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“It was a Hard Life”:Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920-1950

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Article abstract

Most social histories of the working class have focussed on women's or men's experience alone. However, while studies of working-class women have often been sensitive to the way in which class and gender relationships are constructed and reconstructed simultaneously, histories of working-class men have been largely gender-blind. In an attempt to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender-based divisions in the working-class experience this study examines the relationship between male and female work worlds in the railway ward of Barrie, Ontario between 1920 and 1950. Based primarily on oral history, this paper argues that the class and gender conditions and relations of the period set limits to what was available and possible for the men and women of the railway ward. In most families, husbands were breadwinners and wives were full-time homemakers. This pattern was the response of railroad families to the constraints created by the gender division of wage work, railway labour rhythms, the prevailing conditions of reproductive labour, and the ideology of patriarchy. None the less, railroaders and their wives also made choices within the limitations of their lives. These choices had different implications for the men and women of the community. The strategies men and women adopted for survival and well-being also began to change over the period, both altering as well as being changed by the constraints they faced. As conditions changed, concepts of masculinity and femininity which informed their strategies began to shift — but not dramatically. The experience of the railway community revealed that the construction of gender identities was a complex and contradictory process. Indeed, the historical literature on the social construction of gender has really only began to grapple with the many dimensions which comprised that process.

"It Was a Hard Life": Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920-1950

Mark Rosenfeld

Résumé

Most social histories of the working class have focussed on women's or men's experience alone. However, while studies of working-class women have often been sensitive to the way in which class and gender relationships are constructed and reconstructed simultaneously, histories of working-class men have been largely gender-blind. In an attempt to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender-based divisions in the working-class experience this study examines the relationship between male and female work worlds in the railway ward of Barrie, Ontario between 1920 and 1950.

Based primarily on oral history, this paper argues that the class and gender conditions and relations of the period set limits to what was available and possible for the men and women of the railway ward. In most families, husbands were breadwinners and wives were full-time homemakers. This pattern was the response of railroad families to the constraints created by the gender division of wage work, railway labour rhythms, the prevailing conditions of reproductive labour, and the ideology of patriarchy. None the less, railroaders and their wives also made choices within the limitations of their lives. These choices had different implications for the men and women of the community.

The strategies men and women adopted for survival and well-being also began to change over the period, both altering as well as being changed by the constraints they faced. As conditions changed, concepts of masculinity and femininity which informed their strategies began to shift — but not dramatically. The experience of the railway community revealed that the construction of gender identities was a complex and contradictory process. Indeed, the historical literature on the social construction of gender has really only began to grapple with the many dimensions which comprised that process.

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La plupart des études sur le monde du travail ont mis l'accent soit sur l'expérience des femmes, soit sur celle des hommes. Si, cependant, les études sur les femmes se montrent sensibles à la place qu'y tiennent les rapports entre les classes sociales et les deux sexes, celles sur les hommes ne tiennent aucun compte des femmes. Pour mieux comprendre les conflits qui ont existé entre hommes et femmes dans le monde du travail, cette communication présente une étude de cas, celui du secteur des chemins de fer à Barrie, en Ontario, entre 1920 et 1930.

S'appuyant surtout sur des sources orales, cette étude soutient qu'il existait des différences dans les conditions de vie entre les hommes et les femmes dans ce secteur du travail. Dans la plupart des cas, les hommes étaient les pourvoyeurs de la famille tandis que les femmes étaient ménagères à plein temps. Ce modèle social reposait sur les contraintes qu'imposaient les salaires, les horaires, la productivité et le patriarchat. Cependant, les cheminots et leurs épouses avaient certaines libertés à l'intérieur de ce cadre et les choix qu'ils faisaient avaient des conséquences différentes pour les hommes et pour les femmes.

Les moyens choisis par les hommes et les femmes pour assurer leur survie et leur confort commencèrent à changer pendant la période, suivant en cela les changements dans les circonstances elles-mêmes et les mentalités. A mesure que les conditions de vie s'amélioraient, la conception qu'ils avaient de leur rôle respectif se transformait, mais non pas de façon radicale. L'expérience étudiée montre que l'identité des sexes suivait des voies complexes et parfois contradictoires. Il ne fait aucun doute que les études historiques se rapportant au sujet n'en soient qu'à leurs balbutiements dans l'appréhension de ce cheminement.

In December of 1939 Ed Walker was hired as a brakeman by the Canadian National Railways Company (CNR) in Allandale, the railway ward of Barrie, Ontario. This event was not an unexpected one for him. Railway work was part of Walker's heritage — his father had been a conductor and his grandfather a section foreman, overseeing the maintenance of railway track. Having celebrated his twenty-third birthday, Walker was anxious finally to be able to carry on a family tradition. The Great Depression had prevented him from getting work "on the road" and, after completing two years of secondary school, he spent the next five years working in a number of temporary jobs. With the outbreak of war and the need for men to operate trains, Walker's prospects of a career on the railroad were now more assured. His work schedule as a brakeman was none the less very irregular. For the next two-and-one-half years, Walker was on the "spare board" replacing brakemen who were off work due to injury, sickness, or the need for rest. There was nothing predictable about where he would be working or the time at which he would be called for work. The tensions created by this type of existence, however, were partially offset by the support and fellowship of workmates in a similar position.

In 1942, Walker left the railway to join the army. Returning home four years later, he resumed his work as a brakeman. That year he also married and bought a house just outside the railway ward. His wife, a nurse, continued working at the Barrie hospital until the birth of their first child a year later. She then left her job as a nurse to assume

full-time domestic work in their home. Except for one brief occasion, she stayed out of the paid-labour force until her children were in their teens, and then resumed nursing on a part-time basis. Walker's frequent absences meant that her responsibilities for the welfare of their family greatly increased. Though promoted to a freight conductor in the late 1940s, her husband still had to work at odd hours and was away from home two or three days a week. Only in 1961, twenty-one years after being hired by the CNR, did he begin work on a regularly scheduled passenger train which permitted him to be with his family most nights of the week until he retired.[1]

For those of the railway community, Walker's experiences were unexceptional. These were the common pattern of existence for the engineers, conductors, brakemen, and firemen who began operating trains during the Second World War, as well as for their families. There were also many features of Walker's life that were experienced by his father's generation. Though unremarkable to the railroaders of Allandale, the circumstances of Walker's and his father's generation reveal a great deal about the way in which the world of work and its rhythms dominated the lives of men and women in the community.[2] Their experiences also reveal much about the way in which working-class women and men developed strategies, drawing upon the resources of family, friends, union, and community, to meet the constraints of their lives.

1. Interview with Ed Walker, born 1916, hired by the CNR in 1939.
2. For the most part, Canadian railway histories have been limited to considerations of railway finance, politics, and economic development. When considering railway workers, they generally have been concerned with union activity and industrial relations, or with the men who actually built the railroads. The different labour processes on the railroad have only recently been closely examined and few studies of the railroad community exist. In those community studies, there is very little analysis of the relationship between the paid-work world of railroaders and the world of unpaid domestic labour maintained by their wives. On the finance and politics of railways, see, for example, G.R. Stevens, *Canadian National Railways* (Toronto, 1962); A.W. Currie, *The Grand Trunk Railway of Canada* (Toronto, 1954); H.A. Innis, *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (Toronto, 1971); and Pierre Berton, *The National Dream* (Toronto, 1970) and *The Last Spike* (Toronto, 1971). For studies of those who built the railroads, see, for example, Edmund Bradwin, *The Bunkhouse Man* (rep. Toronto, 1972). On unions and railway industrial relations, see G.M. Rountree, *The Railway Worker* (Montreal, 1936); L.A. Wood, *Union Management Cooperation on the Railroad* (New Haven, 1931); J.H. Tuck, "The Canadian Railways and the International Brotherhoods," PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1976; and Rosemary Spiers, "Technological Change and the Railway Unions," PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1974. For recent studies of the railway labour process in the nineteenth century, see, for example, Paul Craven and Tom Traves, "Dimensions of Paternalism: Discipline and Culture in Canadian Railway Operations in the 1850s," in *On the Job*, eds. Craig Heron and Robert Storey (Montreal, 1986), 47-74. Probably the best-known railroad community study is Rex Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown: Life in Canadian Communities of Single Industry* (Toronto, 1971). More studies have been written about British and American railway communities such as W.H. Chaloner, *The Social and Economic Development of Crewe, 1780-1923* (Manchester, 1950); James Ducker, *Men of the Steel Rails* (Lincoln, Neb., 1983); H.S. Stromquist, "A Generation of Boomers — Work, Community Structure and the Pattern of Industrial Conflict on Late Nineteenth Century American Railroads," PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1981; and W.F. Cottrell, *The Railroader* (Stanford, 1940).

The constraints they faced were those of both class and gender. Attempts to understand the nature of class relations have had a long, if controversial, history of their own.[3] The study of gender relations, however, has been of more recent vintage. Until the past two decades gender issues received little attention from historians. Moreover, studies written in the 1970s and 1980s which have considered such issues have tended to focus on the experience of women.[4] Histories of men have been largely gender-blind. Most depictions of the past, which strive to be sensitive to the nuances of class relationships among male workers and employers, have not considered the role of gender in shaping class interaction.[5] Yet, as one school of feminist inquiry has convincingly

3. For example, sample the sometimes-heated debates of the past decades which heralded the emergence of the new working-class history in David Bercuson, "Through the looking glass of culture: An essay on the new labour history and working class culture in recent Canadian historical writing," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 7 (1981): 95-112; Gregory S. Kealey, "H.C. Pentland and Working Class Studies," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3:2 (1979): 79-94; idem, "Labour and Working Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980s," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 7 (1981): 67-94; idem, "Looking Backward: Reflections on the Study of Class in Canada," *History and Social Science Teacher* 16 (Summer 1981): 213-22; Kenneth McNaught, "E.P. Thompson vs Harold Logan: Writing about Labour and the Left in the 1970s," *Canadian Historical Review* 42 (1981): 141-68; S.R. Mealing, "The Concept of Social Class and the Interpretation of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 46:3 (1965): 201-18; Terry Morley, "Canada and the Romantic Left," *Queen's Quarterly* 86 (1979); Bryan D. Palmer, "Working Class Canada: Recent Historical Writings," *Queen's Quarterly* 86:4 (Winter 1979/80): 594-616; and idem, "Listening to History Rather than Historians: Reflections on Working Class History," *Studies in Political Economy* 20 (Summer 1986): 47-84.

4. For example, see the critical comments of Ava Baron in "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity: The Social Construction of Gender and Skill in the US Printing Industry, 1850-1920," paper presented at the 5th UMIST-ASTON Conference on the Organisation and Control of the Labour Process, Manchester, England, 22-24 April 1987.

5. The work of Greg Kealey and Bryan Palmer, for example, does, however, begin to consider such issues. See Gregory Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto, 1980); Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal, 1979); Gregory Kealey and Bryan Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Cambridge, 1982). The historical dimensions of class and gender relations for male workers have been explored in some detail in Ava Baron's study of American printers, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity," and in Cynthia Cockburn's examination of British printers, *Brothers* (London, 1983). Most studies which address this concern deal with the present and are often written by sociologists. See, for example, Paul Willis, "Shop-Floor Culture, Masculinity and the Wage Form," in *Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory*, eds. John Clarke, Chas Critcher, and Richard Johnson (London, 1979), 185-98, 281-82; Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity* (London, 1982); Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality* (London, 1986); Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shop Floor," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power and Change*, ed. Michael Kaufman (Toronto, 1987), 216-34; and Michael Yarrow, "Class and Gender in the Developing Consciousness of Appalachian Coal Miners," paper presented at the 5th UMIST-ASTON Conference on the Organisation and Control of the Labour Process, Manchester, England, 22-24 April 1987. It should be noted that the conceptions of masculinity discussed in this paper refer to *heterosexual* masculinity. See, for example, the comments of Blye Frank on

argued, class and gender comprise an integrated system of relations which shapes both the world of women and men and an understanding of that world.[6]

Gender does not simply pertain to the relations between women and men. It plays an important role in class relations among male and among female workers and between workers and employers.[7] The organization of the labour market and the paid (as well as unpaid domestic) work process, definitions of skill, the exercise of workplace authority, wages, and job status — all are affected by gender. If the structure of work is created out of the relationship between labour and capital, then the fact that both are gendered deeply influences what takes place.[8]

Analyzing the historical constitution and reconstitution of class and gender relations within a *specific* community can help contribute to a better understanding of the way in which these relationships *generally* developed and changed over time. Such analysis also allows for the affirmation, qualification, or challenge of previously held conceptions of these issues. For example, it is commonly assumed that, within the working class, men have occupied a position of subordination at work and superordination at home. Historians have explored the complexities and contradictions of class domination to a greater degree than those of patriarchal domination, however. It would appear, none the less, that complexity and contradiction have characterized gender relations as well. The dimensions of that subordination and superordination need to be portrayed in fine detail. If wives were subordinate to husbands within the working-class family historically, what were the contours of that subordination? How was it enforced? Were there areas where wives could achieve some control and autonomy? If so, why, and to what effect?

Questions might also be asked about the nature of gender identities and bonds, and their influence on the formation of class solidarities. Generally, the literature on male and female bonding argues that ties between men have been typified by individualism, independence, and competition while those between women have exhibited the qualities

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the importance of distinguishing the type of gender identities and practices in "Hegemonic Heterosexual Masculinity," *Studies in Political Economy* 24 (Autumn 1987): 159-70.

6. This approach rejects a "dual systems analysis" which argues that a system of patriarchal gender relations exists apart from that of capitalist class relations. For a sample of the debates which discuss the different conceptualizations of the relationship between class and gender, see, for example, Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex: Towards Feminist Marxism," *Studies in Political Economy* 10 (Winter 1983): 7-43; Pat Armstrong, *Labour Pains* (Toronto, 1984), 19-48; and Jane Lewis, "The Debate on Sex and Class," *New Left Review* 149 (1985): 108-20.
7. Ava Baron, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity," 6-8.
8. For example, the way in which concepts of masculinity have shaped class relations at work is examined in Ava Baron, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity"; Cockburn, *Brothers*; Michael Yarrow, "Class and Gender"; Paul Willis, "Shop-Floor Culture"; and Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shop Floor." Whereas Cockburn argues that there is a "sex/gender system" which is separate from the system of class relations, Baron sees class and gender as comprising one integrated system and speaks in terms of a "gendered class."

of interdependence, cooperation, and nurturance.[9] Though it is recognized that the nature of such bonds has varied according to class and age, these characteristics are still viewed as the main distinguishing features. Such simple dichotomies, however, seem to belie the intricacy of ties between man and between women, as recent studies of working-class masculinity, for example, have indicated.[10] The degree to which concepts of masculinity or femininity have prompted or undermined solidarity among workers and struggles against class inequality would also seem to defy any simple generalization. Again, in the case of working-class masculinity, some sociologists and historians have stated that concepts of "manliness" have on the whole undermined unity among workers on the job,[11] while others have suggested that the relationship between class and gender identity has been contradictory and ambiguous. Moreover, the latter observe that gender identities are not immutable; they can shift in emphasis and meaning as the conditions which shape them alter.[12] Such studies also underscore the important cognitive and emotional dimensions of both class and gender identities. To understand the actions of working-class women and men, one needs to know not only the experiences which helped mould their worldview, but also the complex of emotions which influenced gender and class interaction.[13]

The following study is an oral history which explores the relationship among work, family, class, and gender in the railway ward of Barrie, Ontario, as experienced by two generations of engineers, firemen, conductors, and brakemen and their families between

9. For a discussion of this issue's theoretical and empirical literature, which deals primarily with the present, see Lorette K. Woolsey, "Bonds between Women and between Men, Part I: A Review of Theory," and "Part II: A Review of Research," *Atlantis* 31:1 (Fall 1987): 116-36.
10. For example, Michael Yarrow, "Class and Gender," and Ava Baron, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity."
11. This is indicated, for example, in the studies of Willis, "Shop-Floor Culture"; Gray, "Sharing the Shop Floor"; and Cockburn, *Brothers*. They underline the contradictory features of working-class masculinity while emphasizing the way it has been used to exclude women from the workplace and from working-class organizations in general.
12. The same can be said of identities based on race, ethnicity, and religion. In "Class and Gender," Yarrow has explored the way in which concepts of manliness have figured in the unity of male Appalchian miners against mineowners and contributed to what he has called a "gender specific class conflict consciousness." Baron's "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity" and Yarrow's work also bring out the contradictory and changing character of male gender identities in their studies.
13. See Yarrow, "Class and Gender" for a discussion of the emotional and cognitive dimensions of class and gender consciousness.

the 1920s and the 1950s.[14] It begins with an examination of the structural constraints faced by the men and women of the railroad community and looks at the world of both paid and domestic unpaid labour. As feminist scholars have emphasized, an examination of the interconnections between these two spheres is essential to an

14. Research for this study is based on a series of interviews with fifty-three men and women who primarily were either running-trades workers (i.e. engineers, firemen, brakemen, or conductors), their wives, or their children. In a few cases, those interviewed came from other sections of the railroad workforce but were long-time residents of the railway community. In total, twenty-one women and thirty-two men were consulted. Of the women, five were wives of engineers (who had previously been firemen), seven were wives of conductors (who had previously been brakemen), four were daughters of conductors, one was a clerk who had worked in the Allandale CNR office, one was the daughter of a chief clerk, two were daughters of a railway crane operator, and one was the wife of a carman. Of the men, sixteen were engineers (and former firemen), eleven were conductors (and former brakemen), two were railway clerks, one was a CNR policeman, one was a carman, and one was a personnel manager. Those interviewed also comprised a total of thirty-two families of running-trades workers. Eight of those families consisted of husbands and wives who married in the 1920s or earlier. Spouses in the remaining families married mainly in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The men and women interviewed were not randomly selected and it cannot be simply stated that they were representative of Barrie's running-trades workers or its railroad families of the period. The majority of Barrie railway families noted in the CNR Pensioners' Club files and on the company's mailing list of pensioners was contacted. Those interviewed had been preselected by the basis that they had chosen to remain in Barrie, or to return there. The men interviewed also spent the greatest part of their working lives on the railroad. All had been hired by the CNR before 1948 and remained with the company until their retirement. Many who worked on the railroad in the years under examination were no longer alive and thus could not be interviewed.

The study makes extensive use of oral history precisely because it provides information about class, gender, work, and family relationships which cannot be effectively researched through an examination of traditional documentary sources. Information from newspapers, government and CNR records, and union files has not been considered in the analysis but is, however, being incorporated into a larger study of the railway ward. To explore these relationships, a schedule of questions pertaining to work, family, community, politics, and culture was prepared and then pursued during interviews. As the interviews progressed, the schedule of questions was modified to reflect the new information and perspectives which came from speaking with railroaders and their families. The interview format, however, was not rigid. While a series of similar questions was asked to allow for a comparison of experiences, a more open-ended method using a life-history approach was taken if it promised to be more successful. Initial interviews lasted approximately two hours and follow-up meetings were generally of the same duration. At least one follow-up meeting was held with half of the men and women interviewed. Husbands and wives who both agreed to an interview were generally questioned together. As well, a number of widows and widowers were interviewed. While the presence of a spouse did affect answers to certain sensitive questions, many responses were still surprisingly candid in cases where a spouse was present. Tapes of the interviews were not transcribed in their entirety but only for information deemed relevant. In addition, the names of those interviewed have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

understanding of the forces which shaped the women and men of the working-class community. These interconnections reveal much about working-class reproduction and survival and the social construction of gender.[15] The study considers the implications of such structural constraints for railroaders and their families, and the strategies that were developed in response. It then examines the role of gender identity in shaping relations between husbands and wives, and class relations on the railway, though only certain features of these relationships are investigated. For both the men and women of Allandale, the fact of being working class was experienced in gender-specific ways. Conceptions of masculinity and femininity and of men's and women's "proper sphere" — all shaped and were derived from those experiences. The study concludes with some general comments on the nature of class and gender relations in Allandale over a forty-year period.

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> "On the railroad there was no night or day." (Dave Kingston, conductor, born 1892, hired 1913)
>
> "It's a very poor life. I mean layin' in the bunk houses waitin' to go to work. Waitin' to be called. You're away from home more than you're ever home.... I was away 300 days out of 365." (Jim Blythe, engineer, born 1913, hired 1940)
>
> "You never knew from one day to the next what you were going to do.... I might go to work at five o'clock in the morning or I might go at midnight." (Norman Crane, conductor, born 1914, hired 1942)

Work, family, and community life in Allandale were profoundly influenced by the railway. The historical recollections of the ward's residents were often prefaced by the comment that "this was a railroader's place." Indeed, until after the Second World War, the economies of Allendale and of Barrie itself were dependent on the railroad—a pattern that had existed since the midnineteenth century. Allandale was an important divisional point on both the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) and its successor in 1923, the Canadian National Railways Company. In a town with a relatively small population

15. See, for example, Veronica Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country: Canadian Women at Work in the Home," in *On The Job*, eds. Craig Heron and Robert Storey (Montreal, 1986), 124-51; Meg Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love* (Toronto, 1980); Bonnie Fox, ed., *Hidden in the Household: Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism* (Toronto, 1980); Wally Seccombe, "The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism," *New Left Review* 83 (Jan.-Feb. 1974): 3-24; Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, "Beyond Sexless Class"; Pat Armstrong, *Labour Pains;* Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Placing Women in History," *New Left Review* 133 (May-June 1982): 5-29; and Bettina Bradbury, "Women's History and Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 19 (Spring 1987): 23-43.

and few industries, the railroad was well known as the major employer.[16] Its workforce comprised some five hundred employees, approximatly 40 per cent of whom were running-trades workers.[17] These consisted of what were known as "head-end" and "tail-end" crews of men. The "head-end" was comprised of firemen, responsible for maintaining the steam engine's supply of coal fuel, and engineers who, as former firemen, had gained enough experience and skill to run a locomotive engine. The "tail-end" was comprised of brakemen, responsible, among other duties, for coupling and uncoupling railway cars and switching trains from one track to another, and conductors who, as former brakemen, had gained enough skill and knowledge to oversee and be accountable for the general operation of a train.

To be employed by the railway as a fireman, engineer, brakeman, or conductor was to enter a world where the rhythms of work were in the main chaotic and unpredictable. The hours were long and the work demanded that these men absent themselves from

16. Population statistics for Barrie reveal a small town of under seven thousand people in 1921. From the 1920s to World War II the population of Barrie grew slowly. At the outbreak of war it had only increased by fifteen hundred. During the war and especially during the postwar years the population growth was more pronounced. From 1945 to 1950 it had increased from 10,500 to 13,500 people. Ten years later, Barrie had over twenty-one thousand people. Allandale represented roughly a little less than one-fifth of this total until the beginning of the 1950s, after which other sections of the town would appear to have grown more rapidly than the railway ward. Ontario Bureau of Municipal Affairs, *Municipal Bulletin* (Toronto, 1921-33). Ontario Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report of Municipal Statistics* (Toronto, 1934-60).

17. Except for the Great Depression of the 1930s, the size of the workforce seems to have remained stable until the late 1950s. Complete CNR payroll records for the Allandale terminal for this period have not yet been located and relatively detailed census information for Barrie is only available beginning with the 1951 census. That year it was reported that the CNR had a workforce of 380 employees, including express and telegraph workers. These figures might not have included engine and train crews temporarily working out of different terminals but with a "home base" in Allandale. A number of those interviewed, including the payroll clerk, spoke of a workforce of approximately five hundred, of which a little less than half were running-trades workers. An occupational breakdown of the Barrie workforce in the 1951 census indicates a similar proportion of running-trades workers. As well, in 1951 the CNR was still the largest industrial employer in the town. Canada, *Census* 1941, vol. VII, Table 10; 1951, vol. IV, Table 4 and Table 17; interviews with Steve Williams, clerk, born 1904, hired 1923; Len Stevens, CNR police, born 1892, hired 1920; Tim Armstrong, clerk, born 1915, hired 1946.

The replacement of coal-fired steam engines with diesel-fuelled ones in the late 1950s, in conjunction with the CNR's programme of centralization, dramatically reduced the size of the workforce in the next decade. Other industries set up after the war, such as Canadian General Electric, replaced the railroad as Barrie's major employer. See Rosemary Spiers, "Technological Change and the Railway Unions, 1945-1972"; Department of Economics and Development, Trade and Industry Branch, *Industrial Survey*, 1966; John Craig, *Simcoe County: The Recent Past* (Simcoe County, 1977), 231-34; Gail Foster, "Industrial Growth in Barrie and Orillia," BA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1968; Richard LeGear and John Kearns, "History and Development of Industry in Barrie," unpublished paper (OFY Project 4K2419, 1974), copy in Simcoe County Archives; and interviews.

their homes for days, and sometimes for weeks or months. An engineman or a trainman based in Allandale could be moved to any one of a number of terminals that fell within his union's northern Ontario seniority district. Seniority determined the location, amount, and type of work assigned to employees.[18] Most running-trades crews, however, operated freight trains for the greatest part of their career on the road. These trains ran on a twenty-four hour schedule. Passenger trains offered steadier and more predictable hours of work but only towards retirement were most running-trades workers entitled to operate such trains exclusively.[19]

The rhythms of railway labour were also shaped by cyclical changes in the economy. Work patterns for the generation hired before 1920 were disrupted by the massive layoffs of the Great Depression.[20] Men who had over fifteen years' seniority were laid off for months or longer. Some had to leave their families to work out of terminals located in the far reaches of northern Ontario. Those who normally would have been recruited in the 1930s had to wait until the outbreak of World War II before they were

18. A seniority system had been in place since the late ninteenth century, when the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, Order of Railway Conductors, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen began organizing engine and train crews; see J.H. Tuck, "Canadian Railways and the International Brotherhoods," 21 and *passim;* Rountree, *The Railway Worker,* 29-30, 216-23, 227-8 and 273; L.A. Wood, *Union Management Cooperation on the Railroad;* Rex Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown,* 120-23; W.F. Cottrell, *The Railroader,* 42-59.

    The seniority district of engineers and firemen varied slightly from that of conductors and brakemen in its geographical extent. As well, unlike the "head-end" engine crews who had one seniority list for the whole district, the "tail-end" crews of conductors and brakemen had a separate seniority list for local runs out of their division terminal (such as Allandale) and for their general district. This arrangement gave them somewhat greater ability to remain in their division terminal. After 1930, the seniority district for both crews was bounded roughly by Toronto in the south, Port Arthur and Armstrong in the northwest, and North Bay (or, for engine crews, Brent) in the northeast of the province. Previous to that, in the early period of nationalization between 1923 and 1930, workers operating trains on the former Grand Trunk lines running out of the Allandale station were not given seniority rights over the northern Ontario terminals of the former Canadian Northern Railway.

19. This is a simplification of what was a very complex system of seniority and promotion. Beginning with the Second World War, firemen and engineers had less control over their promotion and geographic mobility than did, for example, brakemen and conductors. The experience of work rhythms could consequently vary for engine and train crews. As well, there were regional variations in work rhythms. In the sparsely populated north country, freight and passenger runs were longer and work was steadier and more predictable than in the south.

20. According to G.M. Rountree's calculations, based on annual statistics for all railway lines, road service staff was reduced by more than 40 per cent in the five-year period between 1928 and 1933. Out of a total reduction of sixty-two thousand men, ten thousand were involved in the operation of trains; see G.M. Rountree, *The Railway Worker,* Table X, 123 and, in general, 103-36.

given positions. As the most junior workers, they spent the duration of the war in the north while their families, in many cases, remained in Allandale.[21]

Engine and train crews, however, were able to gain some control over their work rhythms. They could use their elaborate and extensive seniority arrangements and union regulations to intensify their workload. Since pensions were based on the best ten years of earnings, many men chose to labour long hours and take any runs to which they were entitled towards the end of their career when their work schedules should have been the least disruptive. Some also manipulated the payment system where wages were based on the number of miles travelled and quotas were set limiting the miles a worker could accumulate in a month.[22] By exceeding his quota, a running-trades worker not only increased his own workload but also decreased that of others. This type of manoeuvring was not regarded favourably: "Fellas would stay up all night tryin' to figure out a goddamn angle till they get another trip or steal a trip off you or some goddamn thing.... They just wanted the money."[23]

Union regulations were also applied in an attempt to regulate the intensity of one's workload in a period before paid holidays and vacations. Crews were allowed to book rest after twelve hours on the job. They could also book off sick in order to be with their families. There were, nevertheless, financial limits to such controls. As one engineer commented, "if you felt like being off, you booked off or you booked sick. Usually they let you off. But years ago when you had a family you couldn't book off because you couldn't afford it. You didn't have the money."[24] The high unemployment of the 1930s also had its effect: "In them days [the 1930s] the unions weren't so strong. And very few booked rest which wasn't good. They'd make you stay on and then penalized you if you made a mistake."[25]

Men also devised informal ways of gaining some limited control over their work rhythms. When summoned to work by the call boy, they would arrange to be absent for the call and this resulted in the next-available crew member on the seniority list having to go to work. Some had an arrangement with the call boys which allowed them to get runs

21. Interviews with Dave Kingston, conductor, born 1892, hired 1913; Bob Lenard, engineer, born 1901, hired 1918; Tim Reilly, conductor, born 1899, hired 1920; Vera Miller, engineer's wife, born 1906, married 1929; Catherine Roy, engineer's wife, born 1900, married 1923; Ed Walker, conductor, born 1916, hired 1939; Glen McPherson, engineer, born 1909, hired 1942; Don Nelson, conductor, born 1915, hired 1939; Mike Allen, conductor, born 1915, hired 1941.

22. Running-trades workers were paid on a mileage rate basis. Passenger service paid less per mile travelled than freight service since one could "get over the road" and earn one's miles more quickly on a passenger run. As well, engineers and conductors were paid more per mile than firemen and brakemen. A worker was allowed to earn as many miles per month up to a certain quota which increased throughout this period. After reaching that quota one was supposed to stop working for the month and allow others to make up their quota. Rountree, *The Railway Worker*, 74, and interviews.

23. Steve Price, engineer, born 1915, hired 1942.

24. Joe Mathews, engineer, born 1919, hired 1941.

25. Tim Reilly, conductor, born 1899, hired 1920.

which were both profitable and relatively short in duration: "I used them call boys pretty good down there and they used me pretty good too. I got a lot of good trips out of them. . . . I never paid the buggers but when they were stuck I always went. . . . You knew when you worked you'd always get somethin' back. You always did."[26] In addition, when the opportunity arose, engine-crew and train-crew members would try to arrange to work with those who were known to be able to "get over the road" as quickly as possible. Running-trades workers were quite aware of the differences in the skill of their workmates and often attempted to avoid those who were slow or unsafe.

Despite these strategems and regulations, however, a large portion of a fireman's, engineer's, brakeman's, and conductor's employment on the railroad involved uncertain hours, frequent absences from home, and a highly variable supply of work. It was characterized neither by the certainties of industrial shift-work time nor that of "white collar" work. Often the most predictable feature of this work was its unpredictability. Indeed, though work in the running trades offered more economic security than most working-class occupations, it came with a price. The rhythms of labour in the running trades during these decades essentially constituted a special category of industrial work time, incorporating its most disruptive features. Men had to be at work at the designated time; yet at least in the case of most freight runs there was no set time at which work would be over. One could always book off after twelve hours but there were limitations in doing so. Furthermore, from one day to the next, many workers would not know when work would begin again.[27] Such rhythms could not but have profound implications for the work and nonwork lives of these railwaymen and their families.

ii

> "The big burden fell on the women, to look after the home and children, and so on . . . . The boys, both of them, grew to realize that there were many things dad couldn't participate in, that mother had to fulfill both functions as both parents." (Ed Walker, conductor, born 1916, hired 1939)

> "They really had to adapt. They had to adapt to not only running the family, the home, and it didn't matter what created [a problem], they had to solve it. So they became, well, real pros. There wasn't anything they didn't do." (Elizabeth Burt, born 1918, daughter of a conductor)

Given the chaotic and often unpredictable work rhythms of engine and train crews, it would have been difficult for trains to operate, and for the families of these men to remain intact, without the existence of a particular configuration of gender relations. In Allandale, as with other railway and nonrailway communities of this period, households were constituted and gender divisions shaped according to the predominant twentieth-century pattern. After marriage, husbands were the sole or primary wage earners and

26. Steve Price, engineer, born 1915, hired 1942.

27. See, for example, E.P. Thompson's classic statement on the shaping of industrial work time in "Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," in *Essays in Social History*, eds. M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (Oxford, 1974), 39-77.

their wives were responsible for unpaid domestic labour. There were, however, variations in this pattern between the two generations of families whose husbands or wives were interviewed. The first generation of wives were married by the end of the 1920s, and all worked in the paid-labour force or on their family farms before marriage.[28] Upon marriage, they left the paid-labour force or farm to assume full-time domestic work in their new homes.[29]

Paid work after marriage was more common for the second generation of wives. As with those of the previous generation, the wives who were married in the late 1930s or early 1940s worked before marriage, in the paid-labour force or on family farms, in occupations that conformed to the sexual division of labour of the time.[30] One-third continued to work outside the home after marriage, before they had their first child. With the arrival of their first child, which was generally within a year or two of marriage, the majority withdrew from the wage-labour force until their children were older.[31] One-third reentered the paid workforce at a later stage of their lives.

There were many interrelated pressures which shaped the after-marriage wage-work patterns of these wives. The economy of Barrie offered little opportunity for the wives of the first generation, most of whom were either residents of Allandale or moved there after marriage.[32] The town's female workforce was small and concentrated into

28. For a description of the experience of women working in the paid-labour market during this period, see, for example, Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 4 (1979):131-64; Jane Synge, "Young Working Class Women in Early Twentieth Century Hamilton: Their Work and Family Lives," in *Proceedings of the Workshop Conference on Blue Collar Workers and their Communities*, ed. A.H. Turritin (Toronto, 1976), 137-46. In my study, three of these eight women had jobs in retail sales, three came from farms, one worked as an operator for Bell Telephone, and one was a nurse. All but one of these women remained at home until marriage in keeping with the gendered ideological conventions that required single daughters to be supportive and guided. These single women also remained in their family homes for financial reasons. The daughters of railroaders who remained single also tended to stay at home and look after their parents when they retired. Interviews with Agatha Johnson, conductor's wife, born 1904, married 1925; Cynthia Waterford, chief clerk's daughter, born 1916; Eva Naylor, conductor's daughter, born 1915; Barbara Cruickshank, conductor's daughter, born 1917; Wilma Naylor, conductor's daughter, born 1910. See also Joy Parr, "Rethinking Work and Kinship in a Canadian Hosiery Town, 1910-1950," *Feminist Studies* 1 (Spring 1987):137-62 for a fascinating discussion of the situation faced by women in the hosiery industry of Paris, Ontario.

29. There were two exceptions: one woman worked part-time as a nurse before and after her child was born, and another worked in a bakery after her husband retired from the railroad.

30. Of these twenty-four wives, four were in retail or office work, four were teachers, four worked on family farms, six were factory employees, two were nurses, two were waitresses, one was a babysitter, and another a dancer. All but five of these women also lived at home before marriage.

31. Only two of these twenty-four wives did not withdraw from the labour force while their children were still young. One worked as a nurse part-time and the other, also a nurse, briefly resumed her job in response to a family financial crisis.

32. This was the case with six of the eight wives interviewed.

service, clerical, and retail occupations, all of which were notoriously poorly paid.[33] As a result of the Second World War, there were greater work opportunities in town for the wives of the second generation who were from Allandale or moved there in the late 1930s and early 1940s.[34] By then, however, many already had children for whom they were responsible. Unlike the first generation, the majority of wives of the second generation married before their husbands were able to get a position on the railroad. Less than one-third married after their husbands had already taken up railroading.[35]

The rhythms of work in the running trades made it *necessary* that there be a full-time domestic worker in the home after the first child was born. Also, it would have been extremely difficult for a woman to maintain a family on her own income. In view of the fundamental role these women had in providing for their families' well being, there was little economic sense in wives reentering the wage-labour market while their children were growing up. Reentry would only have increased the burdens of women already labouring under the time-consuming and often stressful conditions of domestic work.[36]

33. Barrie labour-force statistics for the 1920s and 1930s have not yet been located. Census figures for 1941, however, were probably similar for the earlier decades given that Barrie's economic structure did not change significantly until after World War II. In 1931, female wage earners comprised 22 per cent of all wage earners over twenty. In 1941, they constituted 22 per cent of all wage earners over fourteen years of age. Almost 90 per cent of these women were in retail, clerical, or service employment that year. Though a very small sample, all of the three wives of the first generation who came from Allandale were retail workers before they married. Less than 6 per cent of the female workforce was in manufacturing. The only positions open to women in the Allandale station were those of office clerks and stenographers. Canada, *Census*, 1931, vol. VI, Table 7; 1941, vol. VII, Table 10; and interviews. See also the discussion concerning the working conditions of clerical workers in Graham Lowe, "Class, Job and Gender in the Canadian Office," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 10 (1982): 11-37.

34. Nineteen of the twenty-four wives considered were in this situation.

35. Seven of the twenty-four wives considered were in this category. Most husbands began railroad work a few years before, or after, marriage.

36. For example, the absence of a state-supported system of childcare placed an onus on women to make informal arrangements for the care of their children if they worked outside the home. As Ruth Pierson has observed, while a state-supported system of childcare was created during World War II, it was only a temporary measure to allow mothers to enter the paid workforce at a time of wartime labour shortages. Both the provision of childcare and tax concessions to married women ended after the war. In the case of the wives of Allandale running-trades workers, there was still little economic incentive for them to take up wartime wage work. See Ruth Pierson, "Women's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II," in *The Neglected Majority*, eds. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto, 1977), 125-45 and 185-92.

    The manufacturing of a number of goods and services formerly produced in the household did not take place on a large scale until after the Second World War. This restricted the ability of wives to substitute labour-consuming goods and services produced in the home for those produced on the market if they had to reenter the wage-labour force. It would also appear that, while some *potentially* labour-saving domestic technology was acquired by Allandale families in the 1920s (such as washing machines), this did not take place in a major way until after the Second World War.

The ability of engine and train crews to earn enough on their own to support their families for most, if not all, of their career in the running trades allowed wives to assume domestic responsibilities without having to return to the paid-work force. Compared to other sections of the railroad labour force, and to most working-class occupations in general, running-trades work was one of the most highly paid. The earnings of these men, however, varied according to occupation and seniority. Firemen and brakemen were paid less per mile than engineers and conductors. The income of junior men improved as they gained seniority and were offered more work and the possibility of promotion.[37]

In spite of these circumstances, earning enough to maintain a family was also at times very difficult for an engineman or trainman, and this made it necessary for a wife to devise strategies to stretch family income in ways that attempted to avoid her reentry into the paid-labour force. For the generation of wives whose husbands began railway work in the 1920s or before, family income was limited by the layoffs of the Great Depression and a reduced work schedule. In families where the husband started railway work in the late 1930s or early 1940s, previous savings were minimal or nonexistent. As well, in the experience of both generations, family income was limited by a husband's need to pay for living expenses when he was away from home and working in northern Ontario. As the wife of an engineer recalled, "you were keeping two homes going. I was here and he was up [in] Hornepayne and Nakina and money wasn't like it is today. I can remember that if you got fifty dollars every two weeks you thought you were in heaven."[38]

Despite these fluctuations in family income, employment in the running trades still brought greater financial security than most working-class occupations. For the wives of these workers — the majority of whom came from farming or working-class backgrounds — marriage, and particularly marriage to a railroader, also offered more economic security than that of women forced to subsist on the wages paid to female employees in the labour market.[39] As was the case of work in the running trades, however, labouring as a wife and mother in a railroader's family had its price.

In many ways these women faced a situation similar to that of all working-class wives of the period. Like them, they were primarily responsible for all facets of domestic

37. Though no complete wage and income data for the Allandale terminal have been located for this period, census figures for Toronto and Hamilton train and engine crews on all railway lines for the period between 1921 to 1951 provide a rough indication of the relatively high earnings of the men. The rate paid per mile was fairly standard in the industry. Canada, *Census*, 1921, vol. III, Table 37; 1931, vol. V, Table 22 and 23; 1941, vol. VI, Table 7; 1951, vol. V, Table 23.

38. Vera Miller, engineer's wife, born 1906, married 1929.

39. This is not to say that the motivations for marriage were simply economic, only that the prospects for a woman who remained single and dependent on the wages paid to most women were not very attractive. See, for example, the comments of Meg Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love* (Toronto, 1980), 43-44. Of the twenty-seven wives married to railroaders whose father's occupation is known, fourteen came from working-class families, eleven from farming families, and two from lower-middle-class families. Concerning those that came from working-class families, ten were skilled workers, and seven of these were railroaders.

labour — housework, reproduction, and care of dependent children, and of working and dependent adults. Their labour was essential to the maintenance of the family and its wage-earners and, within a larger framework, essential to maintenance of workers as a class and to the economic conventions of industrial capitalism. Their domestic labour was also shaped by the work schedules of their husbands or, if they reentered or remained in the paid-labour market, by the added demands of the "double day."[40] The rhythms of work in the running trades, however, had unique implications for the wives of engine and train crews.

Wives had to juggle the schedules of their own domestic routines to meet those of their husbands. In many cases this involved getting up at odd hours to prepare the meals that husbands would take to work. Dave Kingston's wife had to tend to the needs not only of her husband but also those of her cousin, who boarded with them for almost ten years: "My wife used to have to maybe get up twice in the night. I might go out at one o'clock in the morning and he'd go out at three or four o'clock in the morning. And she'd have to get up and pack that basket."[41] The demands placed on wives to cater both to husband and children could be especially exhausting.

When husbands were home the rhythms of domestic labour could be actually more chaotic than when they were away for long periods of time. Not only did wives have to prepare meals at odd hours, but also the irregular sleeping patterns of their husbands meant that children had to be kept quiet while their fathers rested during the day. The long absence of a husband who had to work in the north was, in one sense, easier for a wife. Domestic routines could be organized in a less chaotic fashion, in accordance with a wife's own preferences. Long separations from husbands, nevertheless, also created difficulties for these women. They had primary responsibility for the financial management of the household and for the care of their children. Most working-class wives also had these responsibilities. However, railway husbands were often not around to offer support in instances where such help might have been given. "We were left with everythin'," recalled a conductor's wife. "It seemed always if there was an emergency come up they were on the other end of the line. You didn't have a husband."[42]

After long separations, and even after frequent short absences, family members had to make emotional adjustments. The need to be away from home often meant that running-trades workers had limited contact with their children. When a man came home and was in a position to take on some childcare responsibilities, his priorities could differ from those of his wife. The recollections of Joe Mathews, an engineer, underscored the

40. These categorizations of domestic labour are taken from Veronica Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country," 126. See also Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love*. The above generalization is not meant to ignore the differences in the experiences of working-class women. Gender was experienced in class-specific ways and there were differences within the various sections of the working class, for example, concerning the ability of wives "to make ends meet," the frequency of the need to cope with their husbands' unemployment, and the ways of doing so.

41. Dave Kingston, engineer, born 1892, hired 1913.

42. Evelyn Martin, conductor's wife, born 1915, married 1943.

conflicts that could result: "[My wife] more or less brought the children up. I was never home. She'd say once in a while, oh you have to straighten that guy out, one of the girls out. I said listen, I've been away for four days. . . . I want to hug 'em, I don't want to be fightin' with 'em."[43]

As tension managers, wives were expected to deal with the work frustrations of their spouses and those caused by their husband's inability to participate in family events.[44] A certain degree of understanding about railway operations was necessary in order that a wife be able to coordinate her own routines with her husband's needs. This understanding was gained through conversations with spouses and other railroaders' wives and, for those who came from railway families, from having observed their fathers on the job. Despite a wife's knowledge and abilities, however, explosive situations could not always be avoided. The intensity of frustration that at least some women could feel was indicated in one wife's comment: "That's the trouble. We all were for our husbands. He's like number one. Like God himself coming in the door and out the door. . . . I used to think for a long time 'You make me so sick I wish to heck he'd run off the track.' Then I prayed like eff that he wouldn't."[45]

Though sometimes exasperated, a railway wife was also keenly aware of her significance to the family's welfare. Household economic management was particularly important to these women. The most common pattern for both generations was that wives would be given their husbands' pay cheque and then would allocate money for groceries, clothing and material to make clothing, furniture, and other essential items. Husbands would then take an allowance or a small portion of their wages for themselves.[46] When two households had to be maintained or in times of economic crisis, some wives augmented family income by offering room and board to single railroaders, by taking in washing for a fee, or by selling knitted goods. Planting vegetable gardens, doing work that might otherwise be purchased on the market, or putting the needs of other family members ahead of one's own were other ways of making ends meet when family resources were limited.[47]

The financial balancing act wives had to perform was both a source of pride and a cause for anguish. When managing finances these women had autonomy in determining daily expenditures, though this appeared to be less so concerning the purchase of large items. Their position as financial managers was based on a fundamental dependence on their husbands' wages. This dependence could have dire consequences if a husband put his own priorities ahead of his family's and squandered away his pay cheque in gambling and drinking. Most wives, however, were not faced with such a situation. Decisions

43. Joe Mathews, engineer, born 1919, hired 1941.
44. See also the observations in W.F. Cottrell, *The Railroader*, 73-75, concerning the problem of planning family events.
45. Rosemary Sharp, engineer's wife, born 1924, married 1948.
46. Meg Luxton provides a very interesting analysis of the various ways family finances might be handled in *More than a Labour of Love*, 165-68.
47. See also, for example, the observations of Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country," 143-44 and Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love*, 127 and 173-75.

about household expenditures were often amicably made. Yet, as the wage earner, a husband could also exercise his prerogative and refuse to sanction certain expenses. Rebecca Crane recalled that "it took a lot of years [to work decisions out] because the first few years the man was the boss. There was no question about it."[48] Her comments were echoed by others.

The wives of running-trades workers found themselves in a situation that could be intensely lonely and sometimes exasperating. Their loneliness was not only a product of being separated from their spouses for long periods of time. It was also the result of the work situation of these women. As others have observed, the domestic labour process is isolated, private, and fragmented, and this contrasts sharply with the socialized and integrated process of industrial capitalist production.[49] Wives were quite aware of the conditions shaping their isolation and loneliness, on the whole moreso than their husbands.

Though much of their time was spent doing domestic work in the home, wives also had support networks that played a very significant role in aiding them to deal with the isolation and loneliness of their situation. The most important of these networks was that of kinship. For both generations, family provided the material and emotional support that helped both husbands and wives survive the tensions of railroad life. Many wives decided to remain in Allandale rather than move north to join their husbands because of the support offered by their relatives.[50]

Most railroaders had what would technically be considered nuclear family households. The close proximity of kin, however, made the isolation of the household unit more apparent than real.[51] In addition, at specific periods in the life cycle of a number of running-trades workers, the household was extended to include other close family members. Wilma Laidlaw, a conductor's daughter who married a brakeman in 1920, lived with her parents and her brother in an extended family household after marriage. Even after having children she continued to live with her parents until her husband bought a house across the road from her mother and father. In her extended family situation, housework was done collectively by the women, though "everyone seemed to go their own way, do their own thing" with regard to social activities. Each component of the household was also financially self-sufficient, though family members shared household expenses and collective management, an arrangement which reduced their living costs. When Wilma's husband went to London, Ontario to work for seven

48. Rebecca Crane, conductor's wife, born 1916, married 1937.

49. For example, Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love*, 201-04.

50. Of the twenty-one families that stayed in Allandale while the husband worked in the north for long periods of time, more than three-quarters had either the wife's or husband's parents or siblings living in the town or nearby. Only three wives with relatives in Allandale moved their family north to join their husbands. The remaining eight of the thirty-two families considered did not originally come from Allandale and only moved there after the husband worked up north for a number of years.

51. The classic, as well as most problematic, examination of household structure is found in the work of Peter Laslett. See, for example, *The World We Have Lost* (New York, 1965) and Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, eds., *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972).

years during the Great Depression she would see her family daily.[52] Wilma Laidlaw's situation was not unique. After they were married, Catherine Roy lived just up the street from her family, Vera Miller took a place next door to her parents, and Rosemary Sharpe settled only a few houses away from her mother and father.[53]

Allandale railway families not only provided emotional and material support; they were also essential in conditioning future railway workers and future railway workers' wives to running-trades work and its rhythms. In the case of the men interviewed, half of whom came from railway families, it was well known that, with a father or uncle in the railway workforce, one not only had an important contact that made it easier for a man to get a job on the road. Having a relative on the railroad also allowed a future worker to acquire rudimentary knowledge of the skills and terminology that he would eventually use when hired by the company. It was this type of exposure that was valued by the CNR and its predecessor.[54]

As with sons, daughters were also exposed to their father's work routines. Furthermore, both sons and daughters had experience with the way a father's work rhythms affected family life. Daughters, however, were more likely to be involved with their mother's domestic labour and to hear a great deal more about the anguish and turmoil that their mothers might feel. "My oldest daughter was my sounding board and I talked to her probably before she knew what I was saying," recalled the wife of a conductor.[55] It was certainly felt that a daughter's exposure to railway life equipped her to handle its pressures should she also marry a railroader. Jim Blythe, an engineer, expressed this common belief succinctly: "It was hard for a woman but not for my wife because she was used to it, being the daughter of an engineer. She adjusted to it, but for the other women it was hard to adjust. . . . Had a lot of trouble. Lots of trouble."[56]

52. Interview with Wilma Laidlaw, conductor's wife, born 1900, married 1920; and Val Laidlaw Bates, conductor's daughter, born 1934.

53. Interviews with Catherine Roy, engineer's wife, born 1900, married 1923; Vera Miller, engineer's wife, born 1906, married 1929; Rosemary Sharp, engineer's wife, born 1924, married 1948; Mike Allan, conductor, born 1915, hired 1941; Carol Webster, engineer's wife, born 1918, married 1941; Jim Blythe, engineer, born 1913, hired 1940; and Ed Walker, conductor, born 1916, hired 1939.

54. See also, for example, W.F. Cottrell, *The Railroader*, 4-11; Rex Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown*, 135-37; Alick R. Andrews, "Social Crisis and Labour Mobility: A Study of Economic and Social Change in a New Brunswick Railway Community," MA diss., University of New Brunswick, 1967, 72-73.

55. Jill Allen, conductor's wife, born 1920, married 1939.

56. Jim Blythe, engineer, born 1913, hired 1940. For women who grew up on a farm, the heavy responsibilities of a railroader's wife were not totally unfamiliar. As evident both in the comments of farm women who became railwaymen's wives and in the historical literature on rural families, a farmer's wife performed essential productive and reproductive labour. Similar to the daughters in railroad families, daughters in farm families would observe their mothers and help them. The rhythms of household labour on the farm, however, differed in certain respects from that in running-trades families. The degree to which concepts of gender relations learned on the farm were altered by life in a railway family needs to be explored further. For a recent study of farm women in the 1920s, see Mary Kinnear, "'Do you want your daughter to marry a farmer?': Women's Work on the Farm, 1922," *Canadian Papers in Rural History* VI: 137-53.

Next to the family support network, that established among friends and neighbours and among fellow church members was most important to the wives of running-trades workers. For the most part, friends were the wives of other railroaders, many but not all of whom had husbands working in the running trades. This was true of both generations. Similarly, fellow church members were also from the railway community.[57] Wives looked upon friends and neighbours as a source of help and comfort, especially in emergencies. They would visit one another with their children, thereby creating an informal arrangement of collective childcare. Visiting with other wives was a way of combatting loneliness and a form of entertainment. Card parties, community dances, and other social gatherings were also popular forms of entertainment which were important to the support networks railway wives created. Both husbands and wives might participate in these events, but frequently only wives would be involved.

Indeed, there was a gender division of leisure in the railroad community. Many wives of both generations were members of the church women's auxiliaries and, to a lesser extent, the women's branches of union and fraternal organizations. As with the informal networks women created, these auxiliary committees offered them a forum to share their experiences and to break some of the isolation they might experience, especially for those who did not have family in the town. Their participation in such organizations and in informal arrangements was governed, however, by the demands of their domestic work schedule, and especially by their ability to make arrangements for childcare.

While wives might depend to various degrees on their support networks to deal with the pressures of their situation, they also devised ways to gain some control over the effects of their husband's work schedule on family life. As one historian has observed, "it is within the private sphere that women could wield the most influence over their families. They made effective use of their capacity to argue, nag, manipulate... in order to achieve certain demands."[58] Many wives of running-trades workers refused to move their families to northern Ontario when their husbands were sent there to work. In isolated towns such as Hornepayne, Capreol, and Nakina, living conditions were extremely harsh compared to what existed in Allandale. Facilities improved in the 1950s, but still compared unfavourably with those available at home. In light of such conditions, wives stood firm in their commitment to remain in Allandale or in other divisional points in southern Ontario. Given a wife's refusal to move, a husband might pass up a better job in the north to remain with his family when he was allowed to do so, as in the case of senior brakemen and conductors. A conductor's daughter vividly remembered her mother's determination to stay in Toronto: "Our dad, he... started on a passenger [train as a] conductor. And he wasn't on there very long because he got transferred out to Toronto, from Toronto to North Bay. And my mother says no way would she break her family in Toronto. That was the last thing. So my dad just dropped

57. Allandale had a United, an Anglican, and a Presbyterian church within half a block of one another. The congregation of each was almost exclusively composed of railroad families.

58. Franca Iacovetta, "From Contadina to Worker: Southern Italian Immigrant Working Women in Toronto, 1947-1962," in *Looking Into My Sister's Eyes: An Exploration of Women's History*, ed. Jean Burnet (Toronto, 1986), 202.

back to a freight [conductor]."[59] Conversely, some wives insisted that they move up north with their husbands in order to avoid a long separation.

For many wives, a move to northern Ontario would mean the loss of an important family-support network. They were also aware, not only of how conditions in the north would affect their own domestic labour and well being, but also how such conditions might affect the health of their spouses, especially in the harsh winters when much time would be spent outside in temperature that could fall to as low as minus 35 degrees celsius.

Some wives pressured their husbands to take every opportunity to get work in the southern Ontario terminals, if their seniority permitted this. Vera Miller's approach was more direct. She used her knowledge of the seniority system and union regulations to have the Allandale station superintendent bring her husband home, much to her spouse's dismay:

> [I said] why aren't you bringing Peter home? Well, he said, I thought maybe he might just get home and he'd have to go back again. I said that's his worry, not yours. I said, by the way, I said, when Mr. Newton was cut off the railroad, I said, retired, I said that automatically brings a man back. . . . And I said he's still up there. I said what's the point? What did you leave him for? . . . I said you call him back. So he [telephoned the terminal at Hornepayne] and called Peter home. And he never had to go back. Never had to go back. And he could have killed me for it. He said, what did you do that for? I said just because you should have been home, Peter. And I said that's where you should be. And he said, well, I was making good money. I said I don't care how much money you were making. He never had to go back.[60]

Some wives also would meet their husbands at the station on the day they were paid in order to collect their cheques. In certain cases this would provide protection against the spending habits of husbands known for their prowess at drinking and gambling. As the railway would not give the pay cheques directly to the wives, this was one of the few recourses open to women in such situations.[61]

The degree to which women could manoeuvre, however, was still limited. A wife might refuse to move to northern Ontario or to get up at night to make her husband dinner, or she might try to have him come home from the north but she was in no position to prevent the chaotic and disruptive nature of railway scheduling. Her efforts were directed toward *curtailing* the effects of railway work rhythms on family life. Similarly, a wife might develop ways to manage household finances that met the needs of her family as well as her own needs, but her management was dependent on the wages of her husband.

59. Barbara Cruickshank, conductor's daughter, born 1917.
60. Vera Miller, engineer's wife, born 1906, married 1929.
61. Dick Cook, personnel manager, born 1929, hired 1944.

Running-trades workers were aware of the economic pressures which kept them in the work force as the family breadwinner. These men also derived a certain pride from being able to earn a "family wage."[62] The fact that running-trades workers were the family breadwinners was viewed through a particularly masculine frame of reference. Their situation did not simply reflect economic necessity but was also a desireable state of affairs. It confirmed their masculinity and underpinned the patriarchal power they might exercise in the family.

As theorists of masculinity have argued, "definitions of masculinity enter into the way work is personally experienced, as a life-long commitment and responsibility. In some respects work itself is made palatable only through the kinds of compensations masculinity can provide. . . . When work is unpalatable, it is often only his masculinity (his identification with the wage, 'providing for the wife and kids') that keeps a man at work day after day."[63] A male worker views his wages as proof of his ability to endure the harsh working conditions that a woman would supposedly be incapable of surviving. For him, to be the breadwinner of the family is not simply a result of the sexual division of wage labour; it is also a confirmation of his male prowess. It is a prize won "in a masculine mode in confrontation with the 'real' world."[64]

The self-image of running-trades workers as men was bound up in their notion of a wife's place being in the home. For the first generation, this meant after marriage; for the second generation, this meant, if not after marriage, at least after the first child was born. As an engineer's son recalled, "back in those days the women didn't work. If a woman had to go out to work her husband was kinda looked down on because he was supposed to keep her."[65]

A wife working for wages outside the home was, for some men, a threat to the power and privileged position of the male breadwinner in the family, despite the improbability of a wife being able to become economically independent. The comments

62. The debate over the importance of the "family wage" for working-class survival and for gender relations has been controversial. See, for example, Jane Humphries, "Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working Class Family," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 1:3 (1977): 241-58 and "The Working Class Family, Women's Liberation and Class Struggle: The Case of Nineteenth Century British History," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9:3 (Fall 1977): 25-41; Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh, "'The Family Wage': Some Problems for Socialists and Feminists," *Capital and Class* 11 (Summer 1980): 51-72 and *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (London, 1980); Ruth Milkman, "Organizing the Sexual Division of Labour: Historical Perspectives in 'Women's Work' and the American Labour Movement," *Socialist Review* 10:1 (1980): 95-150; Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas, "Rethinking Women's Oppression," *New Left Review* 144 (March-April 1984): 33-71; Martha May, "Bread before Roses: American Workingmen, Labor Unions and the Family Wage," in *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (London, 1985), 1-21.

63. Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, 48.

64. Paul Willis, "Shop Floor Culture, Masculinity, and the Wage Form," 196-97. See also, for example, Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality*, 38.

65. Tim Armstrong, engineer's son and railway clerk, born 1915, hired 1946.

of one railroader made explicit what others might have also felt but were reluctant to articulate: "My wife never worked outside the house. I don't believe in the woman working. I'm an oldtimer. In the old days that was their place but now it's so much different. A man that starts a little argument [with his wife would be told]: 'Well, I can keep myself. To hell with you.'"[66]

While many railwaymen believed that a woman's place was in the home, their wives did not always concur with this view. Some women, especially of the first generation, resented being told that they had to leave the paid workforce upon marriage. Though wives were aware of how wage work for married women reflected badly on their husbands, some were particularly irritated with the way such restrictions were enforced by their employers and by the railway company itself. To allow married women to work outside the home would give the unwelcome impression that Grand Trunk or CNR wages were insufficient to support a family. Catherine Roy's recollections underscored the irritation that these women felt: "You [were] not allowed to [work outside the home after marriage] when you belonged to the CNR in those days. No, you couldn't dare have another job. Your whole life was CNR. . . . The railroad disapproved of it, you see. I don't know how they can run your affairs for you."[67]

Once his wife became a homemaker, a railwayman believed that he was entitled to certain benefits which were compensation for his breadwinning efforts — for example, the right to spend a portion of his time off the job as he pleased. The degree to which a husband might become involved in housework and childcare was limited by his own wage-labour schedule and the time necessary to recover from the demands of his job. Domestic labour was not simply assigned to wives as a result of their husband's work schedule, however. For the vast majority, domestic work was allocated on the basis of gender; it was women's work. In certain instances, husbands might "help out." Some intervened to ease their spouse's workload through the acquisition of home appliances.[68] Some husbands also prepared meals, though generally after their retirement. As well, many practised a division of labour in which they were responsible for house repairs and maintenance.

66. Tim Reilly, conductor, born 1899, hired 1920.

67. Catherine Roy, engineer's wife, born 1900, married 1923.

68. For general observations on the availability of domestic technology and its uneven development and application, see Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country," 130-35 and Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love*, 128-59. They note that the market for domestic appliances expanded in the 1920s and contracted in the 1930s and the war years before expanding again in the postwar period. Census statistics on household technology for Barrie are not available for the years before 1951. That year, 78 per cent of all households had powered washing machines, 60 per cent had electric vacuum cleaners, 69 per cent had mechanical refrigerators, 83 per cent had electric stoves, 81 per cent had hot and cold running water, 67 per cent of all households were heated by coal and 30 per cent by oil, 70 per cent were heated by furnaces, of which 71 per cent were hot air and 29 per cent were steam or hot water, 29 per cent were heated by stove, and 82 per cent of all households had telephones. Canada, *Census*, 1951, vol. III, Tables 22, 26, 30, 34, 38, 42.

Domestic labour was, nevertheless, a woman's responsibility from which a husband was exempt unless he chose otherwise.[69] This arrangement was somewhat ironic, however. When away from home, running-trades workers would often cook for themselves and be responsible for keeping their living accommodations clean. The peculiar working conditions of engine and train crews legitimized their involvement in specific elements of what might be considered "domestic labour away from home." When a worker returned to Allandale this labour again became his wife's duty.

Patriarchal practices, however, cannot be seen as simply being imposed on these women (or on these men, for that matter), though impositions certainly did occur. As others have observed, such practices are perpetuated "in the main by consent, by identification with the status quo and a belief in common interests or inevitability."[70] While domestic labour for a railway worker's wife could be stressful, frustrating, and burdensome, much of a wife's identity and pride was bound up in the work she did in the home. "I never wanted to go to work once I had my children," commented an engineer's wife. "I don't know how people can do it really. So I was just like a home person. I wanted to be in the house. I wanted to keep my family. And it never bothered me."[71]

A great deal has been written about the "heroic" elements of working-class masculinity, which enabled a man to survive hostile working conditions through "sheer mental and physical bravery."[72] Similarly, there are also "heroic" elements to working-class femininity which enabled a woman to survive the often conflicting and onerous pressures of domestic labour. Wives of both generations spoke with pride of being able to meet the demands of their situation, though often with great difficulty. They were aware of the essential role they had in the family and its importance, from the smallest matter of family care to the largest.

For a woman, not to tend to the needs of family and husband was to call into question her identity as a housewife and mother. It would also call into question the necessity of doing her job well. Wives who drank to excess, or did not provide the "proper care" for children or spouse, or who had extramarital affairs, were viewed unsympathetically.[73] Husbands who were poor providers, alcoholics, or philanderers were also criticized, though elements of a double standard did exist, especially concerning the question of drinking.

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69. On the allocation of domestic work in the household and the benefits derived from wage labour, see also, for example, Meg Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love*, 45 and 163; Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, 68-70 and 81; and Joy Parr, "Rethinking Work and Kinship."

70. Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers*, 206.

71. Rosemary Sharp, engineer's wife, born 1924, married 1948.

72. For example, Paul Willis, "Shop-Floor Culture," 189.

73. There was, however, little divorce in this period. Those interviewed commented that divorce might have been more prevalent if it had been more culturally acceptable. As well, for a woman divorce was economically prohibitive and legally difficult. In 1921, only ten men and women in Barrie (out of a population of 6,936) were divorced. In 1951, thirty-seven men and women (out of a population of 12,514) were divorced. Canada, *Census*, 1921, vol. II, Table 33; 1951, vol. I, Table 29.

Seeing themselves as wives and mothers, the women of the railway community did not challenge the predominant gender relations of the period. According to their ideological conceptions, a wife's (or at least a mother's) place was in the home — but this was also a necessity. As one railway wife and mother stated, in comments that have been already noted: "I never wanted to go to work once I had my children." Yet underlying this view of herself as a nonwage-working mother and wife was the recognition: "I don't know how people can do it" — that is, raise children and do wage work under conditions in a railway family that would make such a "double day" formidable. In the decades after World War II it became more acceptable for wives without children, or with older children, to work in the paid-labour force. Yet, this acceptance was not total. Practical and ideological considerations which pointed to the home as the proper sphere for women also remained strong.[74]

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> "The railroad men is a little different from a lot of people. . . . There was togetherness. . . . The railway man was closer because. . . outside the odd time you'd be off, you'd be together all the time. You'd eat together. You slept together. . . . You'd be together for miles and miles, hours and hours." (Dave Kingston, conductor, born 1892, hired 1913)

> "We were always brothers. That's what we worked on." (Mike Allen, conductor, born 1915, hired 1941)

The manner in which running-trades workers manoeuvred within the limits of their work and family lives revealed a great deal about their self-image as men. This identity both shaped and was an outgrowth of their work experience. Their view of themselves as breadwinners was conditioned by their class situation, the prevailing gender division of wage labour, and the ideology of patriarchy. As economic providers they persisted in wage labour for the greatest part of their lives and attempted to ensure economic security for their kin through occupational inheritance.[75] When they intensified their labour by

74. Rosemary Sharpe, engineer's wife, born 1924, married 1948. Some wives returned to the paid workforce in the 1960s and 1970s when changes in the labour market, Barrie's economy, and in household domestic labour had the effect of both pushing and pulling married women into a situation where they had to combine wage and domestic labour. Why these railway wives took on a "double day" and how they managed will be explored further in future interviews. On the changes in domestic and wage labour in 1960s and 1970s, see, for example, Pat Armstrong, *Labour Pains*, 49-66.

75. This was especially the case for the generation of workers that began in the 1920s or earlier. The pattern of occupational inheritance, at least for Allandale railway families, appeared to have changed for the generation of sons whose fathers began work during the Second World War. Of the twenty-one families with sons who might have followed in their father's footsteps, only four families had sons who made a career out of railroading. The contraction of the railway workforce beginning in the 1950s, the greater accessibility to postsecondary education beginning in the 1960s, and family encouragement of social mobility directed sons away from a career on the road. It would appear that many, however, did have summer jobs on the railroad. As well, this pattern would not seem to have been replicated in northern Ontario railway communities where it was reported that occupational inheritance was still

taking all the work they could handle, running-trades workers not only indicated the degree to which economic insecurity might guide their actions. They also revealed how concepts of masculinity, with an emphasis on the role of breadwinning and expectations of competitive individualism, could fracture unity among workers. Yet, the masculinity they practised was multidimensional and contradictory. It played a role both in promoting and in undermining solidarity among workers and opposition to authority at work.

There was much in the lives of enginemen and trainmen to promote a sense of being part of a "brotherhood." Both on and off the job, engineers, firemen, conductors, and brakemen were in close company with fellow workers. When away from their families, married workers returned to the world of single men. Along with their unmarried counterparts, they participated in a bachelor culture of recreation, sanctioned by the particular circumstances of their work.

These men would sleep and eat together in vans or bunkhouses when waiting for a return train, or in hotels or boarding houses when working out of northern Ontario terminals. After rest, and depending on their work schedule, men might go hunting or fishing, if in the north country. Frequently they would play cards, such as poker and "catch" — not the games that were played in the mixed company of card parties at home. The mainstay of conversation was often their work on the railroad. A large part of this recreational culture also involved drinking. As one conductor commented, "booze was mixed up in pretty well every activity they had."[76]

When away from their families, crew members would also go to parties or dances in nearby towns. Freed from the constraints of wife and family and from the view of one's home community, some men threw caution to the wind. "There was a rough old life up there [in the north]," remembered Dave Spalding, an engineer. "A lot of boys got away from their families, you know, and they kinda wooped it up a bit."[77] In the recollections of another railroader, "as soon as the day's work was over it was a hard playin' bunch of fellas."[78]

Wives generally had some knowledge of their husband's recreation away from home, though not necessarily the details. It would appear that these forms of entertainment among men were accepted by wives, except if done to extremes and consequently threatened the security of the family. Tensions did arise at home when

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strong. See also, for example, Rex Lucas' comments on a northern Ontario railtown in *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown*, 135-37. For those who originally came from farms and took up railroading in the late 1930s and early 1940s, approximately half of the running-trades workers interviewed, the changes of the 1950s and 1960s meant that railroading would also not become a family affair. For farmers' sons who began in the running trades in the 1920s or before, it appeared to be more likely that their sons would seek employment as railroaders.

76. Rusty Brown, conductor, born 1915, hired 1941.

77. Dave Spalding, engineer, born 1911, hired 1941.

78. Rusty Brown, conductor, born 1915, hired 1941.

workers returned from the world of single men to the world of wife and family and continued to live as if they were still away from home. This was especially true concerning the question of drinking. Some men would spend most of their recreation at home away from the family, drinking in the local bars with their fellow workers. The majority of Allandale's running-trades workers, however, did spend time with their families when at home.

As with their wives, however, there still existed for these workers a gender division of leisure. When in Allandale, engine and train crews by no means completely abandoned the world of men for that of wife and family. Aside from going to a pub with workmates, these men would go together to certain sports events and to monthly union meetings. Many running-trades workers were also members of fraternal organizations in the community. During this period, the Masonic Order was the most popular.[79] In the years before 1930, and especially in the nineteenth century, organizations such as the Sons of England or Scotland, the Oddfellows, and the Orange Order also had a large railway following among Protestant workers.[80] Masonic meetings and events provided these men with the opportunity to get together to discuss lodge affairs as well as events

79. Half of the conductors and two-thirds of the engineers considered in interviews were Masons. The oldest Masonic lodge in Barrie, the Corinthian Lodge, attracted most of the running-trades workers. The few Catholic workers in the running trades belonged to the Knights of Columbus. The involvement of running-trades workers in fraternal organizations and in community affairs, such as the CNR Recreational Association, contrasts significantly with that of the western U.S. train and engine crews Cottrell studied in the 1930s. He observed that, for these workers, "the influence of institutions which mold and form character, that serve to give stability to personality, that provide the nexus between person and locality are continually broken by their movement. . . . Membership in other place groups, such as fraternal or recreational organizations, is made difficult. Participation in government and the community is made purely secular and pecuniary." See W.F. Cottrell, *The Railroader*, 59; 48 and 71-75. There is no doubt that running-trades work rhythms made participation in such organizations difficult at times, but Allandale workers still became members. In the case of Allandale, having one's family in town maintained a link with the community that was not undermined by a worker's need to change work locations. Such enduring family links would not appear to have existed in the case of Cottrell's railroaders.

80. See, for example, accounts of meetings of these organizations in Allandale in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in *Northern Advance and Examiner*. While the Orange Order was strong especially in Protestant Simcoe County's rural areas, it appeared to have had less of a following among the Allandale running-trades workers who began on the road in the late 1930s and early 1940s. A number of these men recalled, however, that their fathers belonged to the Orange Order and that they would participate in the July 12th parades as children.

on the railroad. Railroaders became members in order to be with fellow workers and friends, and were often encouraged to join by their supervisors and other workmates.[81]

Participation in such male societies, and in male forms of recreation when at home, was in many respects an extension of the comraderie that was established at work. Away from home, men spent long hours together both on the job and off. In certain respects, cooperation was necessary not only to get a train over the road but also to avoid intensifying the already-existing strains that came with working long, and often irregular, hours under demanding conditions. The friendships established were valued, and for some were important compensations for the disruptions that were part of running-trades work rhythms.

When speaking of fellow workers in the running trades, or on the railroad in general, men used terms such as "brothers," "brotherhood," and "family." These terms of consanguinity were not simply figurative, given the widespread kinship ties that did exist in the railroad labour force. They did underscore, however, a closeness that was felt among crew members. Upon entering the running trades, a man was essentially initiated into what sociologists have termed an "occupational culture," with its own language, accepted forms of interaction, and set of expectations.[82] This was also a male culture where one's masculinity came under scrutiny by seasoned workers.[83] The ability of a new fireman to maintain the necessary supply of coal for the engine's firebox, or the ability of a new brakeman to couple railway cars and "throw" the proper switches, became a test of one's stamina and endurance. The new recruit's lack of detailed knowledge of railway operations, particularly those who had no early exposure to railway work, also became a source of amusement and sport for "old hands."

In this world of male workers, men were often given nicknames based on their particular idiosyncracies. These could be terms both of affection and of friendly (or in some cases not-so-friendly) ridicule, and exhibited a degree of creativity by their originators. Among a number of these, the running-trades workforce usually had its "Roarer" ("I was always roarin' about some bastard or something"), "Whiskey Face," "Slippery Dick," "Diamond Jim," "Fats," and "Brandy."[84]

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81. The degree to which supervisors encouraged workers to join the Masons cannot be determined at this point. In the case of Steve Williams, a clerk, encouragement to join came from the chief clerk of the Allandale station. Williams felt that in the office a Mason would be looked upon more favourably than a nonmember. In any case, most clerks were Masons, except for Catholic workers, who were members of the Knights of Columbus. The degree to which membership in the Masons entitled one to preferential treatment in the running trades also cannot be determined at this point. Those interviewed did not think this was the case, though they were unlikely to claim benefit from favouritism even if it did exist. See, for example, interview with Steve Williams, clerk, born 1904, hired 1923.

83. On the masculine aspects of contemporary British male working-class "occupational cultures" in general, see, for example, Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, 51-81; see also Cockburn, *Brothers*; Baron, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity"; and Yarrow, "Class and Gender."

84. Herbert Stitt, a former CPR engineer, provides an interesting collection of nicknames of fellow workers in his autobiography, *I Remember* (Toronto, 1983), 99-102.

Cooperation and close companionship were important not only "to getting the job done" and to surviving the rigours of work, however. They also provided the basis for collective solidarity in resisting or curtailing the authority of railway officials and supervisors. As those who have studied the labour process of mass-production industries have observed, the formal negotiating power of the union provides only a limited challenge to the discipline of production.[85] In the highly organized running trades, union regulations were an important form of protection. Workers did have some recourse to defending themselves against decisions by officials through grievance procedures (which were stronger in the post-World War II period). None the less, in dealing with authority at work, crew members also relied upon informal means of protecting themselves and challenging the structures of discipline that existed.

A sense of responsibility to fellow workers and to one's companions led workers to protect each other from possible discipline when company regulations pertaining to train operations and the conduct of employees were violated. This most frequently took the form of a "conspiracy of silence" regarding rule violations: "If something happened, you never mentioned it. You just kept quiet. Back in the old days [i.e. in the days of the Grand Trunk Railway] the officials, you know, you could be fired for nothing, practically. They were tough in those days. And the railroad men, especially the running trades, they all worked together. Some guy made an error, you didn't say anything about it."[86] In cases where workers were caught violating regulations, men spoke of company officials offering to limit suspensions from work or to reduce or eliminate the demerit points assigned if the person most responsible was turned in by his workmates. To submit to this form of plea bargaining (by turning company's evidence) was particularly insulting to workers and, for those who did, it represented a betrayal of one's fellow workers and the established code of ethics.[87]

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85. Studies which have examined informal resistance on the factory shop floor are too numerous to mention more than a few. See, for example, Michael Buraway, *Manufacturing Consent. Changes in the Labour Process Under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago, 1979); Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain. The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1979); Andrew Friedman, *Industry and Labour: Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism* (London, 1977); Huw Beynon, *Working for Ford* (London, 1973); Jim Peterson, "'More News From Nowhere': Utopian Notes of a Hamilton Machinist," *Labour/Le Travail* 17 (Spring 1986): 169-223. Studies which have examined the issue of workers' control exercised by craftsmen and skilled workers in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canada are also now quite numerous. See, for example, Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds., *On The Job.*

86. Tim Armstrong, engineer's son and railway clerk, born 1915, hired 1946.

87. The railways had an elaborate system of rules and regulations governing the operation of trains and the conduct of its employees. This was necessary for the purposes of safety and the protection of property and passengers, and as a means of controlling and disciplining the workforce. Rule violators were assigned demerit points. A worker could accumulate sixty points before he was fired. The number of points assigned depended on the gravity of the transgression. One of the most serious offences was drinking on the job, Rule G. Good behaviour and work habits could result in a reduction of demerit points. In certain cases, the company might also suspend a worker for a period of time instead of firing him. As with the seniority system and other union regulations, the operation of the railway company's system

While close cooperation and friendship could exist among Allandale running-trades workers, relations among crew members and between them and the rest of the workforce were not as unblemished as the recollections of some railroaders would have them. Faced with the threat of company discipline or the needs of an emergency, workers could "pull together" according to their code of ethics. Nevertheless, generational and occupational tensions and infighting also existed in the running-trades workforce, and those tarnished the idealized image of cooperation and comraderie, and revealed another dimension of their working-class masculinity.

For the generation that began work in the 1920s or earlier, relations between junior firemen and brakemen and their more senior engineers and conductors appeared to have been more harmonious than those which existed for the following generation of workers who started during the Second World War. In the experience of the first generation, most firemen and brakemen were in their late teens or early twenties and unmarried when they began, while engineers and conductors were considerably older, with wives and children. Junior crew members would be treated paternalistically, as sons needing guidance and a firm hand when necessary. Bob Lenard, an engineer, had fond recollections of his early years on the railroad: "A lot of the old men, they more or less adopted me. Like I was only a boy compared with them. That time those men were creatin' a family. They were good to me. I haven't got no complaints about any of them."[88]

Given the extent of the kinship ties that existed in the running-trades workforce, a young man's entry into railroad work could be seen as a way of reaffirming a bond between kin, between father and son or nephew and uncle. As a new recruit learned his job, the paternal authority of senior crew members came to bear on these young workers, as a source of support, knowledge, and discipline. In this generation's experience, paternalism characterized relations between younger and older workers, and was both a remnant of historical tradition and an outgrowth of the actual kinship bonds that existed in the workforce. The railway company saw these familial ties as a *potential* source of discipline, with the actions of sons or nephews reflecting on the reputation of fathers and uncles. The existence of these bonds could also act as a source of solidarity, in resisting or defending workers against company authority, such as in the case of the "conspiracy of silence" that existed on the railroad.

The existence of family ties and paternalistic practices in the workforce could as well lead to a rejection of paternalistic relations, as young men came to resist or challenge the authority of their elders. As this first generation of running-trades workers grew older and attempted to apply aspects of the paternalistic practices of their early days on the railroad to the generation that started work in the late 1930s and early 1940s, they met with resistance. There were several reasons why relations between older and younger

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of discipline was not etched in stone. There was room for company officials and supervisors to manoeuvre. On the genesis of the demerit system, and on the evolution of different management styles on American railroads in the nineteenth century, see, for example, Walter Licht, *Working for the Railroad* (Princeton, 1983).

88. Bob Lenard, engineer, born 1901, hired 1918.

workers in the experience of the first generation were unlike those of the second generation.

With the outbreak of World War II, the first generation of railroaders was faced with the responsibility of training new men after not having done so for over a decade. These new recruits were also older — many were married and had children, unlike the teenagers and young adults who began running-trades work in the 1920s and earlier decades. Established patterns of work for the first generation were disrupted not only by the introduction of new men but also by the need for the intensification of labour rhythms to meet wartime requirements. In the case of head-end crews, men who had always been firemen and wished to remain so were now forced to become engineers and had to cope with their new jobs as well as with the training of new recruits who might be more technically competent. These new men were perceived as a threat: they were younger and in some respects could better withstand, or appeared better to withstand, the demands of wartime work. Essentially they came to symbolize the turmoil these older men were experiencing during the war years, and their presence could raise awkward questions about an oldtimer's own masculinity.

Workers of the second generation spoke of being ostracized by engineers and conductors of the first generation when they began on the road. These "oldtimers" often would not associate with the new men or would sometimes refuse to work with them, would provide only minimum training and advice, and would strongly criticize new crew members when they made a mistake. Such behaviour was not simply part of the harsh running-trades initiation rite, for those of the first generation had not experienced this treatment to the same degree themselves. Antagonism was not only directed to unrelated members of the workforce, but could involve fathers and sons as well. John Heath, who came from a family of railroaders, remembered such conflicts vividly: "When you first started out you ran into these old [crew members]. My father was one of them. They hated to see these young upstarts coming into their territory, you might say. And boy, you had a rough time with those guys. . . . They hated us."[89]

The reaction of many of these recruits was not a passive one, although they were placed in a difficult position of having to work with the "oldtimers" while learning a new job (sometimes on their own) with its attendant uncertainties and vulnerabilities. In addition, company officials apparently took a dim view of oldtimers' refusal to work with new men, especially if this interfered with the training of new recruits.[90] The fact that

89. John Heath, conductor, born 1914, hired 1938.

90. Men of the second generation noted that when an "oldtimer" refused to work with a new man the trainmaster or master mechanic would threaten to take the senior man off the run and assign it to someone willing to do so. Given the fact that these men did not come under direct supervision, it was difficult for company officials to enforce the training of new men. The degree of training a new man received depended on the teaching skills, ability, and willingness of senior crew members. The company was dependent on these workers to train the junior men. Aside from rule instruction and some formal technical training, an extensive programme of formal instruction and training for running-trades workers was not created until after the period under study.

there were large numbers of men hired during the war alleviated some of the isolation they might feel. These "teddy bears," as they were called by the "oldtimers," drew closer together in light of the similar circumstances they faced. Workers cited incidents of fighting between junior and senior crew members as well as verbal assaults on "oldtimers" who attempted to browbeat the new men. The interaction between crew members could take a very masculine form of confrontation, and was recalled in such terms: "For about two years there used to be fire and hell to pay. Because the young fellas comin' up wouldn't take the BS that was bein' handed to 'em. There was a lot of trouble. Once the older men realized what was goin' on, that they weren't goin' to be the little god anymore, then things changed."[91]

It would appear that relations between these generations of workers did improve as the new men fought back against the authoritarianism of the oldtimers and became proficient in their jobs. In addition, in the postwar period, particularly in the 1950s, many of the oldtimers retired, thereby removing a source of conflict. There could also be tensions, however, between engine crews and train crews as proud engineers and conductors argued with one another about train operations and authority. Such rivalries have been well noted in railway histories and celebrated in literature. In the case of Allandale workers, generational tension between "oldtimers" and "teddy bears" also had elements of occupational rivalry between the head-end and tail-end crews. New firemen would be scorned by conductors and new brakemen would be held in disdain by engineers not only because of generational antagonism but also for reasons of traditional occupational conflict. Workers of the second generation spoke of this conflict being less pronounced among their peer group, in part because of the common hostility all new running-trades workers felt from the "oldtimers." None the less, within this generation, as with the previous one, occupational rivalries could still occur.

Rivalry between the "head end" and "tail end" in certain respects was part of a masculine style of interaction, characterized by playful ridicule and insults which did not necessarily indicate any genuine feeling of antagonism. Engine and train crews could be very friendly with one another and, while some spoke of enginemen having nothing to do with trainmen, many others, especially of the second generation, recalled spending leisure time together both at home and away. There were also instances where junior crew members informally switched jobs among themselves for a period while on a run, though this was against company regulations. A brakeman assigned to the "head end" would "fire" (i.e. shovel coal into the firebox) while the fireman would either take a rest or perform the duties of the brakeman.

A difference in technical knowledge and the meaning these men attached to the concept of skill also underpinned the rivalry between engine and train crews. As theorists of the labour process have argued, skill is not only a technical category but is also an ideological construct that is highly gendered. Definitions of skill are bound up with masculine identities and play an important part in defining the skill level of work performed.[92] Not only has the process of skill definition served to devalue the labour

91. Rusty Brown, conductor, born 1915, hired 1941.

92. For example, Cockburn, *Brothers*, and Baron, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity."

done by women in predominantly female occupations but it has also had an important influence on relations between male workers. To be less skilled was to a certain degree to be less of a man, given the way in which the notion of skill has been infused with the supposed masculine qualities of technical proficiency and competence.

The conflicts that arose between enginemen and trainmen — for example, over speed limits — could become intense when an engineer asserted his belief in the superiority of his technical skills and judgement. That a conductor had jurisdiction over the operation of the entire train could be particularly galling. In the words of one engineer, "[conductors] ran the train, alright. But that engine. Bomb the goddamn train on them. You were in charge of the engine. They could do whatever they liked with that train."[93] Some engineers also were not inhibited in presenting their views to conductors or brakemen: "[Conductors] were largely referred to as the messenger boy. That was the extent of the love between the head end and the tail end. . . . You see some of these fellas [i.e. conductors] come in here on the last trip and oh, are they important. I don't know how they kept the buttons on their coats."[94] This dynamic also played a role in the sectionalism evident between running-trades workers and those who worked in other railway occupations. Engineers, firemen, conductors, and brakemen, who had the most prestigious and autonomous of jobs in the railway labour force, could be accused by those working in the car shop, roundhouse, or the bridge and building department, as comprising a self-important elite that would have little to do with other railroaders. More than a few engine- and train-crew members apparently did little to dispel this accusation.[95]

93. Steve Price, engineer, born 1915, hired 1942.

94. Rodney Davies, engineer, born 1909, hired 1941.

95. At this point it is difficult to measure the dimensions of sectionalism in the railway workforce. While running-trades workers themselves professed an absence of sectionalism, and attributed it to a previous generation or to the sentiments of the very few, those from other areas of the workforce were more likely to recall the elitism of the running trades. Studies of the railroad workforce have also observed this sectionalism and the resentment of running-trades workers' elitism and "aristocratic" self-image; see, for example, Rex Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown,* 119-24 and Alick Andrews, "Social Crisis and Labour Mobility," 77-78.

Allandale running-trades workers' view of sectionalism in the past could also have been influenced by the present. A large number of these men belonged to the CNR Pensioners' Club which brought them into closer association with those who previously worked in other sections of the railroad. The nature of current friendships might possibly have coloured the memory of past associations. In addition, as with all sensitive issues which might reflect badly on oneself, one's fellow workers, or one's community, there was a tendency to present an unblemished image of the past. For an astute and incisive analysis of the dynamics involved in oral history accounts, see particularly the collection of articles in Ronald J. Grele, ed., *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (Chicago, 1985), as well as Robert A. Georges and Michael O. Jones, *People Studying People: The Human Element in Fieldwork* (Berkeley, 1980) and Barbara Allen and William Lynwood Montell, *From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research* (Nashville, 1981).

The nature of the work itself contributed much to both the masculine self-image and practices of these workers. The labour of engine and train crews demanded a great deal of physical effort and endurance. These men had to brave temperatures of extreme heat and cold. Long hours, often limited rest, the uncertainty of weather and track conditions, and the ever-present prospect of accidents which could be fatal — all were an integral part of the job. As theorists of masculinity have argued, the harsh physical demands and mental strains of a working-class occupation can lead men to view their work in terms of "a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with 'the task'. Difficult, uncomfortable or dangerous conditions are seen not for themselves, but for their appropriateness to a masculine readiness and hardiness."[96]

For engine and train crews, a sense of "manly confrontation" with the elements was confirmed by the rhythms and conditions of their labour as well as by the technology they had to operate. Brakemen and conductors noted the skill and physical exertion required to "pull" switches and to couple or uncouple cars, as well as the dangers they courted when doing so. Engineers and firemen proudly spoke of mastering huge locomotive engines and of "breathing life" into inanimate objects. To run an engine at high speeds while pulling a long line of freight or passenger cars gave these men a sense of enormous power. One engineer captured the perspective of many others when he stated: "I loved the engines. I loved power, when I handled power."[97] When diesel engines replaced coal-fired ones in the 1950s, engine crews felt not only a loss of skill but also of some of the qualities of their labour which for them made it a specifically masculine calling. The dirt and sweat involved in feeding coal to a hot firebox, the physical exertion and coordination required to operate the steam engine, and the sometimes deafening noise in the cab, were gone.[98]

Paul Willis among others has observed the way in which male worker's "mechanical, sensuous, and concrete familiarity with the tools of production" can mediate both the experience and understanding of the labour process.[99] An engineman might be tired by the demands of needing to be constantly on the move and feel harassed by a supervisor or dispatcher keeping track of his performance or the movement of his engine from a distance. At the same time he could feel exhilarated and be fascinated by the massive and intricate piece of technology he was controlling. For many workers there was a close identification with the power of the technology they operated. Engineers spoke of this power as an extension of themselves. When discussing the operation of their locomotives they would say that "I got up enough power to make the steep grade" or "I was losing power so I had to cut and run [i.e. disconnect the engine

96. Paul Willis, "Shop-floor culture, masculinity and the wage form," 196; see also Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shop Floor," 216-34, and Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, 51-81.

97. Skip Johnson, engineer, born 1914, hired 1941.

98. On the way in which technological change also can call into question a worker's masculinity, see the discussion of the printing industry in Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers*, 93-190 and Baron, "Technology and the Crisis of Masculinity." As Baron has observed, "deskilling represents a crisis of masculinity, a crisis for men workers simultaneously as men and as workers"; ibid., 9.

99. Paul Willis, "Shop-floor Culture," 191.

from the rest of the train and go to the nearest coal- or water-storage facility on the line]." It was no coincidence that their descriptions of railway technology and the terminology of train operations were often invested with sexual or gender-specific metaphors and allusions which underscored the close relationship between work and gender identity that existed for engine and train crews. In the lexicon of the railroader an "old girl" was a locomotive which was always given a title of female gender. When operating his engine an engineer, who would be called a "hogger," "hog jockey," "hoghead," or "whistle pig," might "beat her on the back [i.e. maintain high speed using full engine power] or "maul his pig" [i.e. run an engine at full stroke and throttle]." He would have to "get up steam" in his locomotive until "she was hot [i.e. with enough 'steam up' to run the engine]." Figures of authority and symbols of privilege associated with authority could be given appellations which were meant to symbolize uselessness and impotence, though these workers were quite aware that supervisors were not particularly impotent in the exercise of authority. Division officials might be referred to as "old men," and their private railway cars as "drone cages."[100]

Metaphors of unequal gender relations — of men's domination of women — figured in a railwayman's working vocabularly, and these were also employed to describe relations with supervisors. In his analysis of contemporary male workplace culture at Westinghouse, Stan Gray has argued that the language of sex and sexual imagery is used by men to express the reality of class relations. The "sex act is conceived fundamentally as one of exploitation. . . . [It] is used as a model for all forms of exploitation and degradation of people, of which that taking place in production is one."[101] When officials exercised their power, the terms of domination that workers might employ to describe their mastery of gender-ascribed technology were now used to indicate their own subordination. They were the ones who were now being "mauled" or "beaten." As with workers elsewhere, railroaders might also use explicitly sexual terms to describe authority relations at work. A worker who was given demerit points, suspended, or otherwise disciplined by a superintendent, trainmaster, or master mechanic might speak of being "screwed" or "fucked over" by an official. Supervisors who had a reputation of being particularly harsh, vindictive, or overly zealous were viewed contemptuously, and spoken of in crude terms which referred to aspects of male or female anatomy. Steve Price graphically conveyed the language and metaphors used when appraising company officials: "That's where we got the pricks. Some of the supervisors. . . Old Pete Marwick was a no good bitch. Bill North was a hell of a good guy. . . . Ray Cummings was a rotten little son of a bitch. Sneakin' bastard. Sneakin' around seein' what everybody was doin'. . . . Hal Richards wasn't too bad but he done a lot of dirty goddamn tricks too, the son of a bitch."[102]

100. The terminology analysed here is taken from interviews and from the glossary of terms listed in W. Fred Cottrell, *The Railroader*, 117-39.

101. Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shopfloor," *Canadian Dimension* (June 1984): 25. This is a longer version of the article published in Michael Kaufman, ed., *Beyond Patriarchy*. See also Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, 60, and Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality*.

102. Steve Price, engineer, born 1915, hired 1942.

A mindset which stressed the need to put on a brave front in the face of very difficult or stressful labour conditions was also an important element of these workers' masculinity. Even when admitted, the personal turmoil created by the rhythms of railway labour on work and family life was not discussed at length among fellow workers. This "emotional illiteracy" or inability to express feelings, which was part of a male worker's socialization, was perpetuated by the conventions of work.[103] The fears and insecurities a worker experienced were rarely mentioned, though they might find an acceptable outlet in drinking, arguments, rough play, or fighting. To succumb to such tensions was to be less of a man. Indeed, the pressures of work could be understood as a challenge to one's masculinity rather than as an illustration of the power relations at work, which forced crew members to endure such conditions.[104] Evaluating his work experiences on the railroad, one engineer spoke for many when commenting that he "look[ed] back on things. . . . as sort of successful experiences where you master the job and not let the job get the best of you."[105]

Many workers recalled the harsh conditions they survived with pride and, for some, even with a sense of nostalgia. According to these men, the present generation of running-trades workers would be unable, if not unwilling, to tolerate such circumstances. An emphasis on manly endurance could lead an engineman or trainman to persist in his job when it was neither demanded by supervisors nor safe to do so. Often, workers regarded fatalistically the prospect of being in a major accident. The conventional wisdom among crew members was not to worry about what could not be avoided. Others might repress their fear and believe themselves immune from such a possibility. "You just felt like the same as when I worked in the mine," claimed one man. "Christ, we killed a man every day but ya never thought it was gonna be you. Ya never worried."[106]

In light of the frequent accidents which did occur in running-trades work, many of which involved injury and sometimes death, a fatalistic attitude became one of the means of surviving the tensions of the job.[107] Underpinning the masculinity of these workers was an acceptance of limitations, however uneasy or conditional that acceptance might be. One made the best of a situation and endured what could not be changed. "Making

103. The term "emotional illiteracy" is taken from Tony Eardley, "Violence and Sexuality," in Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries, *The Sexuality of Men* (London, 1985), 101. See also Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, 71. It might be argued that a railway worker interviewed by someone who was unknown to him would be unlikely to speak of emotional turmoil or work insecurities. A false impression of "emotional illiteracy" would therefore be given. This was not the case, however, with the wives of railroaders interviewed. They were quite forthright about the tensions and frustrations of their own domestic work situation. Running-trades workers handled stress in a manner which conformed to what was considered an appropriate and acceptable code of conduct for these working-class men.

104. See also the comments of Paul Willis, "Shop-Floor Culture"; Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shop Floor"; Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity;* and Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality*.

105. Glen McPherson, engineer, born 1909, hired 1942.

106. Steve Price, engineer, born 1915, hired 1942.

107. All of the running-trades workers interviewed had been in accidents, at least one of which involved a fatality. While some of these were "head-on" or "back-end" collisions, the most common accident with fatalities was a collision with an automobile at a railway crossing.

do" could become a virtue in itself. Yet, as with the friendships formed among coworkers, a conception of "manliness" could lead enginemen and trainmen not only to accomodate themselves to the conditions of their labour, but also to challenge authority when its exercise by supervisors impinged on a man's dignity. Such challenges were limited in the sense that they did not fundamentally call into question the relations of power at work, though they might be directed towards containing them to some degree. The demands for a grievance system by the railway unions were motivated not only by the very real need to protect workers from the sometimes-arbitrary exercise of officials' authority but also out of a concern that such treatment was offensive to one's masculine pride. It was this manly pride that proscribed kowtowing to officials and could be a reservoir of aggressiveness in confrontations with authority. Glen McPherson's account of one confrontation captures this style of masculine agressiveness. His comments also underline the rivalries that existed between engineers and conductors and the degree to which confrontations with supervisors could be futile in correcting a perceived injustice:

> The road foreman of engines. . . was criticizing me for pulling this draw bar, [improperly] applying the [engine] brakes at that point. Well, I told him, I was nervy enough to tell him that, "Well, lookit, are you goin' to assess me demerit marks," which he did. He handed me the slip to sign and I wouldn't sign it for him. I says, "I'm not goin' to sign that." I says, "I'm not takin' criticism from you as to how I run an engine. From you, a man who never run an engine." He was a conductor beforehand. . . . The demerit marks went against my record as far as that's concerned.[108]

The nature of a worker's interaction with authority and his willingness or ability to challenge it, however, were also affected by the changing labour conditions of the period. These conditions contributed to what appears to have been a shift in emphasis in the meanings that masculinity had for running-trades workers and a shift in masculine practices themselves. When the sanctions against challenging authority were too great, as was the case during the Great Depression, aggressiveness towards authority was more muted and greater stress was placed on definitions of masculinity which focussed on hard work and endurance. In periods of labour shortage, such as the war years, challenges to authority were less likely to result in dismissal. While a worker's masculinity still emphasized his ability to be "tough," this toughness was also more likely to be practised in relations with senior engineers and conductors (as in the case of new recruits hired during the Second World War) or with officials (as in the case of both generations of workers).[109]

In these "manly" confrontations with supervisors or with each other, workers were not constrained by the presence of women. The work world of the running trades was a male preserve. Historically, women had been excluded from such labour, even during both world wars, when women made limited and temporary inroads into traditionally male occupations. During those wars mainly single women found employment in the railway shops and roundhouses, as well as in the traditional area of office work. They did

108. Glen McPherson, engineer, born 1909, hired 1942.

109. Michael Yarrow has also noted shifts in the masculine practices of Appalachian miners in the 1970s and 1980s which were connected to the changing conditions in the coal mining industry; see Yarrow, "Class and Gender."

not work outside the perimeter of the railway station and its maintenance facilities.[110] For the men of the Allandale running-trades labour force, this was both a necessary and preferable state of affairs. Primarily, workers felt that such work would be unfit and unsafe for a woman, married or single: a woman would be unable to withstand the hard physical labour and dangers of the job. Wives also concurred in the view that running-trades occupations were gendered as masculine. Part of the working-class morality of these men and their community was the concept of protecting women from dangerous employment.[111] As one engineman argued, "I wouldn't want any women goin' out when I was runnin'. Their life wouldn't be safe."[112]

Running-trades work could indeed be unsafe, for women or men. The exclusionary arguments of engine and train crews did not, however, simply involve the question of safety and the needs of the family. Aspects of patriarchal privilege would certainly be at stake if women were to enter the running-trades fraternity. Hiring a woman to do a "man's job," particularly a single woman, would deprive a married man of the means to support his family. Aside from the standard defence of the male provider, the nature of running-trades work itself could be invoked in arguing for the exclusion of women. In the running trades, unlike other male occupations into which women were admitted during wartime, it would have been difficult to segregate men and women workers on the job. Given the large amount of time that was spent away from home, separate living facilities would also need to be constructed for female crew members, for reasons of sexual propriety. Such issues had been raised in resisting the entry of women into other areas of the workforce; in running-trades work these problems would become especially worrisome and costly to resolve. Moreover it was felt that a woman's own sense of morality would prevent her from seeking employment on the road — no self-respecting woman would do so.[113]

For a woman to become an engineer, fireman, brakeman, or conductor would call into question the ideological conception of these occupations as men's work. Her work

110. On women's work in the railways and in general during World War I, see James Naylor, "The Woman Democrat," unpublished draft, and Paul Phillips and Erin Philips, *Women at Work* (Toronto, 1983), 25. On the experience of women during World War II, see Ruth Pierson, "Women's Emancipation." On the exclusion of women from running-trades work during the period under study, see interviews and Canada. Bureau of Statistics, *Distribution of Occupations by Industry, 1931* (Ottawa, 1938), Table 2; Canada, *Census*, 1951, vol. IV, Table 6 for the Allandale railway workforce. On the exclusion of women in the nineteenth century on American railways, see, for example, Walter Licht, *Working for the Railroad*, 214-16, and James Ducker, *Men of the Steel Rails*, 72. On the experience of British women in the railway shops during the Second World War, see Frank McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, 96-98.

111. Interviews. For an excellent analysis of protective legislation concerning female and child labour in the early decades of the twentieth century, and of male unionists' motivations for excluding women from areas of work traditionally monopolized by men, see James Naylor, "The Woman Democrat," unpublished draft. See also the position of the American Federation of Labor in Ruth Milkman, "Organizing the Sexual Division of Labor."

112. Jim Blythe, engineer, born 1913, hired 1940.

113. In this period the admittance of women into the running trades was never seriously contemplated by the CNR, the railway brotherhoods, or the men and women of Allandale. These issues were forcefully raised when a few women were hired as running-trades workers in the last decade; see interview with Dick Cook, personnel manager, born 1929, hired 1944.

in the running trades would make it difficult for a male worker to get a sense of confirmation of his own masculinity. The physical strength and the endurance of harsh and sometimes-dangerous conditions demanded by the job could no longer be understood as the unique and special preserve of a man. At the same time, the entry of woman into the running trades would constitute an invasion of an important sanctuary of male working-class culture, where men could escape from the constraints of wife and family and be as profane and rough as they wished, at least when they were not in contact with passengers. It was no coincidence that trainmen stated that the most disagreeable feature of their work on passenger trains was dealing with "the public." While the problems of unruly or dissatisfied passengers were cited as the major source of irritation, it was also the case that these men disliked the constraints placed on their own behavior, constraints which were absent when working on freight trains. Passenger-train conductors had to wear uniforms which were popularly known as "harnesses," a telling colloquialism which did not refer to the restrictions of a dress code alone.[114]

Theorists of masculinity have argued that male workplace culture can be seen as a form of rebellion "against civilized society's cultural restraints."[115] It was also a domain that had to be protected against representatives of civilizing restraint — women. The presence of women in this world forced men to "clean up their act" and alter the way they behaved with one another. In the presence of women, both on and off the job, running-trades workers did act differently than when just among themselves.[116] Women were not totally closed off from the work-world of engine and train crews. The wives and children of these workers periodically travelled on the trains with their husbands or fathers, and events on the railway were discussed in many running-trades families. None the less, in the presence of women a sanitized image of male work culture would often be conveyed.

The masculinity practised by enginemen and trainmen shared many features with that of other sections of the railway labour force and the male working class in general. As with many workers, these men could be rough and aggressive, "hard drinking" and "hard swearing." In his analysis of contemporary male workplace culture in mass-production industry, Stan Gray has written that male workers worship a self-identity of "vulgar physicalness" where intellectual pursuits and theoretical knowledge are disdained. According to Gray, it is this self-identity that is antithetical to a tradition which spoke of the dignity of labour. The obsessive celebration of physical prowess can be seen as "accepting and then glorifying the middle class view of manual labour and physical activity as inferior, animalistic and crude."[117] Running-trades workers were certainly proud of their physical capabilities, but their masculinity was not reduced to a simple "self-identity of vulgar physicalness." There was much in the nature of their work

114. W.F. Cottrell, *The Railroader*, 128.
115. For example, Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shopfloor," 225.
116. This was also quite noticeable in interview situations. The language and nature of interaction of these men were influenced by the presence of women. When men were alone or, especially in a group with their former coworkers, the rough and boisterous masculine style of conduct was most evident.
117. Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shopfloor," 226.

— for example, the relative autonomy from direct supervision and the skills demanded of their trade — as well as a rich and proud historical tradition which militated against a view of their labour as inferior or animalistic. These men viewed themselves to be "respectable" and cherished their respectability as did skilled workers within the class as a whole. This was not simply middle-class (or petit-bourgeois) male respectability, though it had many of those features. Its style was too aggressive, direct, and rough for middle-class gentility, nurtured as it was in part at work. Though the exercise of company authority might wound a railwayman's masculine pride and offend his working-class dignity, pride and dignity were also tenacious qualities in the running-trades workers' world.

iv

For the men and women of Allandale, the class and gender conditions and relations of the period set limits to what was available and possible. In most running-trades families, husbands were breadwinners and wives were full-time homemakers. This pattern was the response of railway families to the constraints created by the gender division of wage work, running-trades labour rhythms, the prevailing conditions of reproductive labour, and the ideology of patriarchy. None the less, railroaders and their wives also made choices within the limitations of their lives. Some decided that it was better for a family's welfare if a wife remained in Allandale while a husband worked in the north. Others believed that families should stay united. Wives consequently moved to northern Ontario with their husbands. Many men chose to remain running-trades workers despite the disruptive and unpredictable rhythms of their labour. Others, however, could not tolerate the work and sought employment elsewhere in order to support their families. These choices had different implications for the men and women of the community.

The strategies railroad families adopted for survival and well-being revealed some striking continuities. Nevertheless, there were changes as well. Married women of the first generation provided for their family's welfare through their labour in the home. A number of second-generation wives, however, also contributed as secondary wage-earners, at least until they became mothers. During the Great Depression, running-trades families had to abandon temporarily their emphasis on occupational inheritance as a means of providing economic security for the next generation. Men whose career on the railroad belatedly began in the early 1940s were even less able to offer their own sons the prospect of occupational inheritance. With the decline of Allandale as a railway centre and the general contraction of the running-trades workforce in the 1960s and 1970s, fathers encouraged their sons to pursue other employment. These strategies both altered and were changed by the constraints of the lives of railway-family members.

Conceptions of masculinity and femininity which informed family strategies also shaped and were moulded by the class and gender relations of the time. Especially in the paid-work world of railroaders, notions of "manliness" had a rather contradictory influence on labour relations. An emphasis on the breadwinning role and elements of competitive individualism could come into conflict with notions of worker solidarity and the established code of ethics on the job. This was evident in instances when men exceeded their mileage limitations, tried to manipulate their seniority standing, or reported a fellow crew-member's violation of company regulations. An emphasis on masculine hardiness

could lead enginemen and trainmen to view the difficult and dangerous conditions of their labour as a test of their manhood and played no small role in relations among workers themselves. Officials would also appeal to such manly virtues when supervising their workers. Yet, being "tough" could as well lead to the challenge of authority and resistance to managerial intimidation when the sanctions were not too great. While a worker's identity as the family provider might foster a dependence on the railway, it might also lead to demands for better wages and working conditions in order to fulfill that breadwinning role.

Within the running-trades "brotherhood," elements of egalitarian and hierarchical relations coexisted.[118] The experience of railroaders hired during the Second World War highlighted the intensity of the conflicts which could arise as claims of equality come up against the paternalistic practices of an earlier generation. Generational conflict and sectionalism between enginemen and trainmen could threaten the solidarity of the brotherhood; yet these men could also stress a united front against officials. Having come up from the ranks, supervisors might claim to remain a "brother" and use that identity with some effect, but the actual power relations on the railroad also served to undermine such appeals.

Running-trades workers themselves played an important role in shaping their gender and class identities. Breaking the conspiracy of silence when faced with company discipline was actively discouraged as unbecoming to both a worker's and a man's dignity. Those who ran afoul of unwritten codes quickly learned accepted practices or were ostracized. In crafting these practices, enginemen and trainmen revealed how the strains of individualism in their socialization as men might be contained. The bonds that were formed between these men also revealed many dimensions. Though putting a premium on "toughness," a worker could be supportive and nurturing with his "brothers," too. Independence and interdependence, competitiveness and cooperation, existed uneasily with one another in the bonds of the brotherhood. As the experience of the two generations of railroaders indicated as well, the shaping of gender identities was an on-going process.

Relations between husbands and wives could be equally complex. The family wage earned by a running-trades worker allowed his wife to become a full-time homemaker. The rhythms of railway work and the demands of reproductive labour made her presence in the home a necessity as long as her children were still young. Both the family wage and running-trades work rhythms were also central to the construction of working-class masculinity and femininity in Allandale. The spouses of enginemen and trainmen saw themselves primarily as wives and mothers. Their "proper sphere" was in the home, though this began to shift in the post-World War II period. A husband's

118. Michael Yarrow has written that "male subordinates tend to experience relations with other men as involving difficult contradictions between competition and solidarity, between expectations to be subordinate to domineering fathers and yet assert their rights as equals among men and as superordinate to wives and children. Above all is the necessity to maintain membership in good standing in the brotherhood." Yarrow, "Class and Gender," 5.

self-image as a man was bound up in his breadwinning labour. His role as economic provider also formed the basis of the power he could exercise in the family. Yet, wives were not simply subordinate to their husbands. They had autonomy in the handling of finances, sanctioned by a husband's frequent absence from home. That autonomy, however, could be undermined when large expenditures were involved. Indeed, the family wage was an arena of conflict and cooperation between men and women.

Wives could also be aggressive with husbands and company officials when the welfare of their family was threatened. At home or in public they challenged the prerogatives of the male breadwinner by refusing to move their families, demanding that their husbands return from the north, and going to the station to take possession of their spouse's paycheque. By their actions these women called into question notions of passive femininity and confronted husbands whose concept of masculinity emphasized the need to be dominant and tough. The results were sometimes explosive.[119] Notions of respectability, however, constrained some wives to maintain their independence within the confines of the home while in public they tended to bolster the masculine image of the spouses.

In the construction of gender identities, material conditions and ideology reinforced one another. Wives had to become self-reliant due to their husband's unpredictable work schedule. None the less, this self-reliance did not extend to mothers working outside the home. Aside from the great hardship involved, a mother's wage work would threaten the respectability, not only of her spouse, but of the whole family as well.

Both men and women of the railway community were quite aware of the material and ideological constraints of their lives. Given the class and gender limitations of the period, they worked out a division of labour based on how their families could best survive. Essentially held together by the railway wife, the family could be a forum where all the tensions of conflicting schedules and pressures were expressed. It could also provide a measure of stability and continuity for a worker who was frequently on the move. Indeed, if the family strategies railroaders adopted were essential to their own well-being, they were also essential to the welfare of the railway company itself. In one sense, they were the linch-pin of railway operations. Railway families provided a major component of the company's future labour force, early exposure to work rhythms and demands, and a potential source of discipline which operated through kinship networks as sons came to recognize that their actions also reflected on their fathers' reputation. The scheduling of trains was based, among other considerations, on the assumption that enginemen and trainmen could look to their wives for the critical emotional and physical support needed to endure the rigours of work.

119. An emphasis on masculine toughness and power in a husband's relationship with his wife and other family members could lead to domestic violence. Its magnitude in Allandale railway families, however, was not revealed in interviews. Such a sensitive topic was difficult to pursue, though some men and women referred to a few husbands who were known to have mistreated their spouses. While court records might provide an indication of domestic violence, most cases would not have been reported in this period.

The arrangement between husbands and wives was a partnership, though not necessarily of equals. While influenced by concepts of working-class masculinity and femininity, family strategies were conceived and carried out as collective endeavours among members involving emotional and physical burdens for men as well as women.[120] Indeed, as both railroaders and their spouses frequently recalled, "it was a hard life."

120. On the issues involved in conceptualizing family strategies, see, for example, Laurel Cornell, "Where Can Family Strategies Exist," *Historical Methods* 20:3 (Summer 1987): 120-23; Nancy Folbre, "Family Strategy, Feminist Theory," *Historical Methods* 20:3 (Summer 1987): 115-18; Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Strategy: More than a Metaphor," *Historical Methods* 20:3 (Summer 1987): 118-20; Louise Tilley, "Beyond Family Strategies, What?" *Historical Methods* 20:3 (Summer 1987): 123-25. Further investigation of the railway community should provide a greater understanding of the generational and life-cycle changes in gender and class relations as they affected family strategies, domestic labour, marital relationships, and the process through which working-class masculinity and femininity were constructed. It should be noted that the scope of this study is limited to an examination of only one section of the railway workforce. There were, however, differences in the type and rhythms of work and family life for the various occupations that comprised the railway workforce. The degree to which the experiences of these workers and their families replicated or diverged from those of the running trades is currently being examined.