

Separate Spheres: the Organization of Work in a Confectionery Factory: Ganong Bros., St. Stephen, New Brunswick

Margaret E. McCallum

Volume 24, 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/ilt24art03>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

McCallum, M. E. (1989). Separate Spheres: the Organization of Work in a Confectionery Factory: Ganong Bros., St. Stephen, New Brunswick. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 24, 69–90.

Article abstract

Ganong Bros., a family-owned confectionery factory, is a major employer in a small town in southwestern New Brunswick. Up to the end of the Second World War, the period of this study, the numbers employed in the confectionery industry fluctuated dramatically with the variable seasonal demand for confectionery. At Ganong Bros., less than half the total workforce was employed for more than half the year. Work in the factory was divided along gender lines: men made the candy, and women added the finishing touches. About two-thirds of the factory employees were women, most of them young and single. These women could be considered as a reserve army of labour, since many of them worked for a few weeks only, in the busiest season. But when women were not available to fill positions in traditionally female departments, Ganong Bros. management did not consider hiring men instead, even when the women's wages compared favourably to men's. Management decisions about the organization of work in the factory were influenced not only by technical or financial considerations, but by unquestioned assumptions about what work was appropriate to each gender.

Separate Spheres: the Organization of Work in a Confectionery Factory:

Ganong Bros., St. Stephen, New Brunswick

Margaret E. McCallum

ANTHROPOLOGISTS HAVE IDENTIFIED a sexual division of labour as universal in all societies, past and present. Also universal, or nearly so, is the higher value given to the work that men do, whatever it happens to be. Although cultural definitions of what work is appropriate for each gender differ widely, numerous studies have confirmed Margaret Mead's observations that "[m]en may cook, or weave, or dress dolls or hunt hummingbirds, but if such activities are appropriate occupations for men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them as important. When the same occupations are performed by women, they are regarded as less important."¹ In capitalist societies, women have been, and continue to be, responsible for most of the unpaid domestic work; their participation in the capitalist labour market is limited by their domestic responsibilities and largely confined to low-wage jobs in the clerical and service sectors, and in light manufacturing. The greatest change in employment patterns in Canada since World War II has been the increased labour force participation of women, particularly married women, but for most women, the nature of the employment open to them has changed very little. Despite the attention paid to women who enter traditional male fields, most women still work at "women's jobs," in the pink-collar ghetto.²

The wealth of new research on the world of work, past and present, has generated some new ways of thinking about women's work, as Heron and Storey emphasize in their introduction to *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in*

¹Linda Imray and Audrey Middleton, "Public and Private: Marking the Boundaries" in Eva Gamarnikow, et al., eds., *The Public and the Private* (London 1983), 12-14; Margaret Mead quoted at 12; Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview" in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford 1974), 17-42.

²Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work* (Toronto 1978), 13-52; Labour Canada Women's Bureau, *Women in the Labour Force, 1986-1987 Edition* (Ottawa 1987); Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," in Zillah R. Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (New York 1979), 206-47.

Margaret E. McCallum, "Separate Spheres: the Organization of Work in a Confectionery Factory: Ganong Bros., St. Stephen, New Brunswick," *Labour/Le Travail*, 24 (Fall 1989), 69-90.

Canada. They include, among the concepts which they consider to be key to a theory of labour process, the recognition that work is both unpaid domestic work in the household and wage labour in the capitalist labour market. Domestic work, like work in the pink collar ghetto, has been devalued and identified as unskilled. Definitions of skill, however, are socially constructed -- the product both of ideology and of workers' ability, through collective action, to defend their reputation as skilled craft workers. What Heron and Storey say of skill is equally apt in considering definitions of women's work: both are "best understood in a specific historical context in which definitions are altered to match the changing definitions of skilled work and the new characteristics of the skilled worker."³ There is nothing natural or necessary about the way in which the capitalist labour market defines what work is men's and what is women's. Rather, as Joy Parr has shown through her study of the knitting industry, definitions of men's and women's work are the result of struggle in the home and the workplace, and may differ substantially from place to place or from time to time.⁴ This article examines work in a confectionery factory in a small Maritime town, up to the end of World War II, and concludes that a strict gender division of labour was maintained in the factory primarily because management and workers shared conventional assumptions that women's role in production should be ancillary to that of men, regardless of the skill required or remuneration earned.

The article also raises related questions about the description of women as the reserve army of labour. When Marx formulated the concept, he considered every unemployed or underemployed worker to be a member of a reserve labour supply which was available at low wages, and so, through its competition with the main labour force, exerted a downward pressure on all wages. Marx expected that this reserve army of labour would increase in size as the expansion of capitalism relegated more and more workers to marginal and transitory employment. Recent feminist scholarship has tended to concentrate on women as the reserve army of labour, because their particular place in the family makes them more "disposable," i.e., easier to move in and out of the labour force in response to capital's changing labour requirements.⁵ Questions about women's greater disposability are raised by current studies of youth employment, and by historical studies of the special efforts needed to recruit women for war-work, and then to persuade them to go home again when the men returned. But more commonly, the idea of women as the preferred

³Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds., *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Montreal 1986), 26-7; 29-30, quotation at 30.

⁴Joy Parr, *Disaggregating the Sexual Division of Labour: A Transatlantic Case Study*, Queen's Papers in Industrial Relations 1987 # 5 (Kingston 1987).

⁵Patricia Connelly, *Last Hired, First Fired: Women and the Canadian Work Force* (Toronto 1978), 11-22; Irene Bruegel, "Women as a Reserve Army of Labour: A Note on Recent British Experience," *Feminist Review*, 3 (1979), 12-23; Michele Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (London 1980), 155-62; Veronica Beechey, "What's So Special About Women's Employment? A Review of Some Recent Studies of Women's Paid Work," *Feminist Review*, 15 (1983), 23-45.

reserve army is reinforced by scholarly studies of part-time employment which treat it as a new and essentially female phenomenon.⁶ This perspective on part-time employment ignores the historical reality of capital's reliance on adjustments in the numbers employed and hours worked to match production to fluctuating demand or to offset the results of poor planning. Confectionery manufacturing was a highly seasonal industry, and short-time a persistent problem for workers trying to earn a living wage.

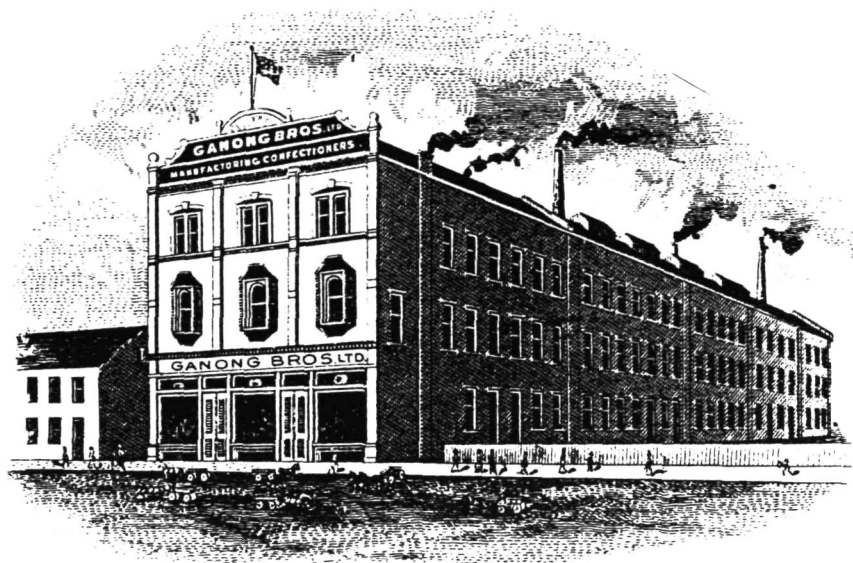
Discussion of women as the reserve army of labour ignores, too, the way in which notions of what work is appropriate for men and women keep the capitalist labour market from functioning as economic theory says it should. As Ruth Milkman argues in her study of women workers in the auto industry, both critics and champions of capitalism assumed that in the impersonal capitalist labour market, all workers would be treated as units of labour power, undifferentiated by such characteristics as sex or race. Yet division of the workplace into separate men's and women's spheres persists, even in situations where maintenance of the division impedes profit maximization.⁷ At Ganong Bros., assigning one gender to do work traditionally done by the other was not a strategy which management considered when faced with labour shortages or rising costs of production.

Ganong Bros., still a major St. Stephen employer, is a family-owned business, established in 1873 by James Ganong and his brother, Gilbert White Ganong. With the experience James had acquired as a shopkeeper and travelling salesman, and the money Gilbert had been saving to study medicine, the two brothers opened a grocery and commission business in St. Stephen, a shipbuilding, lumbering and commercial centre in Charlotte County, New Brunswick, across the St. Croix River from Calais, Maine. Despite the usual reverses suffered by nineteenth-century businesses, including disastrous fires, defaulting debtors, and imbibing employees, the brothers did well, adding a store in Calais and a bakery and confectionery manufactory in St. Stephen. In 1879, they built a soap factory, the St. Croix Soap Manufacturing Company. Six years later, the brothers dissolved their partnership, with James taking over the soap factory, and Gilbert retaining control of the store, bakery and confectionery business. In 1892, Ganong Bros. was incorporated provincially, and in 1916 surrendered its provincial charter in favour of a federal one. In 1946, the company was re-organized with a provincial charter, after a lengthy dispute over the disposition of the estate of Gilbert Ganong's widow.⁸

⁶Teresa Perkins, "A New Form of Employment: A Case Study of Women's Part-Time Work in Coventry" and Marjorie Mayo, "Rejoinder to Teresa Perkins" in Mary Evans and Clare Ungerson, eds., *Sexual Divisions: Patterns and Processes* (London 1983), 15-63; Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, "Women During the Great War" in Janice Acton, et al., eds., *Women at Work, Ontario, 1850-1930* (Toronto 1974), 261-307; Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto 1986).

⁷Ruth Milkman, "Redefining Women's Work: The Sexual Division of Labour in the Auto Industry During World War II," *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982), 337-72.

⁸Year-End Reports, Gilbert White Ganong, 1874 to 1878; *Saint Croix Courier* (SCC) 22 Jan 1885; 2 Aug 1917; 13 June 1946; Ganong Bros. Minute Book I, 25 Feb 1892, MB II, 28 June 1916; C. C. Avard,



Drawing of Ganong Bros. St. Stephen factory used on the firm's letterhead c. 1896.

In 1886, the firm built a three-storey, red-brick factory on St. Stephen's main street. Although the factory was substantially destroyed by fire in 1888 and again in 1903, the firm rebuilt on the same site, and over the years added several wings and a fourth floor.⁹ In 1894, Ganong Bros. gave up the bakery business to concentrate on the manufacture and sale of candy at wholesale and retail.¹⁰ With its increased production, the firm supplied new markets being developed in Quebec, northern Ontario and western Canada. The expanded production facilities in St. Stephen also supported a larger sales staff. By 1912, the firm had opened branch offices and warehouses in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Calgary.¹¹ In 1891, the firm produced close to seven per cent of Canada's confectionery, but by the interwar years, its share had dropped to between three and four per cent.¹²

⁹"Candy, A Universal Food Which Speaks All Languages," *Maritime Advocate and Busy East*, (May 1943), 18-19, 22.

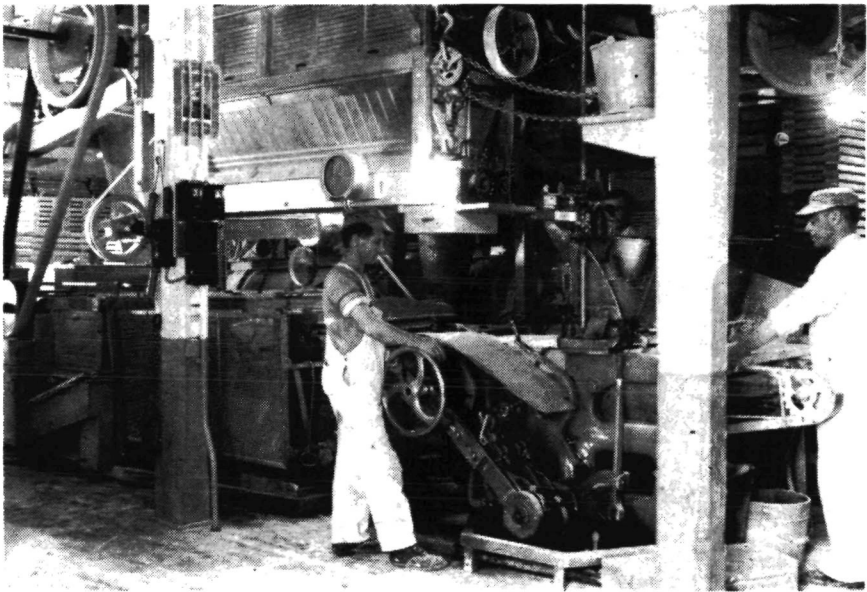
⁹SCC, 11 Nov. 1886; 29 Nov. 1888; 9 Jan. 1890; 19 March 1903; 10 Sept. 1903; 16 June 1910; 13 March 1919; 14 Aug. 1930.

¹⁰SCC, 22 Nov. 1894.

¹¹*Maritime Merchant and Commercial Review*, 14 March 1912, 219; SCC, 2 Feb. 1906; Ganong Archives, Report, Outside Territory and Plans for Covering Same, May 1906; Report, Calgary Branch, Year Ending 25 December 1912; Ganong Bros. Minute Book I, 29 March 1912; MB II, 1 April 1927.

¹²Census of Canada 1891, v. 3, Table 1; Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *The Confectionery, Cocoa and Chocolate, and Chewing Gum Industries in Canada*, 1947 (Ottawa 1947), Table 2; Ganong Bros. Financial Statements.

The first factory, and its replacements, were divided into large rooms or departments, each handling a different aspect of the production process. The heart of the factory was the starch room, a male preserve. There liquid candy was poured into starch moulds to set in the desired shapes. Gumdrops, jelly beans, creams, fondant fillings, marshmallows, nougats, jellies and some caramels were all moulded in starch at some stage in their journey to the packing room. Wooden trays were packed tightly with starch, which was then imprinted with the shape of the finished candy or centre by forcing a mould board into the starch. The mould board was a flat sheet of wood to which had been glued rows of plaster shapes. Liquid candy was poured into indentations in the starch, and left to set. The trays were then emptied, the candies dusted off, and the starch sifted for re-use.¹³



The heart of the Ganong factory, the starch room, showing Mogul, Huhn dryer and starch cleaner.

Starch moulding by hand was labour-intensive and time-consuming, and Ganong Bros. was quick to purchase a mogul, or moulding machine, one of the first machines invented for the mass production of candy. The first moguls were made of wood, but candy manufacturers began replacing these with steel ones about 1914. Empty wooden trays went into the mogul at one end, to be filled with starch,

¹³*The Romance of Candy: The Story of Moirs Chocolates* (Halifax, 1962), 6-7; interview with R. W. Ganong and tour of Ganong factory, St. Stephen.

and imprinted with the mould board. The starch trays were conveyed to gravity-fed nozzles, which deposited a measured amount of liquid in each indentation. Once the candy had set, the trays were emptied and the contents passed over a series of sieves and brushes which removed the starch from the candy. The starch went back into the mogul to be used again, while the candies went on to the next process. Some went directly to the packing room; others received some kind of coating.¹⁴

In home or early factory production, candy centres were coated with chocolate by hand, in a process called dipping. Hand-dipping was considered to be a highly-skilled job, requiring speed and dexterity. In the late nineteenth century, French manufacturers developed a machine, called an enrober, for applying the chocolate coating to candy centres. On the enrober, the centres passed over a rolling drum which coated the bottoms with chocolate, then under a thin rain of chocolate which coated them thinly but evenly all round. Ganong Bros. purchased its first enrober in 1895, shortly after the machine came into use in Canada and the USA. With the enrober, the firm was able to increase its production of chocolates, but the higher grades were still dipped by hand.¹⁵ Initially, Ganong Bros. purchased its chocolate coating ready-made, but in 1906, the firm began making its own coating from partially processed cacao beans.¹⁶

Chocolates were the highest-priced confections produced in the Ganong factory. More important in terms of tons produced, if not profit margins, were the



The Machine-Dipping Room at Ganong Bros.

¹⁴Bernard W. Minifie, *Chocolate, Cocoa and Confectionery: Science and Technology* (London 1970), 323-7; Philip P. Gott and L. F. Van Houten, *All About Candy and Chocolate: A Comparative Study of the Candy and Chocolate Industries* (Chicago 1958), 22; *The Romance of Candy*, 6-7; tour of Ganong Bros. factory, St. Stephen.

¹⁵SCC, 24 Oct. 1985; 2 May 1940; Louis Untermeyer, *A Century of Candymaking: The Story of the Growth of New England Confectionery Company, 1847-1947* (Boston 1947), 50, 82.

¹⁶SCC, 5 April 1906.

staples — the many varieties of penny candies, and candies such as jelly beans and scotch mints which are coated with polished sugar. The centres for jelly beans and scotch mints went from the starch room to the pan room, named for its main item of equipment — deep, bowl-shaped, copper pans. Prepared centres went into the pans along with sugar and syrup, and as the pans revolved, a coating gradually built up around the centres. Candied nuts were, and are, made in the same way.¹⁷

As in the pan room, work in the other departments is suggested by the name. The Ganong factory had separate departments for the manufacture of lozenges, hard candy and caramel, hand-made creams, and moulded chocolate. In the coconut room, young boys prepared fresh coconuts for cooking. The outer shell was removed with a hatchet, and the inner brown skin scraped off with a spoke-shave, a bladed tool used in making wheel spokes. The coconut was then chopped into the required size, and baked. A wire mesh screen across the end of the coconut room kept the flying pieces of shell within bounds, and the other workers teased the “monkeys” in their cage. There were three packing departments, machine-packing, hand-packing (general and fancy) and pan-packing. Ganong Bros. or its subsidiary, the Home Paper Box Co., made up most of the company’s packing boxes, and decorated them with fancy papers purchased from England, the United States and Canada.¹⁸

With production organized in departments, work in the factory retained much of the character of work in a small, handicraft establishment. The individual identified with the department rather than with the factory at large, and each department developed its own routine, conventions and camaraderie. For example, women in the fancy-pack department were teased about being stuck-up, or giving themselves airs, since they tended to dress a little more stylishly than other factory workers. When a long-term employee retired or left the factory for other employment, it was the department which provided the farewell party and gift, usually in the work-room itself.¹⁹ When the New Brunswick Factory Commission noted in 1905 that the Ganong factory did not have a separate lunch-room, G. W. Ganong explained that the firm had one once, but the employees wouldn’t use it. “There was a certain amount of sensitiveness among them; they did not want to congregate together. Two or three of the girls would eat together, and we did not want to turn them out of the rooms, though we would sooner have them out.”²⁰ Departmental identification led to on-the-job rivalry, with each department trying to maintain the highest production levels. These feelings were also fostered through competitions between departments in such sports as polo, hockey, bowling and baseball. When

¹⁷ Minifie, *Chocolate, Cocoa and Confectionery*, 360-361; *Romance of Candy*, 6-8; Untermeyer, *Century of Candy-making*, 42; Saint John Museum, W. F. Ganong Collection, *Progress*, 7 Sept. (1889), 9-16; SCC, 2 May 1940.

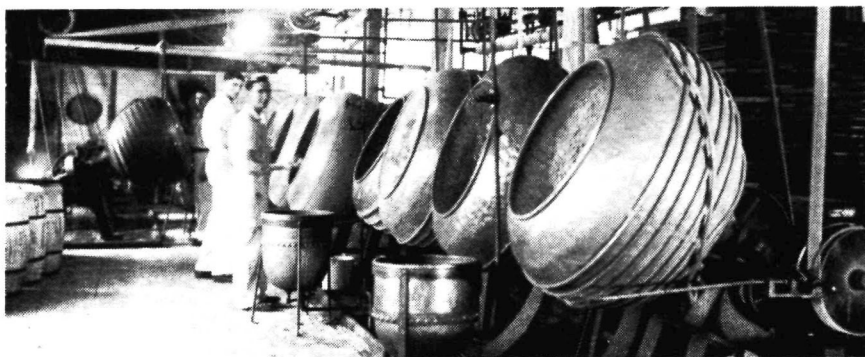
¹⁸ Interviews with Velma Connick, Henry Watters and R. W. Ganong, St. Stephen.

¹⁹ SCC, 15 Oct. 1914; 31 Dec. 1914; *Chocolate Drops*, June 1947, 7; interviews with Addie Crompton and Velma Connick, St. Stephen.

²⁰ Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, RG 30, RS 250, mfm 692, Evidence Before New Brunswick Factory Commission, 6 Jan. 1905, G. W. Ganong.



Making uncooked candy in the Lozenge Room.



A battery of the revolving pans which gave the pan room its name.

competing against teams from outside the factory, however, team members would be drawn from several departments.²¹

The departmental organization lessened the feeling of alienation that factory work often produces, and older, long-term employees described the factory discipline as mild, and the work as relatively easy.²² Employees were always allowed to eat as much candy as they wished, a right which was exercised most enthusiastically in the first few days of employment, before familiarity bred contempt. Most supervisors did not prohibit talking during working hours. With little loud machinery to make conversation impossible, tongues flew as fast as fingers, leading G. W. Ganong to comment, only half-facetiously, that any proposed factory legislation should contain provisions to keep factory workers from talking. The only strike at Ganong Bros. was a short walk-out by twenty female employees on a Friday afternoon in April 1911, in protest that their supervisor had been replaced by one they did not like. Although the factory superintendent, George Ensor, refused to yield to the strikers' demands, the majority returned to work by the middle of the next week. The woman complained of, Mabel Tourtillotte, remained with Ganong Bros. until at least 1945, and is remembered by former employees as being unreasonably strict; one former employee complained that she did not allow the women to converse while they worked.²³

As the workforce and the workplace grew in size, Ganong Bros. began to employ more females than males. By the beginning of this century, when the factory employed close to 200, about two-thirds of the workforce was female. This was the pattern in the confectionery industry as a whole; between 1923 and 1946, in biscuit and confectionery manufacturing in Canada, the percentage of female workers ranged from 55 to 64.²⁴ Most of the female employees at Ganong Bros. were young and single. In 1917, of 82 women with two or more years of service at Ganong Bros., 26 were under 20, and 35 were between the ages of 20 and 25. Marriage was not a bar to employment at Ganong Bros., even marriage to another employee. In 1945, 104 of the firm's female employees were married, 149 single, and 9 widowed. The war-time shortage of labour may have brought more married women than usual into the paid labour force; in 1937, Ganong Bros. employed 86

²¹SCC, 5 April 1894; 16 May 1905; 8 Feb. 1912; 7 March 1912; 17 Dec. 1914; 25 Nov. 1920; 19 May 1921; 18 Jan. 1923; 15 May 1924; 13 June 1929; 11 Oct. 1929; 8 May 1930.

²²Since my research did not go beyond 1946, the employees whom I interviewed were retired, after working for the company for many years. Their recollections as to working conditions in the factory must be handled with considerable caution, as a person who spends close to a half century in a single workplace is unlikely, once retired, to reminisce about what was unpleasant. To do so would be to admit that one had not enjoyed one's life: a difficult admission when it cannot be lived over. The recollections of long-term employees are not false, but limited; those whose factory employment was more casual, or who left Ganong Bros. for another employer, might have told a different story. Conditions changed after World War II, too. Compare, for example, the descriptions of work at the Moirs confectionery factory in Halifax in *Women at Work in Nova Scotia* (Halifax 1973), 16-9.

²³Interviews with Addie Crompton and Velma Cornick, St. Stephen; PANB, RG 30, RS 250, mfm 692, Evidence Before New Brunswick Factory Commission, 6 Jan. 1905, G. W. Ganong; SCC, 13 April 1911.

²⁴SCC, 20 Dec. 1900; 19 March 1903; Ganong Bros. Payroll Records; Canada Yearbooks.

married and 223 single women.²⁵ In the years before World War I, Ganong Bros. delivered candy and packing materials to people's homes, where women with young children supplemented the family income, or even supported themselves in the absence of a male bread-winner, by packing candy on piece-rates. The factory also relied heavily on the seasonal labour of married women who had gained experience as full-time workers before their marriage. Comments made by retired Ganong employees indicate that determining factors in a woman's decision to remain at home or accept paid employment included her husband's income level, and the availability of close relatives to care for children. Such evidence is only circumstantial, but has been confirmed in other workplaces by life-cycle studies, such as those done by Gail Cuthbert Brandt and Tamara Hareven.²⁶

Work in the factory departments was divided along gender lines. In general, men made the candy and women added the finishing touches. In 1931, when the factory was divided into seventeen separate departments, eight were exclusively male. The four departments which packed the confectionery into its individual packages employed only women. In the lozenge room, three men and three women made the firm's only uncooked candy. The remaining departments employed only one or two males. Although there were two male supervisors in the hand-made cream and chocolate moulding rooms, the rest of the employees were female. In the hand-dipping department, employing 41, the only male was the runner who supplied each woman with centres as needed, and who scrubbed up at the end of the day. The machine-dipping department employed two males and seventeen females; one of the men was the foreman, and the other his assistant. As is shown in Table 1, for those employees working at least twelve fortnights per year, in 1931 average earnings for men were \$520.13 above the average earnings for women. Female employees who were paid on piece-rates could increase their earnings slightly as they gained experience and speed, but there was little opportunity for promotion to a job with more responsibility and a higher wage. In 1931, there were only five foreladies, compared to twelve foremen. Promotional opportunities for young men were not quite so limited as for females. At least two senior candy-makers started out as bell boys, delivering messages within the factory. Although the "monkeys" in the coconut room may not have realized it, they were being carefully observed, and those who impressed the factory superintendent with their diligence were singled out for a transfer to a more responsible job.²⁷

²⁵PANB, RG 7, R 63, Charlotte County Probate Records, G. W. Ganong, 1917; Ganong Bros. Payroll Records; Report on Female Help, 30 Nov 1937.

²⁶Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Weaving it Together: Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 7 (Spring 1981), 113-25; Tamara Hareven, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town, 1900-1924," *Journal of Urban History*, 1 (1975), 365-89 and "The Family as Process: The Historical Study of the Family Cycle," *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), 322-29; the assertions here are based on interviews with Addie Crompton, Velma Connick, Henry Waters, Mabel Waters, and R. W. Ganong, St. Stephen.

²⁷Ganong Bros. Payroll Records, interview with R. W. Ganong; most of the tables in this paper have



In the Machine-Packing Room, workers packaged candy bars, penny goods, and the less expensive chocolates.



Part of the Hand-Packing Room at Ganong Bros.

TABLE 1
Average Yearly Earnings by Department for Permanent Employees
At Ganong Bros., 1931

Departments		Number Included	Average Yearly Earnings
Men's			
Chocolate Mfrg.		6	1,068.83
Cream Manufacturing		3	1,002.12
General		5	1,000.03
Shipping		8	965.60
Hard Candy & Caramel		11	817.80
Bulk Packing		2	718.18
Pan Manufacturing		19	669.93
Starch & Gum		6	660.90
Women's			
Machine Packing		12	543.55
Hand Packing		18	483.34
Pan Packing		12	408.41
General Packing		19	374.48
Mixed			
Hand Dipping	M	1	1181.43
	F	21	673.01
Machine Dipping	M	2	1260.68
	F	10	410.08
Hand-made Cream	M	2	706.95
	F	12	433.51
Lozenge	M	3	847.50
	F	3	198.58
Men's Overall Average Yearly Earnings			1000.66
Women's Overall Average Yearly Earnings			486.53

Note: Excluded from Table 1 are all employees who worked fewer than 12 fortnights or 130 days per year.

Chocolate moulding omitted as records incomplete.

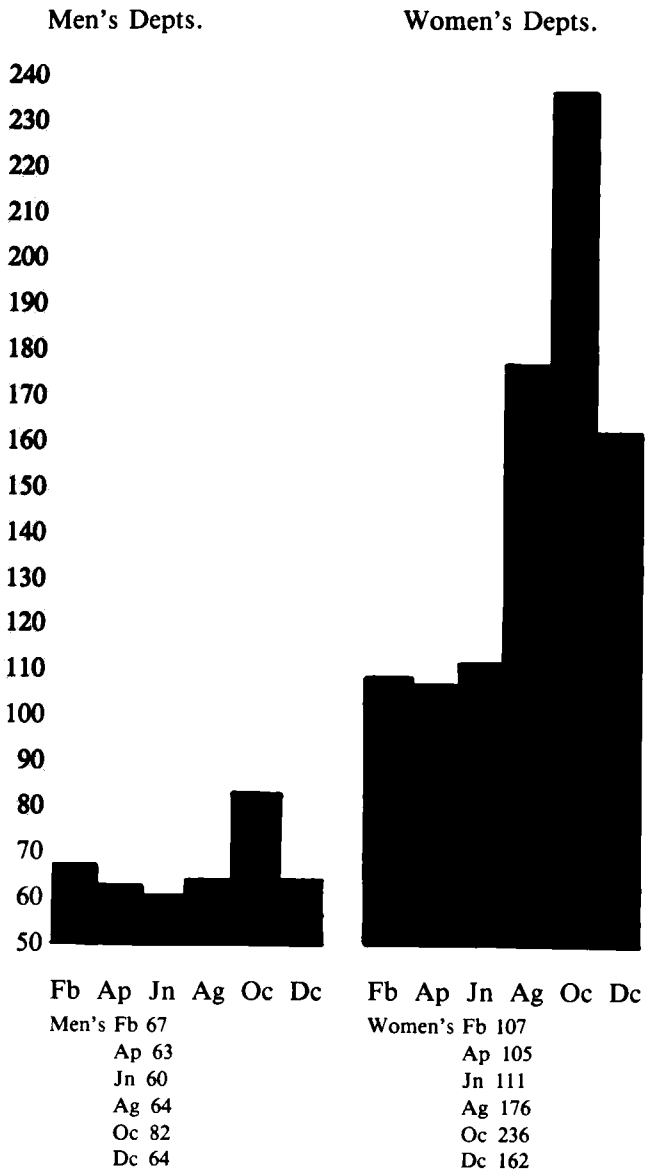
Source: Ganong Bros. Payroll Records

Up to the end of World War II, employment in the confectionery industry fluctuated dramatically in response to a production schedule geared to seasonal demand. As is shown in Figure 1, the numbers employed at Ganong Bros. increased in the fall, as production was pushed to capacity in order to fill Christmas orders.

been developed from the Ganong Bros. payroll records for 1931, the most complete set of payroll records available. Employment patterns in 1931 are consistent with those in the other years for which records are available; 1931 was the last of the Depression years before Ganong Bros. began cutting wages and benefits.

FIGURE 1

Number Employed at Ganong Bros. In Last Pay
Period of Month, 1931



Source: Ganong Bros. Payroll Records

Actual Values Represented By Bars in Figure 1, from Left to Right

The factory was not run on continuous shifts, but in the fall, the day shift came back for several hours of work in the evenings, for two, three or even four days a week.

For those employed just for the fall, particularly the women, the few weeks of employment provided an opportunity to earn some money at a time when their work was not required on the family farm or in the fishery. For permanent, full-time employees, the extra hours in the fall would compensate for short-time in the off-seasons, when employees would be sent home early because there was nothing to do. In the factory, only the superintendent and foremen and foreladies received a salary; other factory employees were paid by the hour, or received piece-rates.

In the context of irregular hours for everyone, the terms casual and permanent, full- and part-time must be used carefully. There were actually three categories of workers at Ganong Bros.: the permanent full-time employees who worked 50 or 52 weeks a year; the permanent seasonal employees who worked for a few weeks each fall; and the casual employees who worked for a few weeks in the summer or fall for one or two years. In 1931, only 42 per cent of the workforce was employed for more than half the year. The Depression was not a factor in the large number of part-time employees, as the comparable figure for 1924 is 40 per cent.²⁸ By definition, there was a high turn-over rate in the category of casual employees, while the first two exhibited considerable stability. Since most of the female employees were either seasonal or casual workers, employed for fewer than twelve fortnights per year, irregularity of employment was as significant as lower wage rates in women's lower average earnings, as is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Analysis of available payroll sheets for the machine packing department, which employed only women, shows that for the years 1924-27, 1930-38, and 1941-45, 84 per cent of the workforce were employed for two years or less. Of those employed in only one year, 88 per cent worked fewer than 10 fortnights. Table 4, based on these payroll sheets, also shows a core of permanent long-term employees, who worked at the factory year after year, for varying periods. Over the twenty-one year period, at least eighteen women had ten or more years of service.

Despite the high proportion of seasonal and casual workers, many employees, both male and female, spent their entire adult lives working at the candy factory. In 1917, thirteen of the male factory employees and seventeen of the female had been with Ganong Bros. for at least ten years, 21 for seven years, and 24 for five years. At least 28 of these employees were still at Ganong Bros. in 1924, as well as ten who in 1917 had been with the company for at least two years. In 1940, the firm's twelve female employees from Calais, Maine, had an average of 24 years of service each; the three males from Calais averaged 19 years at Ganong Bros.²⁹

²⁸Ganong Bros. Payroll Records.

²⁹PANB, RG 7, RS 63, Charlotte County Probate Records, G. W. Ganong, 1917, Schedule C to Affidavit of Value and Relationship of Maria Famiha Ganong, 11 Jan. 1918; Ganong Bros. Payroll Records; Ganong Bros. to J. L. Bottomley, Immigration Inspector in Charge, St. Stephen, N. B., 8 Feb. 1940. The 1924 figures may be low, as the names of hand-dippers are missing from the records for that year.

TABLE 2
Weekly Pay Rates By Department and Gender, Ganong Bros., 1931

		Number of Employees in Each Rate Category					
Men's Departments		\$7-8	\$9-11	\$12-15	\$16-20	\$21-30	\$31-40
Chocolate Mfrg.		—	—	—	5	—	1
Cream Manufacturing		—	—	1	1	2	—
General		—	1	—	1	3	—
Shipping		—	—	4	8	3	—
Hard Candy & Caramel		3	—	12	5	8	—
Bulk Packing		—	—	2	1	—	—
Pan Manufacturing		11	2	1	6	5	—
Starch and Gum		—	2	7	1	2	1
Women's Departments							
Machine Packing		39	9	—	1	—	—
Hand Packing		34	7	5	1	—	—
Pan Packing		43	1	—	1	—	—
General Packing		45	7	1	1	—	—
Mixed Departments							
Hand Dipping	M	—	—	—	—	1	—
	F	14	21	4	1	—	—
Machine Dipping	M	—	—	—	1	—	1
	F	6	10	1	—	—	—
Hand-made Cream	M	—	1	—	—	1	—
	F	25	4	1	1	—	—
Chocolate Moulding	M	1	—	—	—	1	—
	F	27	—	—	—	—	—
Lozenge	M	—	1	—	—	1	1
	F	—	2	1	—	—	—
Total Males		15	7	27	29	27	4
Total Females		233	62	13	6	—	—

Margaret Doyle's story is not unusual. A single woman living in Calais, she started work in the factory in 1890, in the lozenge room. Her first foreman, Chris Laubman, retired in July 1931, after 44 years of service. He was replaced not by Doyle, but by Don McClellan, who had been transferred from the cream manufacturing department a few months earlier. Laubman's salary had been \$32.00 per week; McClellan was given \$20.00, a \$2.00 increase for him. At the time, Doyle's weekly salary was \$14.00. By 1945, McClellan's salary had been raised to \$30.00 a week, and Doyle's, after 55 years of service, to \$14.50. Until 1940 at least, Doyle had not missed any work because of sickness, and usually arrived at the factory one-half to one hour early. Since Calais time was an hour behind the time in St. Stephen, she was up every morning around four o'clock, leaving her little time for

TABLE 3
Number of Fortnights of Employment By Department
and Gender, Ganong Bros., 1931

Number of Fortnights of Employment	Number of Employees in Each Category						
	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-18	19-24	25-26
Men's Departments							
Chocolate Mfrg.	—	—	3	—	2	—	1
Cream Manufacturing	—	—	1	—	—	—	3
General	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Shipping	3	1	1	—	1	—	7
Hard Candy & Caramel	5	3	7	5	1	1	6
Bulk Packing	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
Pan Manufacturing	3	1	1	1	3	4	12
Starch and Gum	1	2	2	2	—	—	6
Women's Departments							
Machine Packing	12	1	15	9	—	—	12
Hand Packing	2	3	16	12	—	1	13
Pan Packing	1	12	7	13	2	2	8
General Packing	10	13	5	6	1	8	11
Mixed Departments							
Hand Dipping	M	—	—	—	—	—	1
	F	2	2	11	5	4	15
Machine Dipping	M	—	—	—	—	—	2
	F	1	2	4	1	4	5
Hand-made Cream	M	—	—	—	—	1	1
	F	9	5	2	3	5	6
Lozenge	M	—	—	—	—	1	2
	F	—	—	—	—	—	3
Total Males	13	7	17	8	7	7	47
Total Females	37	38	60	49	8	22	73

Note: Chocolate Moulding omitted as records incomplete.

Source: Ganong Payroll Records

any life outside the factory.³⁰

That Margaret Doyle was not made head of the lozenge department was no reflection on her ability; she was not considered for the position, and did not ask for it. The lozenge department was a production department, and so required a male head. Although some theories about the gender division of labour describe women's paid work as an extension of their domestic labour, no such clear-cut equation is possible for the work done by the females in the Ganong factory.³¹

³⁰SCC, 18 July 1940; 28 January 1932; Ganong Bros. Payroll Records; interview with R. W. Ganong.

³¹For a brief discussion of this argument, see Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today*, 156-7, 181.

TABLE 4
Length of Employment In The Machine Packing Department At
Ganong Bros., 1924-27, 1930-38, 1941-45

Years Of Employment	Number Employed For That Period	Average Number of Fortnights Worked
1	317	5
2	70	9
3	26	16
4	14	16
5	6	16
6	1	16
7	1	17
8	3	21
9	4	19
10	3	21
11	6	24
12	2	24
13	1	23
14	2	24
15	0	—
16	2	24
17	2	24

Note: Figures in Column 3 omit 1941. Because this table is compiled from incomplete data, it under-reports the number of years worked by some women.

Source: Ganong Bros. Payroll Records

Rather, the gender division of work in the factory was determined by five related factors: patterns established when production had been carried out on a much smaller scale, by a predominantly male workforce; the assumption that women's participation in the paid labour force was secondary to their domestic role, and that jobs promising higher earnings and better opportunities for advancement should go to men; the seasonal rhythm of production, which required large numbers of workers for short but predictable periods; the firm's conservative and paternalistic style of management; and shared community notions about what was appropriate.³²

Confectionery-making required a core team of production workers, regardless of the volume of output. For small-scale manufacture, experienced workers were

³²These factors differ only slightly from those identified by Joy Parr as significant in determining the gender division of labour in her study of the hosiery and knit goods industry in Canada and Great Britain at the beginning of this century. Her five factors are: the specific traditions carried forward from both the domestic and early factory stages of production, societal prescriptions of entitlement to wage work, local labour market features, unionization, and technological change. Parr, *Disaggregating the Sexual Division of Labour*, 4.

more important than capital investment, since the candy-maker had to adjust basic formulas to allow for variations in room temperature and humidity. Different varieties of candy are made from the same basic ingredients by changing the length and temperature of the cooking process, the temperature at which the candy is cooled, and how it is handled after cooling.³³ Candy-making was considered by workers and employers as a highly-skilled craft, and so, although it was women who did the cooking in the home, it was men who were hired as confectioners. Women filled supporting roles for the male craft workers — coating and decorating the prepared centres, and packing the finished product. The number of people required for these tasks varied with the quantity of candy, much more than did the number required for production. Ganong Bros., in common with other confectionery manufacturers, filled these jobs with women, who, in theory, could be laid off and re-hired more readily than men, since they had no families to support. Women were also considered to be better suited than men to jobs such as dipping and packing candy, which were repetitive but required speed, dexterity and close attention to detail.³⁴

Management at Ganong Bros. persisted in maintaining separate men's and women's spheres even in the face of a chronic shortage of female workers. A 1905 article on the biscuit and confectionery manufacturing industry in Canada cited the scarcity of skilled labour and female help as two of the industry's major problems.³⁵ Ganong Bros. recruited skilled male candy-makers in the eastern United States, but a shortage of female help plagued the firm from the beginning of factory production. As early as 1909, when Ganong Bros. employed over 300 in the factory, the president, Gilbert Ganong, considered moving the business to a larger centre because its growth was limited by the lack of cheap female labour in St. Stephen. The idea of moving was raised occasionally at the company's annual meetings for the next two decades.³⁶ In 1911, Ganong Bros. purchased the bankrupt White Candy Company in Saint John, New Brunswick, partly in the hope of gaining access to the larger pool of female labour available in the port city. Ganong Bros. operated a factory in Saint John until 1931, through a wholly-owned subsidiary, the Corona Company Limited. Some Saint John employees were persuaded to move to St. Stephen, but it proved more practical to move some of Ganong Bros. production to Saint John.³⁷

Even with the added production from the factory in Saint John, G. W. Ganong estimated that the company could have markedly increased its sales in 1912 with

³³Harold Crane, *Sweet Encounter: The Confectionery Resale Price Maintenance Case* (London 1969), 48; Gott and Van Houten, *Candy and Chocolate*, 55-6, 114.

³⁴Armstrong and Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto*, 44-5, 108-9.

³⁵*Industrial Canada*, June 1905, 746-7.

³⁶SCC, 11 April 1895; 15 Oct. 1906; 19 Aug. 1909; 30 Nov. 1911; 1 August 1940; Ganong Bros. Minute Book I, 18 Feb. 1910; MB II, 26 Feb. 1917; MB III, 2 April 1930.

³⁷*Maritime Merchant and Commercial Review*, 10 Feb. 1911, 27; Ganong Bros. Minute Book I, 29 March 1912; MB III, 20 June 1931; interview with Dorothy Griffin, St. Stephen.

more female labour. Because of the shortage of help, some of the firm's top line of chocolates had to be coated by machine rather than by hand.³⁸ Hand-dippers were paid piece-rates, and by maintaining a high level of production, they were able to earn wages above those paid to some of the men, as is shown in Table 1. Yet despite the difficulty of finding women to work as hand-dippers, Ganong Bros. did not consider training men for what was thought to be a woman's job. Nor did employees, male or female, think to question the apparently fixed gender-division of labour. Although hand-dippers earned wages comparable to those of some male employees, hand-dipping remained a woman's job. Immigrant men with their own small candy shops or restaurants were known to do their own hand-dipping, but it was not a practice to be emulated. Former managers and employees said that hiring men for hand-dipping "just wasn't done," a statement which described both the facts and the community's norms.³⁹

Ganong Bros. also failed to consider another possible way to ease the shortage of female labour -- the provision of day-care facilities so that women with young children would be able to work in the factory. Instead, the firm concentrated on recruiting young single women from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, or Great Britain. Representatives of the firm made at least two excursions abroad in search of female help, in 1909 and 1910, but these excursions were not repeated, as the women usually left St. Stephen for the greener pastures of the New England states or central Canada. At the end of World War I, the shortage of female labour forced the new president of the company, Arthur Ganong, to re-design the plant lay-out so as to use labour more efficiently.⁴⁰

The single largest employer in the St. Stephen area, the cotton mill in Milltown, also had a predominantly female labour force, contributing to the scarcity of female labour on the St. Croix. When work was begun on the cotton mill in 1880, the lack of adequate rental accommodation prompted the owners to build eight houses for their supervisory staff and a boarding house for female employees. Other New Brunswick industrialists also built boarding houses to aid in securing reliable female help, for example, Atlantic Underwear Limited in Moncton, and the T. S. Simms brush factory in Saint John.⁴¹ Ganong Bros. opened a boarding house for its female employees in 1906. The company paid \$2,500 for a three-storey house on a large, treed lot overlooking St. Stephen's main street and the St. Croix River.

³⁸Ganong Bros. Minute Book I, 13 Feb. 1913.

³⁹Ganong Bros. Payroll Records; interviews with Addie Crompton, Velma Connick and R. W. Ganong, St. Stephen.

⁴⁰SCC, 19 Aug. 1909; 7 April 1910; 16 June 1910; Ganong Bros. Minute Book I, 10 Feb. 1911; 20 March 1912; MB II, 20 Feb. 1919; interviews with Donald Towers and R. W. Ganong, St. Stephen.

⁴¹Peter De Lottinville, "The St. Croix Cotton Manufacturing Company and Its Influence on the St. Croix Community, 1880-1892," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979, 167-9; see also Peter De Lottinville, "Trouble in the Hives of Industry: The Cotton Industry Comes to Milltown, New Brunswick, 1879-1892," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers*, 1980, 100-15; PANB, RS 418, Moncton City Records, CIO; L. W. Simms, "Factors in Successful Operation of a Home for Female Employees," *Industrial Canada*, August 1921, 60-1.

The living-room was converted to a parlour and reading room, and baths and lavatories were installed on each floor. The third storey was outfitted as an infirmary, but during the busiest seasons, extra help stayed there. After two wings were added, the house could accommodate more than 100. Board was \$3.00 per week, increased to \$4.00 by 1928. Initially, preference was given to applicants from Charlotte County; each applicant had to submit a letter of reference from her minister or some prominent person near her home.⁴²

The first matron of Elm Hall, named for the trees around it, was Mary Devoy, an elderly spinster. When Devoy retired, about 1911, her place was taken by Margaret Towers, whose husband Wallace worked in the shipping room at the factory. The Towers and their two children had their own quarters on the ground floor at Elm Hall, with their own dining room and parlour. The boarders came home from the factory for a hot dinner at noon, and had a lighter supper at night. During Mrs. Towers's years as matron, many of the boarders were Francophone Catholics from the North Shore of New Brunswick, so fish was served on Fridays and fast days. Curfew was ten o'clock on weeknights, and ten-thirty on Saturdays, although boarders could obtain one late pass each week. Males could visit on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and at the occasional party. Elm Hall was closed in the early thirties, and sold at the end of the decade for \$20,000 — \$8,281.77 less than its book value.⁴³

Elm Hall was intended to attract young female workers to St. Stephen, and to ensure that their cost of living would not exceed their wages. Ganong Bros. also supported efforts to attract men with families to the area, so that their wives and daughters would be available for factory work. As individuals and through the firm, the Ganongs supported town council decisions to grant tax concessions and bonuses to businesses in St. Stephen which would offer employment for men. When the town's third attempt to support a shoe factory ended with the factory's bankruptcy in 1935, Ganong Bros. wrote off investments and loans totalling \$4,250. The personal losses of Arthur Ganong, the president of Ganong Bros., were even higher.⁴⁴

The female employees at Ganong Bros. fit the definition of a reserve army of labour in one respect: their wages were low. But there are three defining characteristics of a reserve army of labour: the labour is cheap, it is available, and it competes with the main labour force. Although Ganong Bros. did not move out of St. Stephen in search of more female workers, at various times a shortage of female workers did limit the firm's output, or force changes in technology or organization. And like most women workers, the women at Ganong Bros. worked at women's

⁴²Charlotte County Registry Records, Book 65, 486-7; *Saint Croix Courier*, 28 June 1906, 1; 13 May 1920, 5; 16 Aug. 1928, 5; interviews with Donald Towers, Helena Vail and Martha Evans, St. Stephen.

⁴³Interviews with Donald Towers, Helena Vail and Martha Evans, St. Stephen; Ganong Bros. Minute Book III, Financial Statements, 1939.

⁴⁴SCC, 10 April 1913; 14 Aug. 1924; 18 Oct. 1934; Ganong Bros. Minute Book III, 6 March 1934; Financial Statements 1935.

jobs, for which they did not compete with the male labour force. Patricia Connelly argues that the existence of female job-ghettos does not invalidate the reserve army of labour thesis, since women compete with others in the female labour market, and the existence of this market has an indirect competitive effect on male labour.⁴⁵ The latter assertion is not as self-evident as the former; it is more likely, as Milkman argues, that "capital benefits from the existence of gender divisions within the working class in that they — like racial and other intraclass cleavages — foster political disunity within what might otherwise be a stronger source of opposition to capital. In addition, and crucially, segregation by sex within the wage labour market helps to secure the daily and generational reproduction of the working class through the unpaid household labour of women, by denying female workers a living wage and maintaining their economic dependence on men and on families."⁴⁶

Certainly at Ganong Bros., fixed notions as to which jobs were appropriate to women and which to men were as significant a factor in maintaining the strict gender division of labour as were the cheapness, availability and disposability of female workers. Until the Second World War, the firm's ability to hire women for brief periods as needed allowed the maximum flexibility with the minimum capital expenditure, and made it unnecessary to plan a balanced production schedule for the whole year. When women workers were not readily available, the firm did not replace them with male workers, even in cases where women's wages compared favourably to men's. Instead, the firm sought ways to obtain increased production from the existing female workforce, through capital expenditure and factory re-organization. After World War II, when changes in women's expectations about education and work made it more difficult for Ganong Bros. to hire women for a few weeks each fall, the firm borrowed from the bank to equip its factory with an air conditioning and refrigeration system which would permit the manufacture of seasonal confectionery well in advance of delivery dates. Hiring and training dozens of new workers each fall was wasteful and inefficient, but Ganong Bros. abandoned the practice only when forced to do so by changes in the local labour market. Rather than serving as a reserve army of labour, women filled particular positions in the factory, and these positions were eliminated when Ganong Bros. could not find women to fill them.⁴⁷

Of course, the availability of cheap female labour was not the only factor in the firm's decisions about the organization and supervision of work in the factory, or on capital expenditures for equipment and plant renovations. Management had to consider the impact of competition with other firms, tax advantages for certain kinds of expenditures, the availability of credit, and whether the firm could meet the fixed costs associated with the purchase of machinery. Ganong Bros. was also constrained in its decision-making by questions about ownership and control of the firm that remained unsettled from the death of Gilbert Ganong's widow in 1934 to

⁴⁵Connelly, *Last Hired*, 34-44, 74-5.

⁴⁶Milkman, "Redefining Women's Work," 338-9.

⁴⁷Interviews with R. W. Ganong, St. Stephen.

the final disposition of her estate eight years later. During this period, the executor of her estate attempted to block major capital expenditures.⁴⁸ As company presidents, both Gilbert and Arthur Ganong were also aware of the limitations imposed by their individual commitment to the St. Stephen community. Their support for the shoe factory, and for other community enterprises, was motivated not only by the hope of getting similar concessions for their own business, or of attracting more workers to St. Stephen. They saw support for industrial development as part of their leadership role in the community. Former employees speak of the Ganongs with respect, and accept that they had responsibilities and concomitant privileges that were not shared by everyone. That respect, however, depended on the Ganongs's reputation as decent employers. Decent employers gave the steady jobs to men with families, and did not ask men to do women's work.

All photographs are from The Maritime Advocate and Busy East, May 1943, and were taken in 1942.

⁴⁸*Belyea et al. v. McBride et al.*, (1942) 3 *Dominion Law Reports*, 785; Ganong Bros. Minute Book III, 10 March 1937; 2 March 1938; 28 April 1940.

OUR TIMES

IN ITS EIGHTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION, OUR TIMES, published by a unionized co-operative, is a magazine that provides an interesting and informative view of the progressive trade union movement in Canada and abroad. Read what union and community activists think and do — feminism, democracy, labour, culture . . . just some of the issues found in Our Times. Make it your times. . .

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

OUR TIMES

390 Dufferin St., Toronto
Ontario, Canada M6K 2A3

Name _____

Address _____

City/Prov/Code _____

add \$3.00 outside Canada

- ☐ \$18 individual
(8 issues)
☐ \$30 institution

please allow 4-6 weeks
for first copy