Lesson Activity 2 Lesson: Helena Gutteridge

**Teaching Suggestions**: **Suggestions for addressing the questions**

The following questions are either for individuals or for groups of students to read, to discuss, to record the key points in that discussion and finally, to report back to the whole class. There are many ways of doing this, so use the following as a couple of guides.

Each student should keep her /his own notes according to the protocol used in the classroom. A two or three column model would be useful here.

Organize the reading and discussion so that each group has a designated organizer/chairperson, a formal recorder and a presenter. Another role might be that of perception checker, to ensure that group members understand the material. Given class size and time constraints, reading will likely have to be silent.

Or, the article is dived into subsections A-E to provide for a jig saw approach to reading and presenting information within both ‘expert’ and ‘home’ groups.

There are six “quick” questions, allowing for assignment to groups in any way and in any numbers that the teacher chooses.

**Teacher’s Resource: Seven Quick Questions**

1. Some women achieved the right to vote in 1917. Who were they? What specific groups were excluded? What reasons might have been given at the time for this exclusion?

2. What was “radical” in 1911 about the idea that women should have the right to vote?

3. Provide some reasons for women’s wages being low, both during the time when Gutteridge was organizing and now.

4. Interpret the following remark. “The tide of suffrage is coming and the idea of holding back the wave won’t work.”

5. Helena Gutteridge once said: “Women are working for what can hardly be called a living wage. A dying wage is more like it.” This remark could be regarded as inflammatory. What might Gutteridge have intended to accomplish with this particular word choice?

6. Even in 2014, nearly one hundred years after the passage of BC’s Minimum Wage Act in 1918, debate about such legislation persists.

a. What is the current minimum wage in the province?

b. Provide reasons for supporting such an Act. Refer both to the past and to the present.

c. Why might some politicians oppose minimum wage legislation, both in the past and at present?

d. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each position.

7. How are Helena Gutteridge’s main causes; unionism, the peace movement, votes for women, and the politics of the CCF, related? You might use a chart or diagram, organizing it to show the relationships.

**Teacher’s Resource: Significant Questions for further research, examination and discussion.**

1. Although it may be shocking to 21st century British Columbians, most trade unionists in the province in the early 1900s favoured an Anti-Asian policy. What might have motivated this position?   
(Fears? Ignorance? Ideas current in the era? Provide details.)

2. At the turn of the twentieth century, the worldwide labour movement used a stirring slogan to rally workers. It was “An injury to one is an injury to all.” How, in the face of this expression of solidarity, could labour leaders justify the Anti-Asian policy and the injuries it invariably resulted in?

1. What forces eventually helped to overturn such a policy? How?

3. Helena Gutteridge often defied the restricted and unequal status of women, from the 1920s right through to the late 1950s. Yet she also talked about women’s “special qualities.” Using your own knowledge as a starter, list / describe some these “special qualities.” How might such qualities have a. advanced / contributed to or b. hurt her various causes? A challenging question here is “Where do these ‘special qualities’ come from? Are they entirely constructions of particular societies, or are they innate? Describe some ‘qualities’ still attributed to women and discuss the challenging question.

4. From the point of view of an Asian hotel worker, dispute the Anti-Asian advice given by Gutteridge in her presentation to Vancouver City Council in 1915. Prepare a speech and then, deliver it to either the class or a small group.

5. Describe the London experiences that might have helped Helena Gutteridge in the many kinds of work she did in Vancouver. How precisely, did they help?

6. In what specific ways did joining a union advance women’s equality?

7. Many women’s suffrage activists claimed that getting the vote would help protect women against social inequality, including “prostitution arising from poverty.” How might this work? This particular example remains a significant issue today. Describe and explain what is going on and why.