Labour History Project Working People: A History of Labour in BC



**For Women, By Women**

Film Summary: In the 1970s, more women entered into the workforce and sought ways to become organized. One union that formed in British Columbia—the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada—is the subject of this film. Students gain an appreciation of women’s issues in the workplace in the 1970s—and learn more about an attempt to organize a union in the banks by the independent union SORWUC--through a simulation of a union organizing drive.

**Curriculum Application:** Social Studies 10

Social Justice 12

**The Essential Question:** How did the rights of working women in Canada develop as more women entered the workforce in the 1970s?

What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provides a short lesson option. ( 15 minutes)
2. Class activities provide for additional information and learning about the struggle women faced in the Canada workforce during the 1970s.
3. Students explore the struggles and the inequities that women face in the Canadian workforce at the time of the rise of Feminism in the 1970s.
4. A student activity provides for a lesson to simulate the organization of a union.

Learning Standards

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of women, work and social changes in the 1970s. (continuity and change)
2. Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (significance)
3. Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different groups at particular times and places (continuity and change)
4. Assess how underlying conditions and the actions of individuals or groups influence events, decisions, or developments, and analyze multiple consequences (cause and consequence)

**Materials and Resources Provided**

[“](https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/sorwuc/)**[For Women, By Women](https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/sorwuc/)**[” Episode 3- Working People-A History of Labour in British Columbia](https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/sorwuc/)

* Appendix 1: Teaching Strategies
* Appendix 2: Fact sheet
* Lesson Activity 1: Simulation Organizer
* Lesson Activity 2: Union Organizer Kits

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[These were the reasons…Chapter 7 Fighting for Equity: the ‘30’s, the War years and a Shoreworker’s story](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=NFwpDcBUPlw)

[Graphic History Collective – Project #8: An Entirely Different Kind of Labour Union: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers’ Union of Canada](http://graphichistorycollective.com/projects/drawn-to-change/an-entirely-different-kind-of-labour-union)

See additional lessons at [TeachBC](https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/) that focus on working women: Trouble on the Line, Helena Gutteridge, Margaret Rutledge, The Professionals, Home Front, Work Front, Bea Zucco and Connie Jervis.

[On the Line](https://bc-labour-heritage-centre-store.myshopify.com/products/on-the-line-a-history-of-the-british-columbia-labour-movement), pages 199-204

**Vignette Questions**

1. As more working women in Canada entered the workforce, what types of jobs and working conditions did they experience?
2. Why were most working women NOT in unions?
3. What were the challenges facing women organizing unions in the banks?
4. Why did the attempt to organize bank workers in BC fail?
5. What are the positive outcomes of the bank drive?

**Lesson Activities**

1. This lesson is intended to be taught in a Social Studies 11 unit, as part of the chapter on the 1970s decade and rise of the feminist movement; or Social Justice 12 (women and trade union issues).
2. A short lesson option of 20-30 minutes would involve the viewing of the vignette and a discussion of the vignette questions.
3. Teaching Strategies *(Appendix 1)* outlines how a full lesson can be spent on examining the labour facts in “Women in the Workforce “ *(Appendix 2)* prior to watching the vignette and then following up the viewing with the provide class discussion questions to guide the activity.
4. An additional activity that simulates the challenges in forming a union is provided in *Appendix 1, the Lesson Part Two.* A Union Organizer Package (*Lesson Lesson Activity 2*) and an organizing worksheet (*Lesson Activity 1*) are provided.

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Janet Nicol