestic. Once at home, women inevitably take on more and more of the domestic work.

He'd vacuum and make the beds, wash out the bathroom. I'd just say 'well you do this and I'll do this'. Or if we got home at the same time, he'd make the tea, while I did my work.

Now I can manage it all during the day. When
I was working I was trying to fit it all in.
Now I've got my days planned out for each job.

Some evenings he'd cook the meal. Or while I'd
clean up, he'd polish or Hoover. We'd muck in
together. We shared it. We've got a very good
relationship I'm glad to say. He'll still wash
up of an evening, or cook the meal if I'm busy
with the baby.

On the whole there was an acceptance of this allocation of work insofar
as it was deemed immutable. Although a small number of women were
clearly trying to establish different patterns in their children;

I've always made my boys do their own bedroom.
And they'd do jobs for me as they got older.
My boys can clean this house better than any
girl. I've got a friend and her boys do
nothing and the girls clean up and do the
dishes. Those boys don't move a cup. Well I
don't believe in that. My husband was brought
up lazy.

Changing Roles?

The number of men in this case study is very small and huge general-
isations cannot be made from their experiences, but they do offer some
basis of comparison with the women.

In looking at the men's responses to unemployment, it is clear that
their personal crisis is often prompted because they do not have any
real relation to the domestic. Men cope with unemployment in similar
ways to women, in that they try to occupy themselves more in the home.

Usually they take on house repairs, house decorating and such 'appropriate' tasks. Sometimes they take over the housework, to the extent they threaten to displace their wives, but on the whole male unemployment is not prompting a recasting of domestic divisions and organisation. In fact Bell and McKie have indicated that unemployment is hardening and reinforcing attitudes towards traditional male and female roles (p.18). Being at home reinforces their demoralisation, as one worker from Robert Hirst illustrates;

I'd go to the Job Centre, come home, do nothing much. I lost interest in a lot of things. I didn't do anything around the house I just hated it, it was degrading, it was a nightmare. I got the feeling that I was never going to work again.

And bears out Pahl's idea, that in unemployment, the family may become a threat to men;

If unemployed men do not have the provider role, and they cannot or will not take on the nurturant role, then the family may become a more threatening social world, undermining self-esteem.(p.93)

Men did enjoy aspects of being at home more, having time with their children, even the luxury of watching television during the day. The daily grind of work was not missed by men either but the structure and the social relations it created were. Moreover, unemployed men in the home, are invading a wife's terrain. Many women found this loss of space and natural order difficult to bear. It is a recipe for domestic tension;

I quite enjoyed having him at home at first but then I got resentful, even though I knew the circumstances. I was going out to work, and

doing the housework and he stayed at home doing nothing. He was always there, do you know what I mean?

He was absolutely bored stiff. I could find something to do, clean drawers out or something, but he couldn't. I'd rather him go to work and his tea's ready when he comes home, so you're in a routine of your own, but when they're at home you just can't get anything done. You get used to having the house to yourself during the day.

Women's unemployment does not cause the same problem. It can actually enhance men's domestic lives.

Well everything's done now when he gets in. He knows his meals will be ready on time, and he can just sit down for the night.

Well my husband isn't very fond of housework and doesn't like getting his own meals ready and things like that. I think he liked the money coming in, but now he also likes the fact that his meals are ready when he comes in.

Although men and women used the home to cope with the surplus of time created by unemployment, it cannot have any lasting affect on the division of labour between men and women within the home, unemployment is structured as a temporary phenomenon and not one that can and ought to be adjusted to. Restructuring cannot take place because men are actively job seeking. In many instances unemployment for men does assume a sort of permanence, as more and more men are becoming long term

unemployed. Yet it is a permanent state of suspension. It cannot be the basis for long term change or new initiatives. The problem for men with being at home during unemployment was not only to do with having surplus unstructured time. Rather it is a daily confrontation with the fact that they are not doing what men are supposed to do; not simply to work, but to be the breadwinners. The idea that men are the breadwinners remains a very potent one, shared by many women;

I think it's much worse for a man to be made redundant than a woman. I think women have got another interest, there is the home isn't there, and I don't think men are the same. Although I would strongly fight against this myself, to belittle a man because he wasn't working, there's an awful lot of women that would. There's more stigma attached to a man, after all he's the breadwinner and no matter how hard a woman works, you need that man's wage coming in. And I think for a man to lose that, he's lost all his dignity.

I would imagine it's degrading for a man, because I don't believe in this women's lib you know. I think the man should be the man. I think a woman should have a bit of independence but I think it's important for the man to think he's the breadwinner. For a man to be out of work and his wife working must be terrible. I think it would affect a man's mind more than a woman.

Indeed, amongst the women from Robert Hirst there was a common commiseration with the dilemmas of masculinity;

I think it's worse for men. Men get very demoralised. When I first left school, because I'd been going out with my husband over five years before we got married, I got a job straight away. I wasn't out of a job, I was even working when I was at school. I used to do Saturday jobs and evening jobs. When he first left school he couldn't get a job. We used to go out and I had all the money and he didn't have any, so if we wanted to go to the pictures or anything, I always used to pay for him and he didn't like it at all. We did actually split up for a couple of months because of it. When he got his apprenticeship he came back, well he didn't actually go for good, we still kept seeing each other but he wouldn't go out with me because he knew I would be paying for everything and he didn't like that one little bit. I think men, especially if they're married, feel very belittled. But as soon as he got a job that was it. He wasn't very pleased when I worked at Robert Hirst and I was bringing in more than him. He felt threatened. But I told him I wasn't going round telling everybody I earned more than him and we'd our money together anyway. It wasn't as if

we'd leave ourselves so much out of our wage,
 so that I'd have at the end of the week £15
 to spend and he'd only got £5, we pooled it
 together. He came round in the end.

The persistence of the idea that men are the breadwinners is of course rooted in some material fact. Men do earn more than women and whilst that is the case, the larger wage is the most significant one. In reality many women know that men's capacity to be the breadwinner is only as secure as their job. Male unemployment means that a woman's wage has never been more significant;

Last year was a terrible year for us. He was without work for four months, and there was only my wage coming in, so it was a tightrope, we did make ends meet but that was about all. If I hadn't have been working we just couldn't have managed. Then he got a very low paid job, but then I was made redundant...

Unemployment seems less likely to push real changes in the definitions of the male role. Even out of work, men are still technically part of the labour force. They remain providers without the means of provision. It remains to be seen how far such a situation can be held.

For some of the Castleford and Harrogate women, a 'role reversal' situation might have been feasible. Yet the men were resistant to such domestic involvement;

Well I'd like that, but he wouldn't!

Men's involvement with their children can also be insubstantial, as they seem to be in need of care themselves;

He looks after her but, I know it sounds funny to say it, but I've always got the impression

- that he's frightened, deep down he doesn't know how to cope. I get that impression from him, I always have done, since she was little, when I first brought her home. He'd be all over her, round her, but he'd be nervous about holding her. I don't think he really knows what to do. He'll put her to bed and he'll go up and read her a story. He takes her swimming. When it comes down to it, basically I've had to be the one that's seen to her because he's a person who needs somebody himself...

And perhaps that is the point. Domestic labour is more than the reproduction of the household, it is the servicing of men, and a relationship of subordination. It would be impossible for men to participate in their own servicing, and a genuine redistribution of domestic work between men and women would transform the very fabric of the relationship between men and women. So far it has been women's employment rather than men's unemployment that has been the greater catalyst for change.

Although it is clear that capitalist waged labour exploits gender divisions, rather than freeing women from them, nevertheless women's entry into paid work has been a major force for change. Women have had to enter paid work, grappling with the contradictory tensions of the material fact of their employment, and the ill-defined parameters of femininity. One effect has been to extend the boundaries of 'women's role' further and faster than for men. Through their employment, the role of women has been radically disturbed, whereas men's gender identity has not broadened to anything like the same extent. Women are now represented as having a 'dual role' and femininity can span, albeit

uneasily, the family and employment. In their dual role the dilemmas of femininity are resolved, women can have children, be responsible for household organisation and through their wage earning, contribute to family income. It is not an easy one and every woman suffers at some stage in her life from the conflict implicit in her feminine role. The very concept of dual role, implies a reconciliation of the two spheres of a woman's life, when in fact it is an ill-defined and tortuous mix.

Nevertheless, in the event of job loss, the predominant response from the women from the Robert Hirst factories was an absolute clarity about their need and right to work. Their response to, and experience of, unemployment, actually challenges an ideology which marginalises their paid work;

Married women need to work just as much as
anyone else

If all the married women stopped working, I
don't know what would happen to this country.

No woman works for pin money. I mean the men,
none of them are over generous with their
money are they? Let's face it. I mean not
like a woman. She goes to work and she brings
all her wage packet home and most of it goes
in the house or on the kids.

They couldn't run this country without
married women anyway. I think women are much
better workers than men. Men wouldn't do the
jobs that we do. Even youngsters wouldn't do
that job I did at Robert Hirst because it was

monotonous. I think it's absolutely necessary that women work, both for industry and for the home. To keep the home going. We're going to have a lot lower standard of living if women don't work. I don't believe in women leaving young children. I'm all for places that will do part-time and I'm all for this scheme, so that when women do return to work they don't lose anything by it.

But I think a woman has as much right to go out to work as a man has, she has only one life and it's very tiring to be in four walls all day. Women should have the independence of knowing 'well I've earned that'. I don't think a man should turn round and say 'well I've married you and I'll keep you' and expect you to kow tow to everything they want. No, I believe that women should have a life of their own.

No woman in this case study welcomed unemployment, or found it an easy experience. An initial ambivalence was perhaps the commonest experience, as redundancy meant the release from the pressures of work, of both paid and unpaid work. What is clear is that work represents for women - as it does for men - a lot more than economic necessity. Work has become for many women the site of independence, important social relationships, status and social integration and a new female identity. The women for whom this was most true were the category of women for whom it is supposed to be least true. What emerges from the Robert Hirst women's

perceptions of their working lives, is that, women who have returned to work after a period of being at home are paradoxically, those least rooted in an ideology of femininity and familial roles. They have had marriage, kids and full-time domesticity, and as they return to work, they claim back a bit of themselves. They have got the kids off their hands, they have financial independence, they are social beings once more, and it is their time. Redundancy and unemployment comes hard. Whatever the nature of their exploitation at work, waged labour has purchased women a measure of emmanicipation. The family cannot make sense of their unemployment, because work has been for women, a route out of the family. They are, consequently, workers without work.

I felt as if I'd been thrown on the scrap heap,
nobody wanted to know, nobody's bothered.

In a contracting labour market it is particularly difficult for such older women (forty plus) to find new work, and to them the family offers no sop to this painful process.

There's a lot to be said for working, I think
it keeps you young. I think you pay too much
attention to your small ailments when you're at
home. I was never one for having time off work
and I would get up even if I didn't feel very
well and think it would go off when I got to
work and it did. But I think if you're at home
you think 'oh I don't feel at all good' and you
give in to it. I think working with young
people makes you feel young. I think I've aged
since I finished work. I've got very weepy. I
miss people and responsibility.

The last time I sent for a job and she said 'we'll let you know', I said 'for God's sake tell people straight. Why don't you tell us we're too old?' You feel as if you're ready for dying. I can't believe it. It's lonely, I even went after the toilet job in town, the public toilets. I've got my name down everywhere. It's depressing. I have many a weep, I can't help it. You just can't believe it's come to this. This has been the hardest time of my life. I mean I've been on strikes in Leeds and that, but I knew we'd get back to work. It's never been like this.

Notes

1. Increasingly empirical analyses of the sexual division of labour at work and in the family, is making clear the limitations of treating each sex as an homogeneous group. Barrett and McIntosh (1980) have argued that the assumed uniformity in the sexual division of labour, on which the family wage is premised, simply does not exist. Whilst Feldberg and Glenn (1979) have argued that we cannot analyse men's position within the sexual division of labour through employment only - what they call a 'job model' - nor can we analyse women's position, solely through the family - a gender model. There are a range of different positions and experiences which men and women will occupy, both within the family and work.
2. The increase nationally, in the number of self-supporting women (EOC, 1982) was reflected in the sample.
3. It has been suggested that young unmarried girls are using pregnancy and motherhood as a way of acquiring independence and adult status, when previously they would have sought that through waged work (Campbell, 1984).
4. Cohen (1982) has suggested that this is a particular problem for unemployed girls. Their families expect them to undertake more domestic work, whilst unemployed boys are not subjected to the same pressures.
5. 'The rest' is funded by Redundancy Payments which are intended to render labour less resistant to restructuring and job loss (Fryer, 1981). For men and women it can appear as a kind of paid holiday, although as Mary Leason, indicates in her personal account, it represents no real compensation for loss of earnings.

6. A recent study on girls and their work aspirations indicates that girls are driven towards glamour, rather than the domesticity that McRobbie, Pollert and Sharpe suggest (Sheratt, 1983). Either way, girls' fantasies still limit their career objectives.

PART THREE

ISSUES AND TRENDS

CHAPTER EIGHT

WOMEN ON THE MARGINS

In drawing together the material of this thesis, this final chapter underlines the contradictory effects of combining an ideology of the male breadwinner with the fact of women working. In this case study the experience of job loss, unemployment, paid and unpaid work is understood within this contradiction. It has not undermined women's sense of themselves as working women, but it has considerably harnessed strategies for achieving a wage for women which is equal to men's. It has contributed to the creation of female labour as cheap labour, and hence has contributed significantly to the competition and conflict that exists between men and women.

The first chapter of this thesis outlined the debate on women's employment which has been centrally concerned with analysing why both the nature of women's paid work and women's relation to paid work should be structured as different from that of men. Women are employed in a range of jobs which are distinctively sex-typed, where women perform tasks which are seemingly well-suited to feminine capabilities; women are dextrous, domesticated, decorative and docile. Women are employed in jobs which appear to be an extension of domestically acquired skills and qualities; cleaning, cooking, sewing and servicing. And most importantly, women are employed on a basis which does not impinge too much on women's supposed domestic responsibilities; that is in lower grade jobs which carry little skill and responsibility and often on a part-time basis. Most problematically this differentiation of men and women's work, is a major factor in the construction of women as a cheap, secondary and marginal labour force.

Within an ongoing analysis of women's work there are various theoretical

strands, but women's familial role has been identified as a primary factor in determining both the form and extent of women's economic role. That is, a sexual division of labour rooted within the family, is just as manifest in the sphere of production. Some discussions of women's employment see this influence of a family based sexual division of labour as a kind of old-fashioned left over from a domestic economy, and one which will diminish in time. Whilst others suggest that it remains a structural feature of an industrialised, capitalist economy. There is an agreement that ongoing divisions between men and women remain sustained by an ideology of gender and family organisation. So that although women now engage in waged work, familial ideology⁽¹⁾ continues to construct men and women as having different family obligations. Women's responsibilities to the family are constructed as still being primarily domestically based, to service the family, whilst men's family responsibilities are constructed as economic - to provide for the family. What is less clear is why such ideology should prove so resilient despite enormous economic and social change.

As the debate has moved away from focussing primarily on women's role in the family, to looking at women's work, so it has become clear that the labour market and the labour process, reflect and reinforce gender differentiation. The labour market is segmented to the extent that there is effectively a male and a female labour market. And if the labour market has some correspondence to a sexual division of labour that occurs in the family household, this is because the organisation of the labour process is predicated on such divisions. A growing number of empirical and historical studies of the organisation of the labour process indicate that whilst familial ideology continues to structure women as marginal labour, it also establishes women as cheap and flexible labour. Thus it has become clearer why familial gender differentiation has not been eroded by women's

participation in production, rather that ideology is sustained and reproduced in production itself. However its identification of the wider relevance of the sexual division of labour, beyond the family, may help explain the ubiquity of familial ideology, but not how such ideas are perpetuated. The question that needs to be pursued is how familial ideology may inform the lived experiences and social relations of men and women.

The distinctive feature of the sexual division of labour in industrialised economies is that women systematically perform paid and unpaid work and men do not. The case study of this thesis has been concerned with the unravelling of the nature of that female dual role, and in a sense redundancy and job loss amongst women is a 'test' of the status and weighting of one sphere of work over the other. The ideology explains the differentiation of paid work through asserting women's place to be primarily in the home. If this is the case, then the impact of the loss of waged work amongst women should be minimal; not least in terms of women's economic means of support, social status and identity and in the structure and meaning of daily life.

What in fact emerges from the case study is the fundamental importance of waged work in these women's lives. Women's sense of economic independence, their skills and a large part of their social identity is derived from their paid work, not their family role. Housework is not regarded as an occupation nor compensation for the loss of waged work. There have been very few studies on job loss, redundancy and unemployment amongst women, but where it has been the focus for study, similar findings have been made. For example the Haringey and Lewisham Women's Employment Project (1981) identified loss of income as the greatest difficulty women experience in unemployment, and expose the myth that women are supported by a male wage earner. As in this case study, they found that most

women were in a situation where they were either solely dependent on their own wage earning capacity or their wage represented a considerable and necessary contribution to family income. Wood's study of female redundancy (1981) similarly identified the financial importance of work to women, but also how social meaning and identity is derived from paid work.

It is apparent that the longer women have become established in paid work, so that work has effected enormous changes in women's lives; women have some financial independence within the family and unpaid domestic work within the family household is no longer women's life-long or primary activity.⁽²⁾ Such changes indicate that the sexual division of labour is not a static transhistorical fact, but rather is a set of economic, social and power relations between men and women rooted in the material of the waged relation inside and outside of production. It is these relations which need to be examined.

The women from the Robert Hirst factories were a heterogeneous sample of working women, yet whether they were wives, mothers or daughters, married or unmarried, there were very few for whom domesticity did not inform the expectations of their daily lives. Consequently it is easy to see how domesticity may be constructed to be the determining factor of women's lives. Yet what they shared to an even greater extent was the nature of their paid work which was low paid, 'women's work'. It was the feature of their work at the Castleford and Harrogate factories, and it was the feature of any subsequent work which they found after redundancy. Whilst this pattern of paid work arises from the nature of the sample, it does also crystallise the underlying patterns of women's

waged work in general. And it may seem commonsense that women have this kind of paid work because of their domestic responsibilities, but equally it is the nature of women's paid work which also accounts for why women still undertake housework, childcare and family servicing. It is crucial to ask why women have the kind of paid work that they do and to understand the relationship between women's paid and unpaid work and the effect that one may have on the other.

A case study such as this cannot answer what needs to be investigated through detailed historical and comparative research, yet it can propound sharply some of these issues. Most recently two very important debates, one on the nature of skill, and one on the family wage, have begun to interrogate not only the nature of women's paid work, but the ongoing bases for inequality and subordination in paid work, and within the family. They provide analytical linkage to this case study where it has been seen that women experience and understand their paid work and unpaid work, not only through domesticity, but through the structure of low skilled jobs, low pay and the ideology of a male breadwinner.

Women's Work; Women's Pay

The debate on the social construction of skill in the labour process has highlighted the ways in which women's congregation in low skilled work is not always what it seems (see Thompson, 1983; Zimbalist, 1979). Rather it is often the case that women's low graded jobs in fact require a range of competences but which are undervalued and unrecognised. One way this has come about in craft occupations is through male craftworkers organisation and bargaining strategies around their skill. Their success in this has been predicated, in part, on excluding women from such skill (Cockburn; Lazonick) and which moreover, degrades the skills and jobs that women have (Bradley, 1984). Garmanikov (1978) has shown that this

male claim to skill, in relation to women's supposed lack of skill, has also occurred in the profession of medicine. Davies and Rosser (1984) have suggested that another way in which women's skills become low graded is in the process of job design itself. In the organisation of the National Health Service, they have identified a broad range of low graded jobs, which they call 'gendered-jobs' which have been created from the outset with women in mind;⁽³⁾ low graded jobs but which in fact utilise and depend on a range of women's informally acquired skills and expertise. Inevitably there is not a monocausal reason for women's failure to gain formal recognition for their skill, but it is clear that lack of skill and low pay are inseparable features of women's paid work. Women's lack of skill explains and justifies the female wage.

In this case study, the process by which women's skills have been systematically undervalued has been tied into the clothing industry's endemic need for cheap labour. The extent to which women may be employed in this way is not however tied into the ideology of skill alone. Crucially the social construction and gendering of skill is underpinned by the wage form and the ideology of the family wage. The women from the Robert Hirst factories did have a sense of their skill, and sometimes, how that was undervalued, but this sat uneasily with an implicit understanding that men, as men, should receive a larger wage. It is of course not just the women of Robert Hirst who hold these views. It represents the dominant ideology of the wage form and as an acceptance of the primacy of the male wage, it undermines fundamentally women's claim to higher pay (Campbell and Charlton, 1978).

As Barrett and McIntosh (1980) have argued, the wage form itself is weighted towards inequality as it embodies a taken for granted 'wage moralism' which is 'that an adult man's wage ought to be adequate to support a family' (p.52). It has never embodied a claim for equal pay

for work of equal value. Humphries (1977) has argued that the history of the family wage is based in wage bargaining strategies of the Nineteenth Century when organised sectors of the working class adopted the ideal of the family wage in order to restrict the labour supply and improve family living standards.

However there is little evidence that the family wage has ever been achieved or that it generates a higher standard of living. Women have always supplemented the male wage, even if through work in the 'informal economy' (Davidoff, 1979; Taylor, 1977). In the post-war decades the growth of employment for women in the formal economy has more visibly exposed the myth of the family wage and provided a real improvement in family living standards (Department of Health and Social Security/DHSS, 1971; Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, 1978). Such a wage form as Barrett and McIntosh state, 'presents capital with a cheaper work-force' (p.66) and structures women in an ongoing financial dependence and ideological subordination. 'Low wages, dependence and housework for women are a trio of mutually reinforcing ideas, each justifying and producing the conditions of the other' (Barrett and McIntosh, p.61).

The seeming paradox in this case study is that it was younger women who most accepted the marginality of their waged work in the sense that they anticipated the period when they could withdraw from the labour market; the 'promise' for them was femininity, motherhood and an escape from the monotony of waged work. Whilst older women who most met the paradigm of familial ideology and the family wage, were the ones who were least accepting of it. Wood has suggested that it is the experience of paid employment that brings this about. He argues that women 'were not so much changed, but developed, by their experience of employment, and in such a way that work became an increasingly permanent element in their conceptions of themselves and their future'(p.658). However, given the difference in

this case study between younger women and older women who had also had the experience of full-time domesticity, it is probably not just the experience of work which challenges the ideology, but the whole experience of women's dual role.

Paid work for women has created the basis for a real economic freedom for women. The loss of income was the most widely experienced difficulty that arose from redundancy and a period of unemployment. It was experienced not only as a depletion of personal and family income, but as a loss of financial independence. The limits to that independence remains structured by the relationship of women's pay to men's pay. Whilst the women from Robert Hirst were clear about their right and need to work, they could not assert that right as a claim equal to men's. They did affirm the male wage as being the primary wage and given the inequality of wage, it would have been difficult for them to think otherwise.

Thus the explanation of differentiation in waged work cannot be explained solely in terms of a sexual division of labour within the family. The wage form itself has directly counteracted women's claim for equal pay, for skilled work, and upholds a sexual division of labour within the family in which women are subordinate. It has placed men and women in conflict with one another within the family household over the distribution of family income (Hunt, 1978; Oakley, 1976), and in the labour market where women as cheap labour compete against men for jobs and undercut wages. The further dilemma of this in-built conflict and competition is that neither trade union organisation nor equal opportunities legislation have tackled this bias in the wage for it never appears as being in men's interests to do so.

Trade Unions

For men trade union organisation has been the major focus for

bargaining to secure improvements in wages and working conditions, but whilst trade union membership has brought women considerable benefits, it has not brought the same gains as it has for men. This case study of redundancy has also been quite illustrative of women's experiences of trade unionism and although the women from Robert Hirst recognised the need for trade union organisation, they were quite cynical about what it may achieve for them. They did not perceive the union as a structure for them, through which they could express grievances and for the most part did not regard the union as relevant to the issues of their daily working lives. This corresponds to other studies of women in trade unions, but increasingly this lack of involvement is seen as arising from the nature of trade unionism itself, rather than the passivity or lack of militancy amongst women. Trade union organisation remains overwhelmingly structured around the needs and interests of its male membership (Charles, 1983; Fryer, et al, 1974 and 1978; Hunt, 1982; Stageman, 1980).

Nevertheless, women's trade union membership has rapidly increased. In 1960 women made up one in four of trade union membership, and by 1981 women came to represent nearly one in two of all trade unionists (Kellner, 1980). In fact, it has been the growth of female trade union membership especially in white collar occupations in the service sector, which has accounted for most of the total growth in trade union membership in the 1960's and 1970) (Bain and Price, 1976). The problem for trade union organisation that has occurred with this process of feminisation, has been less to do with women's lack of radicalism and more to do with trade unions' attempts to absorb large numbers of women into its existing structures and strategies, without any recognition that a radically changed composition of membership might lead to the development of new policies (Hunt, 1982).

Historically, the trade union movement's response to women workers has been an ambivalent and contradictory one. Both Lewenhak (1977) and Boston

(1980), have shown in their studies of the history of trade unionism and women workers, that men's defensive strategies to protect their jobs and wages have often amounted to open hostility towards women working at all. As male trade unionists sought to keep women out of employment, so they sought to keep them out of trade unions. The establishment of the Women's Trade League in 1891, and later the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW) arose out of male trade unionists practices of exclusion, not from a politics of separation. As an autonomous, women only organisation, the NFWW had a history of considerable militancy, exceeding that of most male workers (Gill and Whitty, 1983, p.325; Lewenhak, 1977), and were a major force in the setting up of the Trades Boards under the Trades Board Act, (1909). However there were contradictory effects of separate trade union organisation for women. Whilst women were very much more active around issues which they perceived as directly concerning them (and this is still the case, see for example Pollert, 1981 and Stageman, 1980), its separate bargaining procedures for women tended to reinforce pay differentials between men and women, and it was weakened by its marginalisation from the trade union movement.

The very widespread use of low paid female labour during the First World War was a chastening experience for the trade union movement, and by the 1920's a strategy of exclusion had given way to a strategy of unionisation; women represented more of a threat to men outside of the unions than within them. The NFWW merged into the National Union of General Workers in 1920, and many trade unions established an auxillary, or female section, within its organisation. With this absorption, Gill and Whitty (1983) state, 'women's trade union voice was gradually silenced' (p.326).

The 1930's was a period when women's trade union presence was scarcely visible, and out of five and a half million women workers, only five

hundred thousand were trade union members. It was a period when trade unions were again openly hostile to women workers,⁽⁴⁾ who were often blamed for high male unemployment (Land, 1980).

Even the enormous influx of women into work during the Second World War, did not change trade union thinking on women workers.⁽⁵⁾ Rather, the trade unions contributed to the structuring of women's wartime work, as a temporary phenomenon. Some unions continued to bar women, others set up female sections, but they all had to deal with the problem of care-taking men's jobs and men's pay rates whilst they were occupied by women, and to ensure that those jobs were protected for men to return to after the war. Zweig (1952) records the early post-war period in Britain as a bleak one for women's trade unionism, with trade unions still stamped with craft traditions and practices historically opposed to the interests of women (p.129).

The enormous increase in women's trade union membership started to occur in the late 1960's, and inevitably this growth in the female membership has challenged the trade union movement, although not to the degree that women's numerical presence would suggest. Women have been raising for decades the same issues; equal pay; equal job opportunities; shorter working hours and childcare, but they have never been taken up by the trade union movement as central issues of concern; they remain 'women's issues'. This marginalisation of women's issues and grievances is linked to ^aunion structure which is dominated by men at every level. Even in unions where women make up the majority of the membership, men occupy the majority of the official positions within both local and national structures. Only one in four women are active in the union and as Stageman states, to be active 'women require motivation and interests similar to men' (p.57). Women challenge trade unions with the fundamental question of representation. For example, in 1980 the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), with

257,000 women members, did not have a single woman on the Executive. There have been some measures to combat women's lack of presence within trade union structure. The TUC now reserves five seats for women on the General Council (out of a total of forty-three), maintains a Women's Advisory Committee, and an annual women's conference. Additionally, many individual unions have reserved seats for women on their national executive, have set up women's committees, and appointed women's officers. Most unions with a significant female membership have a large range of platforms for women's issues (see Hunt, pp.167-169).

Where trade unions do actively support their female membership, some gains have been made. Equal Pay claims under the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act, are far more likely to be successful when they have trade union support (Snell, 1979). Some trade unions have adopted positive action programmes for women. Three unions, the Association of Cinematography, Television and Allied Trades (ACTT), the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU), and the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO), have introduced positive action programmes which have not only had effects within their own organisation, but within the employing organisation as well.

There is a danger however that the setting up of such separate structures for women within trade unions, continues to 'hive off' women from the main stream of trade union concerns (Gill and Whitty, p.341), whereas a thorough going representation of women, reflecting their presence in employment and trade unions would transform trade union structures and practices and the very focus of its organisation. This last point is crucial, for the problem for women in trade unions is not just a question of a male dominated hierarchy and lack of representation. The crux of the matter is the way in which trade union wage bargaining procedures have always been organised around a claim for a wage which is

a family wage, a male breadwinner's wage. It has already been argued that this wage form is oppositional to women's interests, yet this wage strategy remains a central objective of trade unionism. Charles' study (1983) of the attitudes and practices of local shop stewards, union representatives and officials, indicated that most male trade unionists think that men should be the primary wage earner and that women are a marginal workforce.

Rather than challenging the iniquity of the wage, Coote and Campbell (1982) have argued that low pay, job segregation and poor union representation are inseparable. Male trade unionists strategies for defending men's jobs and men's pay, have sometimes led trade unions into collusion with employers against the interests of female trade unionists. Trade unions have colluded with employers to avoid equal pay (Snell, 1979); they have suppressed women's industrial action (Pollert, 1981) and have negotiated redundancy agreements in which women are dismissed before men (Vaughan, 1981).

Equal Opportunities Legislation

The failure of trade union organisation to redress the bias of the wage⁽⁶⁾ has meant that equal opportunities legislation for women, introduced in the 1970's has been very important. Its importance has been less in what it has achieved, but more that it represents and supports another 'wage moralism' of equal pay for work of equal value. The Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) backed by the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission, have been one of the most significant achievements of the 1970's and yet one which affects most women's lives hardly at all.

Coote and Campbell state that the effect of the legislation was that, 'The focus of argument shifted: open disputes about whether or not women

were men's inferiors, worthy of unequal treatment, gave way to disagreements over what exactly constituted the equal rights that women were acknowledged to deserve (pp.106-107). Whilst at the same time, 'the material circumstances of most women's lives, remained entirely unchanged by the new legislation' (op cit).

Although the implementation of the Equal Pay Act did contribute significantly to the rise of women's earnings between 1975 and 1977, since then women's average earnings have stuck at around seventy-one per cent of men's average earnings (Gill and Whitty, p.29). As is now recognised, inequality in the wage is maintained not because employers do not comply with the Act, but because job segregation between men and women is so effective that there is no basis for direct comparison with men's work. The case study of the clothing industry illustrates well how job segregation can enable pay levels which do not reflect the real value of women's skills. Moreover, in common with other industries, the introduction of the Equal Pay Act provided clothing with further impetus to extend job segregation.

The five year period, 1970-1975, which was set aside to enable employers to prepare for the implementation of the Equal Pay Act, was in fact often used for reorganising work processes (Snell, p.47), and consequently, equal pay legislation probably contributed to increased job segregation between men and women (Hakim, 1979, p.49). The extent of occupational segregation and the need for women to establish comparability with men, makes it very difficult indeed for women to establish their right to equal pay. There has been a sharp decline in Equal Pay claims from 2,500 in the first year of the operation of the law, to eighty-one in 1980. Gregory (1982) has stated that this drop should not be perceived as arising from increasing settlements, but rather that women are discouraged from making claims. Discouraged by the complexity of the law, where the onus is on

individual women to prove their cases and of all the cases brought by women under the Equal Pay Act, few have been won.

In 1982, the European Commission ruled that the Equal Pay Act in the United Kingdom, was failing to comply with European law, because in narrowly defining entitlement to equal pay in terms of direct comparison with men's jobs, it did not properly provide for the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The Equal Opportunities Commission has long sought the incorporation of this principle into the existing legislation because direct comparison with men becomes unnecessary, and it allows for a re-evaluation and upgrading of women's work. In 1983, a Bill was passed to comply with EEC regulations, but without any real intention of improving women's pay or making it easier for women to make claims under the legislation. Although the United Kingdom Equal Pay Act 'allows women to define their work as of equal importance to the work traditionally undertaken by men...it is highly unlikely that the law presently proposed can ever have such affects. It is drafted in such a way as to make equal pay for work of equal value almost impossible to claim' (Atkins, 1983)⁽⁷⁾

Non-comparability of jobs may be the greatest barrier to equal pay, but it is not the only one. Even where men and women receive the same basic hourly rate for undertaking the same work, men have far more opportunity than women to make up their basic pay with shift premia, bonus and overtime pay (EOC, 1981a, p.20). This may be taken as some reflection of women's domestic responsibilities, but it is now far more indicative of the conditions of the jobs which women do, which have very few opportunities for overtime payment. As women become more confined to a casual, unskilled labour market, hours of work increasingly have an influence on women's pay levels. This was particularly illustrated in the case study where the women from Harrogate had to accept substantial

wage cuts because part-time work was the only work available to them. It is a situation which is exacerbated by employers' strategies to avoid the provisions of the Employment Protection Act, by setting part-time hours at very low levels, outside of the scope of the Act. The objective of equal pay for women as it is provided for within the Equal Pay Act, has only ever been relevant to a small proportion of working women, and in recession the capacity for such legislation to facilitate an improvement in women's pay is very remote indeed.

As it has become apparent that occupational segregation between men and women has severely restricted the opportunity for securing equal pay for women, many women's groups, organisations and the Equal Opportunities Commission, have consciously shifted their attention and activities onto overcoming the problem of occupational segregation itself. They have identified the need to focus far more broadly on equal educational and training opportunities for women; on organisation structures and practices within industries, firms and institutions (such as career paths, promotion, working hours, job mobility and recruitment policies) and to seek changes in informal and informal procedures which discriminate against women. The Sex Discrimination Act has enabled a programme of positive action⁽⁸⁾ to be introduced within many educational, training and employment situations, as a means of seeking to overcome barriers which inhibit and prevent women having equal opportunities with men.

In the United Kingdom, positive action programmes have been introduced in local government, trade unions, training schemes, and ^{by} some private employers. It involves stated and official commitment, within its own organisation, to establish equality of opportunity in recruitment, training and promotion, as well as providing crucial facilities, such as childcare provision and flexible working time, to make that possible.⁽⁹⁾ In setting up a positive action programme, a local authority also provides a model

of employment practice and gives direction to other employers on how to facilitate equal opportunities for women. Amongst employers in private industry however, there has been little take-up of positive action policies, although it is there that some of the most blatant barriers to women's opportunities exist. Training courses for women only funded by the Manpower Services Commission, and the European Social Fund, provide women with training in skills and employment in areas not readily open to women. Such courses are now becoming widespread but exist to compensate for the even more widespread failure of employers to provide such training opportunities for women.

Other forms of organisational structures and employment practices which may be re-examined and changed under a positive programme for equal opportunities, include recruitment policies, career paths and promotion. Most organisations operate along traditional male employment patterns and ones not suited to women's working patterns, which more often than not include a break in employment and ongoing domestic responsibilities.

Women still have most of the responsibility for childcare and domestic labour. Whilst this is the case, it will be difficult for women to enter well paid, more responsible jobs because the hours of work are inevitably too long and too inflexible to combine with family responsibilities. In addition to pre-school and after-school childcare provision, it has been suggested that women would benefit from a flexibility in working time (Campbell, 1980; Charles, 1983; EOC, 1981c; Phillips, 1983). The EOC has proposed various forms of alternative working arrangements; flexi-time, shorter working time and job sharing, and indicated how they could be implemented (EOC, 1981c), but such proposals have met a lot of resistance from employers and trade unions, who argue that the organisation of more skilled work does not easily lend itself to flexible and shorter working arrangements. The most radical proposal for such new working

arrangements to meet the needs of women, has been to seek the extension of full-time rights to part-time workers. The EEC has issued a draft directive to the governments of the European Community, that such legislative provision should be in operation by 1983. This has been resisted by governments and employers on the grounds of impracticability and expense. The battle to implement such legislation will doubtless be similar to the protracted and prolonged implementation of the Equal Pay Act. Indeed arguments against the current proposals are very similar - that such employment protection will undermine women's cost advantage and they will simply not be employed.

The limit to the scope of action under the Sex Discrimination Act has been in part because of the uneven support that has come from employers and trade unions alike. As Snell states;

many union representatives shares managements' assumption that there was no need for action, either because they also believed women had equal opportunity, or because they were hostile to the idea and consequence of equal opportunity (p.49)

The Impact of Economic Recession

In recession the gains made by women in their employment and within the family, seem more fragile than ever. The numbers of women out of work are increasing and at a rate faster than men (EOC, 1982). Moreover, this is before the full potential impact of technological change and the restructuring of the economy has been felt in those areas of work in which women are concentrated (Barker and Downing, 1980; Hines and Searle, 1979; Huws, 1982). In this case study of factory closure, job loss for women represented a loss of relatively well paid manual work for women, and the failure to find alternative work of comparable pay and conditions. This

mirrors national trends where there has been a loss of full-time jobs for women, set against a steady growth in low paid, part-time jobs (Elias and Main, 1982). Between 1971 and 1983, 1.3 million new part-time jobs have been created. In 1983 alone two hundred thousand part-time jobs were created (Manpower Services Commission, 1984).

Some women's groups and organisation have feared for women's employment opportunities because of acute job loss in recession and because they believe the government has been seeking to ease unemployment by encouraging women to remain within the home; outside of the labour market (Counter Information Service/CIS, 1980). Perhaps an even greater threat to women's employment opportunities is an aggregate loss of the kind of jobs in which women might expect to achieve some equality with men. That is better paid jobs, and skilled jobs with some responsibility. Whilst there is a growth of work for women in the very poorly paid, badly organised sectors. Certain aspects of current government policies which have been targeted at 'freeing' the labour market and wage levels⁽¹⁰⁾ have provided the ideal conditions for the increased employment of women under these conditions (Gardiner, 1981; Rubery and Tarling, 1981).

What the case study of job loss and unemployment amongst women does indicate is that women are not 'choosing' to give up work in the face of high unemployment and for economic reasons alone, are no more able to do so than men. But unemployment is one aspect of a rapidly deteriorating employment condition for women. Women's needs in employment, identified by equal opportunities legislation in the 1970's, are still the same in the 1980's. Women still need to earn a living wage; to have access to a wider range of jobs; to have good conditions of work and for men to take on their share of the responsibility of childcare and domestic labour.

The kinds of jobs which the women from Robert Hirst found after a period of unemployment, represented often, a regression in their position in employment and within the family. Yet at the same time there is

evidence that women are continuing to find work and more easily than many men. For in recession there is a growing importance of women in the labour force (see Massey, 1983; Sassoon, 1982; Williams, 1982). This trend affects men as well as women. For as women increasingly congregate in poorly paid, unorganised sectors, they represent also an increasing threat to better organised sectors. Male workers have contributed to this growing competition from women. As Rubery has pointed out 'a worker's main concern under competition is to obtain and keep a job. Workers act defensively to protect themselves from the competition of the external labour market, to obtain job security and higher wages, to the exclusion and detriment of those remaining in the unorganised sector' (Rubery, 1978, p.34). In such sectional practices, skilled men have contradictorily endorsed the creation of a cheap unskilled labour supply (Herding, 1977, p.260), and have precisely reinforced the conditions which make women such a threat.

There is a basis for a unity of interests between men and women. Economic recession and political conservatism has meant more than a climate which is now less receptive to women's issues. High levels of unemployment are forecasted to persist well up to the 1990's (Institute of Employment Research, 1982) and women's needs for, and in, employment now have to be located within the situation where there are millions of men and women, who are, long term, without work. Women's inequality cannot be given priority to, or tackled separately from, the poverty and inequality directly caused by unemployment. That is, the only way women are going to achieve real economic independence is through a redistribution of work and a redistribution of income (Campbell and Charlton, 1978; Phillips, 1983).

It is capitalist production which has structured women's waged labour as different, low waged and marginal, but it has been men who have

endorsed that. Women will not achieve significant improvements in the working conditions without the co-operation of men. There is no reason why working class organisations cannot equally represent women's interests and as Weir and McIntosh (1982) have argued, 'the real weakness of women... is a weakness in relation to their employers' (p.11). What remains unclear is the extent to which the male working class will identify its interests alongside women's. A reduced working week, a minimum wage for all with no differentiation over the male breadwinner, and a claim for a social wage that provided full social services provision, could provide a strategy for a redistribution of work and income with a protection of real living standards. The cost to men would be the loss of male privilege within work and the family, that is maintained by the inequality of the wage. Yet the unity of working class interests can never be built on the subordination of half of it.

Notes

1. Familial ideology not only conveys notions of gender and roles within the family, but as Barrett (1980) argues, a notion of the organisation of the family household which constructs for men and women a different relation to the wage and class structure (p.211).
2. It is notable that the women from Robert Hirst differentiated between childcare which continues to warrant a woman's full-time involvement, and housework which does not. As the ideology of domesticity has diminished, so the ideology of motherhood has intensified (Mitchell, 1971).
3. Grossmann (1979) makes a similar point in discussing the establishment of electronics factories in South East Asia.
4. Again this hostility took the form of defending the family wage. However, Land (1980) illustrates that in this period the defence of the male wage not only took the form of opposing female employment, but proposals for a State Family Allowance System, payable to wives.
5. The trade unions did learn to make war-time agreements securer. The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) secured an agreement whereby male dilutees were given the opportunity after the war to undertake a full training for the jobs they were doing. Women were not given the choice and were transferred back to their former sections (Electrical Trades Union, undated).
6. Of course trade unions have never perceived this as their primary task. On the contrary trade union activity sustains differentials insofar as they correspond to members' interests (Clarke and Clements, (1977)).
7. Currently two cases under the new Act await a hearing and represent

test cases for the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

In one case a catering assistant with a four year training, is claiming skill and qualifications of comparable value to engineering technicians with an apprenticeship training. The second case, the NUM, with the help of the EOC, is claiming a case for seven canteen workers to be paid the same as male surface workers. It is very unlikely that either of these cases will be rapidly settled, nor have widespread applicability (Guardian, 17.3.1984).

8. Positive action has been 'imported' from the United States where it has achieved some considerable improvements in the representation of women.
9. Although the idea behind such alternative working arrangements is to enable women with children to have greater access to a wider range of jobs, there is an implicit tension in such schemes, since they may endorse women as society's childminders rather than confronting men with their responsibilities.
10. This has included proposals to end Wages Council industries; the removal of local authority Fair Wages Resolution and changes in the Employment Protection Act (1980) which place many more workers, (especially women) outside of scope.

APPENDIX 1

INFORMATION CHECK LIST

Name

Age

Sex

- single
- married
- divorced
- separated
- widowed
- other

- pre-school
- in further/higher education
- in some form of training
- employed
- unemployed
- other

Employment situation of spouse/partner.

- full time
- part time
- permanent
- temporary
- unemployed
- housewife
- retired
- sick
- other

Any other dependent relatives?

QUESTION SCHEDULE

Work History

What was your job at Robert Hirst?/What exactly did that entail?

Was your job full time or part time?

Average net weekly wage?

How long did you work for Robert Hirst?

Were any other members of your family employed with the company?

Can you remember how you came to get that job?

Why did you go into the clothing industry?

Have you worked in other industries? Other occupations?

If so, can you give me some idea of the industries, the jobs, full or part time and approximate periods?

Redundancy

When did you first hear about the factory closure?

Was that the official notification date?

What was the general reaction to this news? How did you react?/

Your family?

Were you a member of the trade union?

What did you think of the way trade union/management handled the closures?

Were the closures essential do you think?

Did you receive redundancy pay or other payments?

How much (at least distinguish between redundancy pay and compensation in lieu of notice)

Unemployment

After leaving Robert Hirst did you register as unemployed?

Yeses

When did you do that?

Did you receive unemployment benefit? (If no because of married woman's stamp, go onto NI questions)

The full amount, or reduced?

When did you start receiving that? Immediately after leaving?

Are you still receiving unemployment benefit?

When did you stop receiving benefit?

Why? found work/ceased to be entitled?

Were there any periods of sickness or employment during the period you were signing on?

Nos

Why did you not register?

Got job? Not entitled? Other

Did you try to register?

Married Women Only

When you were working at RH, did you pay the full National Insurance Stamp, or did you opt out under the married woman's exemption?

Why did you choose to do that?

Are you working now - yes go on to new employment section

- no - are you still looking? — onto job search

- given up looking? — onto not looking.

Job searchIf still looking:-

Where are you looking for work?

- job centre/employment exchange
- advertisement in paper
- through family
- through friends
- other

Household Organisation

Money

How many wage earners are there in your family?

How do you organise your finances?

What do you spend on yourself?

Do you think two wages are necessary?

(For women not in work this can refer back to when they were working)

and further questions may be asked-

How does being out of work affect this financial arrangement?

Do you have less to spend? Do you have to be more careful?

Do you have difficulties in paying bills/HP/rent etc?

Did redundancy payment/tax rebate help?

What did you do with that money?

Housework

When you were/are working how did/do you fit in the housework?

When, for example, did you do/do you do the shopping, washing, cleaning?

Did/does your husband help?

Did/do you get any other help? From whom?

(For women still out of work)

What do you now do during the time when you would have been at work?

Do you spend the same amount of time on housework as before/more/less?

Does your husband still help you? more/less/same?

Do you find that you have to spend more time on housework, cooking, repair jobs etc. now that you don't have your wage coming in?

Childcare

When you were/are working how do you manage looking after your children?

Did/do you have any difficulties?

Did/does your husband help? How?

(For women still out of work)

Now that you are now working -

Do you spend more/less/same time with your children?

Does your husband help as much/less/as before?

General

How did/do you feel about not working? e.g. Do you have more time/leisure?

Do you think not working is a different experience for men than it is for women?

APPENDIX Two

New Employment and Hours of Work

The women in the sample had all been employed on a full-time and fixed basis at Robert Hirst, whereas in subsequent employment many had to accept both part-time hours and shift work. Such changing patterns are difficult to tabulate, especially with a small sample, since women were still moving in and out of jobs eighteen months after redundancy. However, the following table of the numbers in part-time and full-time work, counted twelve months after the date of redundancy, does give some indication of the different patterns of employment between the two towns.

	Harrogate	Castleford
Full-time	8*	20
Part-time	9	1
Homeworking	2	0
Total	<u>19</u>	<u>21</u>

Table 1: New Hours of Work, 12 months after redundancy

* 6 of these 8 women were working double day shifts.

Domestic and Economic Circumstances

The following Table indicates the number of women in the sample who were self-supporting. In addition to those women who lived alone, and were obviously self-sufficient, young women who lived in the parental household were self-supporting and made a contribution to the household income. Moreover, the organisation of the family sometimes conceals who the bread-winners are. Of the number of women living in the marital home, one was supporting a disabled husband, many more supported husbands during periods of unemployment. In three cases, daughters living in the parental home, were actually supporting their parents.

	Harrogate	Castleford
Women living alone and sole breadwinner	7	2
Women living with husband in marital home	17	16
Self-supporting women in parental household	6	11
Total	<hr/> 30	<hr/> 29

Table 2: Domestic and Economic Circumstances in Harrogate and Castleford.

Women's Pattern of Work

Women's 'dual role' means that women tend to have two spans of economic activity. The following Table indicates the numbers of women who were in a first phase of economic activity, and the numbers who were in a second phase, having returned to work after having children. The different pattern in the two factories largely corresponds to the different age composition of the two workforces.

	Harrogate	Castleford	Total
First Work Phase	14	24	38
Second Work Phase	16	5	21

Table 3: Patterns of Work in Harrogate and Castleford

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