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## RESEARCH NOTE / NOTE DE RECHERCHE

# “You Will Have a Good Career Here, but Not a Great Career”: Male Mentoring and the Women Journalists of the Canadian Press News Cooperative, 1965–2000

**Barbara M. Freeman**

THE WOMEN JOURNALISTS WHO WORKED for Canadian Press (CP) from the mid-1960s to the year 2000 faced varying degrees of overt and subtle discrimination within an institution that prided itself on its unbiased stance on political and social issues. Unionization in the mid-1970s, new federal employment equity regulations a decade later, and their own demands for equal opportunities led to improvements in better workplace conditions for CP women, but did not satisfy their requests for work-life balance policies or facilitate promotions into senior management. Changing the attitudes of their male supervisors and mentors, who outwardly supported their female employees but still operated as an “old boys’ network,” was a long-time, complicated business, both professionally and personally. In response, the women adopted different coping skills, as suited to their respective times, locations, circumstances, and personalities. Their experiences are examined here in the historical context of the andocentric newsroom culture within which they performed their duties and the liberal, equality feminism that spurred their personal ambitions.

Canadian Press was a central and influential news cooperative, a wire service that served most of the country’s English and French media, with several of its own bureaus across the country and a few of them abroad. It shared immediate “spot” news and less urgent features with its 100 newspapers members, and operated Broadcast News (BN) for the private TV and radio stations and

Press News for the CBC. Most of the private stations adopted the CP-BN style guides for reporting, writing and editing. Each member paid Canadian Press an annual fee and contributed its own locally generated news for distribution. Media historian Gene Allen has written an institutional history of Canadian Press from its founding in 1917 up to 1970. Allen's study focuses on the efforts of CP's founders and managers to establish and maintain a national news cooperative with strong journalistic values, more than the experiences of its staff.<sup>1</sup>

The female journalists who worked for CP and its media members came of professional age during the resurgence of the women's movement in Canada, when a number of feminist groups and academics were demanding gender equality in law, policy, and practice from government, political parties, business, the professions, educational and arts institutions, and social service agencies.<sup>2</sup> Joan Sangster and other historians have illustrated how female advocacy influenced the struggles for gender and labour equality among Canadian women of the working and middle classes, and of different ethnicities, religions and other circumstances, who were entering previously "male" occupations, or fighting for respect in predominantly female workplaces.<sup>3</sup> By the late 1960s, Canadian labour unions became more willing to negotiate on behalf of their female members.<sup>4</sup> The journalists at Canadian Press joined the Canadian Wire Services Guild in the mid-1970s,<sup>5</sup> a move that brought about

1. The number of newspapers varied somewhat because of mergers, closures, and additions over the years. On CP, see Gene Allen, *Making National News: A History of Canadian Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

2. Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Naomi Black, Paula Bourne, and Magda Fahrni, *Canadian Women: A History*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2011), 530–543; Jacquetta Newman and Linda A. White, *Women, Politics, and Public Policy*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jill Vickers, Pauline Rankin, and Christine Appelle, *Politics As If Women Mattered* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Nancy Adamson, Linda Brisikin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminists Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988).

3. Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-war Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Mona Gleason, Tamara Myers, and Adele Perry, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 6th ed. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2011); Deborah Gorham, "No Longer an Invisible Minority: Women Physicians and Medical Practice in Late Twentieth-Century North America," in Dianne Dodd and Deborah Gorham, eds., *Caring and Curing: Historical Perspectives on Women and Healing in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 183–211; Therese Jennissen and Colleen Lundy, *One Hundred Years of Social Work: A History of the Profession in English Canada, 1900–2000* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Kristina Llewellyn, *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

4. Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 233–268.

5. Allen, *Making National News*, 186–196; Wilfred List, "Management of Wire Service Denies Assertion: CP Workers' Guild Says Publishers on Campaign to Destroy Union," *Globe and Mail*, 16 October 1976.

equal pay. Unlike newspapers and magazines, which are considered private businesses, the news agency was also subject to the federal employment equity regulations that were introduced in the mid-1980s because it had been founded as an essential communication network during World War I, under a 1917 Act of Parliament.<sup>6</sup>

A feminist, interdisciplinary approach to the history of journalism's working culture allows analysis of systemic gender biases as they were reflected in CP's masculine newsroom norms and affected women journalists and their career aspirations over 30 years. As Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter point out, "the processes of socialization into the newsroom, where reporters learn on a daily basis the skills needed for their job, show that historically, assumptions about gender-appropriateness have actually been central to the definitions of the profession" even when the men do not see gender as an issue in their demand for professional conformity.<sup>7</sup> Like their sisters in other white-collar occupations, such as the law and engineering, female journalists struggled against systemic sexism, male domination of senior decision-making positions, and high levels of conflict between their jobs and home duties, especially if they had children.<sup>8</sup>

According to Gertrude J. Robinson, company executives in North America and Europe in general tended to treat women as outsiders, did not mentor them adequately, and clung to narrow definitions of valuable "experience" with the company, thereby imposing a glass ceiling over their female employees' aspirations. In the news industry, media managers expected women to fit into its traditional newsroom culture if they wanted assignments to prestigious reporting beats or senior editing and management positions, although many of them assumed that most women could not perform as well as the men. These assumptions could affect women's reporting styles, their relationships with their male colleagues and their work routines around the newsroom. Their male supervisors also tended to assume that women with children

6. Allen, *Making National News*, 17–53; Annita Newell, "Facing the Barriers: Women at CP-BN: A study by Annita Newell for the Canadian Media Guild," May 1997, 2–3. Newell kindly sent a copy to the author. Newell, email to the author, 29 July 2014.

7. Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter, "Women and News: A Long and Winding Road," *Media Culture and Society* 33, 8 (2011): 1146–1165.

8. Barbara Freeman, "Breaking Out of the Glass Cage: Women Newspaper Journalists in Canada, 1945–1975," in Catherine Briggs, ed., *Modern Canada – 1945 to the Present* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2014), 426–438; Jean McKenzie Leiper, *Bar Codes: Women in the Legal Profession* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Ruby Heap, "Fighting the Corset of Victorian Prejudice: Women's Activism in Canadian Engineering during the Pioneering Decades (1970s–80s)," in Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek, eds., *Feminist History in Canada: New Essays on Women, Gender, Work, and Nation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 218–236.

could not handle the demanding schedules involved in news work and made little attempt to accommodate them.<sup>9</sup>

Given its anomalous position as a cooperative, unionized, mainstream news agency that was subject to federal equity regulations, a focus on the particular challenges facing women at Canadian Press and the coping strategies they adopted contributes new knowledge to the literature on women's history,<sup>10</sup> journalism history,<sup>11</sup> and the history of women in the Canadian news media, particularly their struggles for equality inspired by the feminist movements of their times.<sup>12</sup>

The women who worked at CP joined a slowly growing cohort of female print journalists across the country. During the 1970s, women constituted 21 per cent of Canadian newspaper journalists and were still clustered near the bottom of the newsroom hierarchy. Their numbers increased to an average of only 28 per cent over the next two decades, despite the predominance of female students in journalism schools while, in the United States, the comparative figure was 36 per cent.<sup>13</sup> At CP, eighteen female journalists represented only about nine per cent of the 216 editorial staff in 1970 while 50 female journalists constituted 28 per cent of the 162 total by 1997, the same proportion as the daily newspapers.<sup>14</sup>

This author has conducted and archived oral history interviews with over 30 journalists to date, including seven Anglophone women who worked as both

9. Gertrude J. Robinson, "Feminist Approaches to Journalism Studies: Canadian Perspectives," *Global Media Journal*, Canadian edition 1, 1 (2008): 123–136. See also Armande Saint-Jean, "L'apport des femmes au renouvellement des pratiques professionnelles: le cas des journalistes," *Recherches féministes* 13, 2 (2000):77–93.

10. Joan Sangster, "Introduction," in Sangster, *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women's History* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 1–48.

11. Gene Allen and Daniel J. Robinson, "Introduction" in Allen and Robinson, eds., *Communicating in Canada's Past: Essays in Media History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3–25; Fernande Roy, "Recent Trends in Research on the History of the Press in Québec: Towards a Cultural History," in Allen and Robinson, *Communicating in Canada's Past*, 257–270.

12. Marjory Lang, *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada 1880–1945* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Barbara M. Freeman, *Beyond Bylines: Media Workers and Women's Rights in Canada* (Kitchener-Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

13. Gertrude J. Robinson, *Gender, Journalism and Equity: Canadian, U.S., and European Perspectives* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2005), Canadian statistics on 37; international 1995 statistics on 27; Vivian Smith, *Outsiders Still: Why Women Journalists Love – and Leave – Their Newspaper Careers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 5, 11, 128, 170.

14. CP statistics from the Ottawa Bureau of the *Globe and Mail*, "CP Head Denies Discrimination against Admitting New Members," *Globe and Mail*, 11 December 1969. The term "discrimination" refers to member newspapers of CP, not staff; Patti Tasko's Canadian Press documents (hereafter CPD), copy of the minutes of CP's Central Circuit regional meeting for 29 May 1970, 9; Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 2–3.

editors and reporters for CP at different times over the 30 years discussed in this article.<sup>15</sup> The field of oral history is fundamentally interdisciplinary, encompassing theories and techniques from social studies, cultural studies, media studies and other fields, and applied to women of many different ethnicities and roles in the world.<sup>16</sup> Personal narratives are important to understanding women's experiences in the news industry and, fittingly, reflect the story-telling nature of their occupation. Female journalists must acquire the personal assertiveness that is essential to high profile work in the public sphere as well as develop professional survival strategies in an individualistic newsroom culture that tends to view feminist perspectives with a jaundiced eye.<sup>17</sup> They love to tell stories that are compelling and revealing and, as in journalistic practice, as accurate as they can remember, even if, like most personal narratives, their accounts can be exaggerated, faulty, or air-brushed and formulated to respond to the subjective lens of the interviewer.<sup>18</sup> However, as Sangster points out, what is important are the insights these interviews provide into these subjects' own lived realities, such as the cultural frameworks within which they operated, their perceived choices and how they consciously navigated them.<sup>19</sup>

The CP newswomen in my research to date were all English-speaking, white, middle-class, and able-bodied and identified as heterosexual, factors that were typical of the print journalism workforce, except in francophone Québec. Therefore, in that context, they blamed sexism for the challenges they experienced, rather than any other form of "intersectional" discrimination, which media scholar Marian Meyers defines as "the complex and varied ways that gender, race, class and other markers of social identity are inextricably linked within a hierarchy of dominance."<sup>20</sup> Despite some minority hiring in the 1980s and 1990s, Canadian newspapers, which were not subject to federal equity

15. Author's interviews with Jean Sharp Cochrane, 17 August 1995; Judy Creighton, 17 August 1995; Norma Greenaway, Ottawa, 17 August 2012; Elinor Reading, Toronto, 17 August 1995; Anne Roberts, Vancouver, by telephone, 24 May, 2006; Rosemary Speirs, Toronto, 15 December 1992 and 17 November 2011; Patti Tasko, Toronto, 26 May, 2014. The author has ethics board clearance from Carleton University for this project.

16. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, eds., *Oral History off the Record: Towards an Ethnography of Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan ebook, 2013); Lyn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

17. Smith, *Outsiders Still*, 34–64; Barbara M. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women's Issues in English Canada, 1966–1971* (Kitchener-Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 41–72; Penny Bender Fuchs, "Women in Journalism Oral History Collection of the Washington Press Club Foundation," *Journalism History* 28, 4 (2003): 191–196.

18. Fuchs, "Women in Journalism Oral History Collection," 192–193.

19. Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History" in Sangster, *Through Feminist Eyes*, 213–241.

20. Marian Meyers, *African American Women in the News: Gender, Race and Class in Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2.

regulations, were not only male-dominated, they were still “97 percent white,” according to a study published in 1998 by Ryerson University journalism professor, John Miller.<sup>21</sup> While news reporters could cover human rights issues, and positive developments and outstanding leaders in various minority communities, public advocacy of any kind was considered a professional conflict of interest that compromised their ability as journalists to be “balanced” in their handling of the news.<sup>22</sup>

As female news workers, my subjects all experienced varying degrees of overt and covert sexism and almost all of them were liberal feminists in their sympathies; that is they wanted to be considered and treated as professional equals to their male colleagues rather than fundamentally change the capitalist news industry. They all have sustained memories of a time and place when their gender was a major issue in their own workplaces, combined with episodic and revealing flash memories of certain sexist incidents, even if they cannot always remember the immediate context. What we glean from oral interviews depends on what the subjects wish to tell us, on or off the record, especially when it comes to sensitive issues and naming names. My subjects referred to sexist behaviour from some male colleagues and supervisors that ranged from inappropriate comments to compromising attempts at dating and seduction. They each found ways of avoiding, coping with, or even confronting this behaviour. Such experiences were common in many Canadian workplaces, where male supervisors failed to understand sexism as an abuse of power and a barrier to female advancement.<sup>23</sup> In the late 1970s, feminists coined the term “sexual harassment” to describe persistent, unwelcome sexual advances, and began fighting back, the issue combining as it did their demands for gender equality at work and an end to all forms of violence against women.<sup>24</sup> Their campaign garnered a great deal of balanced media publicity,

21. John Miller, *Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers Are Failing Us* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1998), 19. In 2015, Vivian Smith bluntly noted that Canada's “mainstream media do not begin to reflect the extent of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexuality, ability, and age diversity within our culture.” Smith, *Outsiders Still*, 208. See also Mary Lynn Young and Alison Beale, “Canada: The Paradox of Women in News,” in Carolyn M. Byerly, ed., *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women in Journalism* (Washington: Howard University, 2013), 109–121.

22. Freeman, *Beyond Bylines*, 152–153; Smith, *Outsiders Still*, 208–209. See Canadian Press, *CP Style Book* (Toronto: Canadian Press, 1968), 20–21; *CP Style Book* (Toronto: Canadian Press, 1974), 3.

23. For examples, see Smith, *Outsiders Still*, 7, 17; Simma Holt, *Memoirs of a Loose Cannon* (Hamilton: Seraphim Editions, 2008), 91–112; Freeman, *The Satellite Sex*, 41–72, 218–219; George Pollard, “Profile of a Radio Reporter,” *content* (September/October 1986): 22. The magazine *content* was published by the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ).

24. Constance Backhouse, “Sexual Harassment: A Feminist Phrase that Transformed the Workplace,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 24 (2012): 293. See also Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen, *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978).

mainly through "straight-up" coverage by sympathetic female reporters, who wanted fair and equal treatment in their respective newsrooms and were certainly aware of the problem,<sup>25</sup> and had likely experienced various forms of sexual harassment themselves. By 1985, the federal and provincial Human Rights Commissions had declared sexual harassment on the job illegal<sup>26</sup> and Newspaper Guild contracts specifically outlawed it, although the union still received some complaints about it afterwards.<sup>27</sup> In Canada and the United States, sexual harassment of female newspaper journalists was still occurring into the 1990s.<sup>28</sup>

Aside from personal narratives, the primary research for this article draws on newly available CP documents and other sources. As a 30-year veteran of CP's Toronto headquarters, one of my interview subjects, Patti Tasko, has contributed important background files from her own office, while CP's journalism style books are available in journalism school libraries and online. Otherwise, the news agency's records, which are slim for the years after 1970, are now inaccessible to researchers.<sup>29</sup> Guild, government, and personal documents, newspaper accounts, media trade journal articles and personal communications filled some of the gaps, contributing important information to this article. The women all had different experiences of the agency's newsroom culture according to where and when they were hired, but much of it was a decided mix of sexism combined with andocentric mentoring from their male supervisors.

By "andocentric mentoring," I mean a relationship in which a male manager may consciously, perhaps even proudly, supervise and encourage a female employee in much the same way as he would one of her male peers as long as she conforms to the masculine culture of the workplace. He is unconscious of, or perhaps denies, the ways in which these systemic expectations actually put her at a disadvantage, a common fault among supervisors.<sup>30</sup> In a newsroom

25. Backhouse, "Sexual Harassment: A Feminist Phrase," 294.

26. Backhouse, "Sexual Harassment: A Feminist Phrase," 296.

27. Daniel Drolet, "A History of the Ottawa Newspaper Guild," Chapter 12, accessed 20 April 2016, [http://ottawanewsguild.ca/website/?page\\_id=522](http://ottawanewsguild.ca/website/?page_id=522).

28. Robinson, "Feminist Approaches to Journalism Studies," 127–128; Kim Walsh-Childers, Jean Chance, and Kristin Herzog, "Sexual Harassment of Women Journalists," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 73, 3 (1996): 559–581.

29. CP management has closed its library, relegated its records to the basement and refused further access to them. Patti Tasko, email exchanges with the author on behalf of CP management, 8 April 2014.

30. For a helpful review of late 20th-century mentoring issues, see Catherine A. Hansman, "Diversity and Power in Mentoring Relationships," in Hansman, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Mentoring: Trends and Issues*, Information Series No. 338 (Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 2002), 39–48, <http://www.calpro-online.org/eric/docs/mott/mentoring6.pdf>.



context, that would include male-only social gatherings after work, ignoring or even condoning sexual harassment, emphasizing the importance of job mobility as a condition for promotion, or minimizing the pressure that the 24/7 news routine puts on the young mothers among the staff. As oral histories and other evidence reveal, CP's newsroom culture improved substantially as time went on, but some tensions remained, especially when it came to work-life balance as well as the glass ceiling for women at the senior management level.

### **Sexism in the CP Newsroom in the 1960s**

MOST OF THE FEMALE JOURNALISTS who joined CP in the 1960s worked as general news editors and reporters, or on specialty beats. The women and their male classmates were part of a new breed of recent graduates from university and college journalism schools or other programs, while many of their older newsroom colleagues were high school graduates who had worked their way up through the ranks and regarded journalism as a craft. Accordingly, some of the news veterans had a jaundiced view of formal journalism education, as well as traditional views of women's roles. Many of their male peers regarded the female newcomers as rivals as well as colleagues, while some of their managers and senior editors resented their presence or viewed them approvingly as skilled, relatively cheap labour, at least before CP was unionized.<sup>31</sup> The experiences of Elinor Reading present the opportunity to compare the gender cultures of a regional and a central CP bureau, based on her own memories and the diary she kept at the time. Reading, an American who had been teaching university English in Philadelphia, was hired as a junior reporter-editor in Edmonton in 1967 and moved to Toronto two years later. CP Edmonton was a smaller bureau, with ten to fifteen editorial, technical, and administrative staff, where experienced editors such as bureau chief Andy Garrett and assistant bureau chief Edgar Simon guided the frequent newcomers. The bureau handled news from the major papers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and covered the Northwest Territories, mostly through correspondents. It also staffed some stories of provincial and national interest. Reading recalls that Garrett took a chance on her lack of newsroom experience, giving her some weeks' trial at the copy boy's wage before advancing her to \$79.20 per week. She rewrote wire and newspaper copy, took her turn editing her colleagues' work, and covered the provincial legislature the next year.<sup>32</sup>

31. Norma Greenaway mentioned that having a degree likely enhanced her generation's chances of being hired. Greenaway, interview with author. For an overview of the 20th-century progression of professional journalism education, and some of the resentment toward it, see Peter Johansen, David H. Weaver, and Christopher Dornan, "Journalism Education in the United States and Canada: Not Merely Clones," *Journalism Studies* 2, 4 (2001): 469–483. On male veterans' resentment of women, see Freeman, "Breaking Out of the Glass Cage," 433–435.

32. Reading, interview with author. Reading named Garrett and Simon, and her salary, in her review of a draft of this article. Reading, email to the author, 12 November 2015.

Reading recalled that CP women were also expected to cover news of presumed interest to female newspaper readers,<sup>33</sup> which meant "some silly stories," she recalled;<sup>34</sup> for example, a feature about the fashions worn by the lieutenant governor's wife and other prominent women. "They put me into the legislature in '68 and I got to do it all.... When they had the Throne Speech, they also made me file a story about what the women were wearing, which they would never have made any of the men file." Such an assignment was an extra burden on her and invariably demanded the gender-conscious, sexist style of news writing that was *de rigueur* at the time. In retrospect, Reading regretted the way she wrote about women in descriptive but patronizing "Canadian Press lingo ... as 'a blonde mother of three' and 'a feisty grandma.'" It was a way of writing that "was more than expected, it was enforced," while "there was an absolute ban on referring to any man as balding," she said, referring to the CP style guides of the period.<sup>35</sup>

Reading recalls the newsroom atmosphere at CP Edmonton as generally collegial, "terrific" in fact, because the senior staff taught her a lot about journalism, but "some of the young guys were the worst," including one who resented taking her rewrite instructions when she took her turn on the editing desk. "He didn't like taking orders from a woman." One day, a more experienced male editor in his thirties took her aside and gave her some helpful if crude advice about what to say the next time she was in charge. She practiced in the mirror at home: "If you give me any more trouble, you little twit, I'll have your balls for bookends." She found that all she had to do was look at the offender and think that retort in her mind, and he followed her instructions.<sup>36</sup> Occasionally she reported on various women's group meetings in Edmonton; for example, a gathering of the National Council of Women where the participants discussed proposed tax reforms affecting the family.<sup>37</sup> Serious women's issues were finally getting more media play, mainly because the federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1967–1970) was holding public hearings from Vancouver to St. John's with the intent of hearing complaints and then making recommendations aimed at providing "equal opportunities" for

33. Judging from the discussion between CP's managers and its member newspaper editors, this appeared to be the case. CPD, copy of the minutes from CP's Central Circuit regional meeting for 6 June 1969, 6–7.

34. Reading's review of a draft of this article, emailed to the author, 12 November 2015.

35. Reading, interview with author. Under the sub-heading "Personal Characteristics," the style book instructions regarding aging noted that "balding" was not a particularly descriptive term and therefore not wanted in CP copy but "thinning hair" was permissible. *Canadian Press, CP Style Book* (1968 ed.), 46.

36. Reading, interview with author.

37. Elinor Reading (CP), "National Council: Rejects Family Unit for Taxes," *The London Free Press*, 7 June 1968, 26.

women in Canada.<sup>38</sup> Reading travelled with the Commission to the North, reporting on women's and family issues in the white and Indigenous cultures there.<sup>39</sup>

As much as she learned from her experience at the Edmonton bureau, Reading was eager to go to Toronto, which she thought would be more exciting when she moved there in January of 1969. But "it was an entirely different thing." She remembers, for example, a financial manager arranging for a female journalist on an overnight desk shift to be reprimanded for using the sole coffee machine, which was located in the men's locker room. When Reading asked if women could have access to the machine, she was told, "if you just flutter your eyelashes at one of the guys, I'm sure he'd be happy to go get you a coffee." Another manager refused to authorize a paper towel dispenser in the women's washroom because the small cloth towels delivered weekly to the secretaries' lockers worked well for them. But newsroom desks were grimy with teletype ink and carbon paper. She was "discreetly" informed that he refused her request because he had decided that "women were dirty and would just throw the paper towels around if they had a dispenser in the women's room."<sup>40</sup>

Aside from such petty sexism, Reading found the atmosphere in Toronto much more difficult than in Edmonton because of the presence of the long-time general manager, Gillis Purcell, a strong-minded, domineering man with a deep knowledge of the news industry, whom she regarded as "a bully" and the other CP and newspaper managers looked upon with a mixture of fear and respect. Years later, Reading recalled a frank obituary of Purcell that described his quick temper, his "mean streak" and his way of running the newsroom like a military camp. It also said that he could be kind to his staff, even fostering friendships with them, inspiring their loyalty. During his time, she noted, female journalists were invited to the secretaries' Christmas party whereas male journalists had their own newsroom gathering.<sup>41</sup>

Purcell retired several months after Reading arrived in Toronto, but he definitely left an impression on her. He took a certain old school pride in the fact that CP had assigned a woman to edit on the main desk, the newsroom's nerve centre, but Reading found he could be a bit of a nuisance in his timing. "Mr.

38. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex*; Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 233–268.

39. Freeman, *The Satellite Sex*, 187–209.

40. Reading, interview with author. Until the 1980s, when computers started appearing in newsrooms, journalists used typewriters and typed their stories on a newsprint/carbon combination referred to as "takes." Reading describes them: "Three pieces of newsprint, with sheets of carbon between them, were joined by a strip at the top. Detached from it, they were half the size of an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of typewriter paper. At CP, the top sheet went to the copy desk to be edited; the next to Main Desk to be checked for legal problems, and the third, I think, to Broadcast News. Member newspapers might deploy their three copies differently." Reading, email to the author, 18 December 2015.

41. Reading, interview with author; Allen, *Making National News*, 252–254; Linda McQuaig, "News Chief Hid Warmth under Tough Exterior," *Globe and Mail*, 20 November 1987.

Purcell would call up on the evenings when I was on main desk and talk in courtly and tiresome terms for longer than I really had the time to give, seeing as it was a high pressure job, about how they hadn't had a woman on the main desk since wartime or whatever it was." She did not find a strong male mentor as such at CP Toronto: "You couldn't go hobnob with Gillis Purcell,"<sup>42</sup> who was succeeded by his more even-tempered and pragmatic general superintendent, John Dauphinee, "a tall austere man with military mien," according to a CP obituary. While they were two very different men, both were socially conservative and somewhat condescending to women, attitudes that were common in the news industry at the time.<sup>43</sup> Any praise that Reading remembered receiving came second-hand from supportive colleagues who overheard it, sometimes in the Toronto Men's Press Club, where women were not accepted as members. "It really was the custom in the newsroom to pass plaudits down through the press club, rather than through the newsroom. They didn't have any habits for coming around and telling you that you'd done a great job right then and there."

She also had colleagues who openly resented the women with whom they worked, even though there were few of them at CP then. Some of her memories come in flashes – she recalls one day overhearing some men in the newsroom talking "mean talk" about her colleagues Rosemary Speirs and Lillian Newbery, saying, behind their backs, that they were "too tough, or too hard, or too hard to get along with." One of these men, "who was extremely tough, extremely abrasive and extremely hard to get along with" himself, then came over and aggressively slammed his news copy onto Reading's editing desk, an intimidating gesture at the very least. This flash memory is based on an entry in her diary, an incident that she found startling enough to record and that definitely contributed to her discomfort as a woman in the CP Toronto newsroom. "I was trying to come to terms with the fact that you would never ... quite be judged on the same standards."

Reading did not particularly think of herself as a feminist when she first started working as a journalist – the word wasn't used much yet, she recalled – but CP Toronto was "a watershed." She remembered arguing with the general news editor, Ken Smith, who had asked staffers under 30 for story ideas that might attract readers of that age. She told him: "This thing called women's liberation is going to be huge." The suggestion fell flat: "Ken looked at me as though I had just waved a fish in his face." He told her that the publishers

42. Reading, interview with author.

43. Canadian Press, "John Dauphinee – Former Top CP Executive Handled Top Postings," *Globe and Mail*, 14 May 1990. On social attitudes among Canadian news editors, see Frederick Elkin, *Family Life Education in the Media of Mass Communication* (Ottawa: Vanier Institute of the Family, 1970).

in the CP cooperative were thinking of topics like rock music and what group would be the next Beatles.<sup>44</sup>

After four years with the news agency, Reading moved on to the *Toronto Star*, where she worked on its Insight section. In the late 1970s, after she married and moved with her husband to Montréal, she was out of paid work and volunteered at a women's information centre. She then worked for two newspapers in Detroit for awhile before returning to Toronto to take up a position at the *Globe and Mail*.<sup>45</sup> While the Canadian Press bureaus in Edmonton and Toronto were important training grounds for young journalists like her, she had little union or legislative protection from systemic gender discrimination, but relied for professional support on the senior editors and male colleagues who appreciated her skills. Her experiences in Edmonton and Toronto illustrate how CP's newsroom working culture varied, with the male supervisors offering masculine support in one locale and imposing gender isolation in another.

### Negotiating Advancement in the 1970s

BY 1975, THERE WERE OVER 500 female and 2000 male journalists working on daily newspapers in Canada. Most of the women laboured on small urban dailies and/or dominated the "soft news" beats, like lifestyles. The bigger the newspaper, the less chance they had of covering the "hard news" of politics and business, usually designated for male reporters. By that time, some beats, such as local news, were balanced between the two sexes<sup>46</sup> and the atmosphere at CP was improving for the women who worked as editors and news reporters. During the 1950s to 1970s, the American Newspaper Guild (ANG) accelerated its efforts to unionize Canadian newspapers. CP was finally forced to accept the affiliated Canadian Wire Service Guild in 1976 after a bitter dispute that included rotating strikes to force management to sign a workable contract agreement.<sup>47</sup> The ANG and member locals could be slow in supporting its female members until challenged by the women themselves, but by this time its wage scale did include equal pay at the various newspapers and at CP.<sup>48</sup>

44. Reading, interview with author; Reading's review of a draft of this article, emailed to the author, 12 November 2015; "Obituaries – Ken Smith," *Globe and Mail*, 12 August 1985.

45. Reading, interview with author.

46. Robinson, *Gender, Journalism and Equity*, 39.

47. Ed Finn, "Opinion: Resumption of Rotating Strikes Predicted by Unionist," *Toronto Star*, 13 September 1976; Greenaway, interview with author. On the history of the Newspaper Guild and other communications unions in Canada, see Catherine McKercher, *Newsworkers Unite – Labor, Convergence, and North American Newspapers* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2002), 107–145.

48. Holt, *Memoirs*, 108–111; Freeman, "Breaking Out of the Glass Cage," 432–433; Drolet, "A History of the Ottawa Newspaper Guild," Chapter 7, accessed 20 April 2016, <http://>

With the presence of more liberal male supervisors and mentors, the women at the news agency suffered less overt sexism than there had been in earlier years, although they still experienced undercurrents of it.

Norma Greenaway, who was born and raised in Saskatoon, earned a Bachelor of Journalism degree from Carleton University in 1974. She worked full-time for a year at the daily *Star-Phoenix* and then travelled in South America as a freelance journalist. Upon her return to Canada in 1976, she had a job interview with Arch Mackenzie, who was the bureau chief at CP Ottawa and one of the best-regarded of all its editorial managers. Mackenzie could not hire her at the time, but he phoned his counterpart at CP Toronto, Gordon Grant, who, at 40, was a younger member of the agency's "old boys' network" with a tough-love approach to nurturing both male and female reporters. Mackenzie said to Grant, as Greenaway recalled, "I am sending a girl back to Toronto and I think you should hire her." She exclaimed "a girl!" at the memory of his description of her and continued her narrative. "So I walked in and I literally got hired the next day because Arch's word was gold. Arch knew how to hire. Arch was seen as a guy who really spotted talent."<sup>49</sup>

Greenaway joined CP during the rotating strikes, leaving her in a quandary about crossing the picket line while on temporary probation, the testing period before she was officially hired. She recalled that a Guild representative advised her to go into work, telling her that once she was made a permanent employee, she could sign up with the union. Another probationer refused and did not get a permanent job, which made her feel guilty but also underscored the tension the strike aroused between management and staff. Once hired, she was paid \$250–\$275 per week as she had only two years of experience at a time when five years was considered a milestone on the pay scale, meriting about \$311 per week. At the *Star-Phoenix*, she had been earning about \$200 a week, in line with what she calls its "secretive," non-unionized, merit system at the time. The average daily newspaper salary ranged between \$214 and \$400 weekly, depending on the size of its circulation.<sup>50</sup> She eventually became executive director of the Guild, her main task being communications, but she was not on the negotiating committee. As far as she was concerned, the union made sure that CP women earned "fair wages.... It wasn't about male and female wages" but differences in job classifications. "If you were a reporter, you were

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[ottawanewsguild.ca/website/?page\\_id=522](http://ottawanewsguild.ca/website/?page_id=522).

49. Greenaway, interview with author; Canadian Press, "Inspiring Journalist Arch MacKenzie Dead at 88," *Globe and Mail*, 23 June 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/inspiring-journalist-and-former-bureau-chief-arch-mackenzie-dead-at-88/article19304476/>; John Ward, "Gordon Grant, 73, – Brash, Boisterous Editor Nurtured Young Reporters," *Globe and Mail*, 14 December 2009.

50. Greenaway, interview with author. This five-year figure was the Guild rate paid at the *Toronto Star* at the time. "Guild Votes Tomorrow on Star's Final Offer," *Toronto Star*, 29 May 1976. General statistics for 1975 are from Robinson, "Feminist Approaches to Journalism Studies," 126. Robinson does not analyze the impact of unionization on salaries.

a reporter.... We all earned the same money.” Nevertheless, there was room within the Guild’s pay scale system for newsroom managers to reward their best employees with a little additional merit pay each year.<sup>51</sup>

There was less overt discrimination of the kind that Reading had experienced a decade earlier at CP, but Greenaway still found herself developing certain coping skills in the newsroom. When male colleagues at CP teased her occasionally, “I teased them back.” Or she tried to fit in. “When I had to work in the sports department for a week at CP (Toronto), the guys all wore ball caps, and shorts and sneakers, so I came in with a ball cap on backwards, and put on my shorts and, you know, played the role ... just to humour them.”

Without compromising her professional values, Greenaway also managed to negotiate better working conditions with one manager, since deceased, who had a reputation for “hitting on” women. Aside from joining about a dozen of the staff for Friday, after-work drinks, he liked to invite individual female journalists to dinner socially, a situation that, at the very least, could make them feel vulnerable and certainly might be construed today as inappropriate behaviour if not outright sexual harassment. Greenaway accepted an invitation from him soon after he separated from his wife because she saw it as an opportunity to discuss her desire to do less editing and more news reporting. When she asked, he assured her that they would talk about her job over the meal, so she brought her briefcase along to the restaurant, “and, guess what, we never talked about my story ideas.” She was very disappointed but, at the same time, “I never felt like I had to go to bed with him. I know other people who did feel that, but I didn’t.” She eventually got the assignments she wanted anyway, first in general news and, later, at the Ontario legislature.<sup>52</sup>

When Greenaway was offered the job of bureau chief at Queen’s Park, in 1979, she declined in favour of a transfer to the Parliamentary Press Gallery in Ottawa and, after a year, to other federally related beats, such as immigration, finance, energy, and employment. She worked for Arch Mackenzie, the Ottawa bureau chief who first recommended that CP Toronto hire her, and, in her eyes, “the best boss ever.” Well before the 1986 equity regulations, he was very supportive of female journalists, so much so that some of his management colleagues in the news industry thought he was carrying out his own affirmative action program. Greenaway explained that there were few CP women in Ottawa then and “he was just fair.” He told her that when he looked at applications, he thought that, all things being equal, why would he not hire a woman? “He just started hiring women and really good women.... But he didn’t give us a bigger break.” When he gave reporters, including her, “token” merit pay increases, she added, “I don’t know if women got less or more, but I have a hunch, not under Arch’s watch.” Even Mackenzie had his limits, however,

51. Finn, “Opinion: Resumption of Rotating Strikes Predicted by Unionist.”; Greenaway, interview with author.

52. Greenaway, interview with author; Greenaway, email to the author, 30 September 2015.

when it came to gender roles. In 1979, when she asked if she could go to Iran during its conservative Islamic revolution, he told her that he would not risk sending a female reporter there. He did not elaborate but when she covered the Middle East for Southam News in the 1990s, she discovered that it was not as dangerous to be a woman correspondent in the Middle East as Mackenzie had thought it would be.<sup>53</sup>

During her time at CP, Greenaway noticed that, despite the supportive presence of managers like Mackenzie, some of the male editors automatically mistrusted news stories about certain women's issues; for example, a federal report stated that one in ten women were abused by their male partners, and about twenty per cent of all murder victims were women killed by their husbands. According to her colleague, Juliet O'Neill, who covered the story, the chief copy editor in Ottawa did not believe the figures and spiked it, refusing to put it on the wire and ordering her to recheck her facts. "I recall the disbelief and the skepticism about the number – which was based on interviews with women in transition houses, police calls and divorce cases – and having to go back to the source and press for detail on how the number was achieved," she recounted to the author.<sup>54</sup> Greenaway and other female colleagues had no trouble believing the statistics in O'Neill's story, unlike the men. "The male bosses?! CP Toronto went crazy when that story went out on the wire ... there was a huge flap," Greenaway recalled, even though it seems that they saw a qualified version of the original. The editors did not treat other kinds of news stories with the same amount of suspicion and demands for extra verification, she added. "They never did that with any other story."

Greenaway identified as a "liberal, socially progressive" feminist and was known as such around the newsroom. "Totally. I don't have a problem with that label. Loud, proud." Over the years, she never got involved with women's groups herself, as that would have been considered a journalistic conflict of interest, but found support among other like-minded women, her "soul-mates," who also worked in the news industry. In retrospect, she observed of women's status in journalism, "I always said, and I believe that it's true, that we had to be better (than the men). I still believe that. We have to be better ...

53. One can only speculate on Mackenzie's reasoning. In a follow-up email, Greenaway agreed with the author's suggestion that Mackenzie felt that she could not meet the new regime's strict religious requirements in dress or behaviour and still do her job. She wrote that CP had agreed to cover the revolution for Associated Press because its reporter would not have gained entry with an American passport. It was possible that AP preferred a male reporter, she added, but she did not know for sure. Greenaway, email to the author, 20 April 2016.

54. The report was written for the federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Linda MacLeod, *Wife Battering in Canada: the Vicious Circle* (Hull: Supply and Services Canada, 1980). Juliet O'Neill, email to the author, 21 December 2015. Neither O'Neill nor I have been able to find a copy of her story, but MacLeod's report was covered by other journalists; for example, Patricia Bell, "Battered Wives Can Rely on No One, Report Declares," *Globe and Mail*, 24 January 1980.



to get the job. Just, you know, ‘all things being equal,’ isn’t equal.” At the same time, “I think the difference between the ‘60s and the late ‘70s was remarkable.” By then, women were desk editors at CP Toronto and promoted to senior reporting positions at Queen’s Park. The same was true, at least briefly, at the CP bureau in Washington, DC, where she worked in the late 1980s. The glass ceiling had clearly moved higher for CP women since the 1960s – thanks in part, Greenaway acknowledged, to “the role models ahead of us” – but the few women who wanted to be managers had not yet made inroads. She recalled that she knew of only one woman, a union activist at CP Toronto in the late 1970s, who did want to go into management, and should have, but was not promoted and left the news agency. “She was one of the best editors, she was really smart, and at the time I think she wanted some promotions that she never got.” At the same time, “men were getting pushed up through the system.”

Greenaway did not want to be a news manager herself, however. When Mackenzie asked, in the early 1980s, if she was interested, she told him that she did not want to supervise other people or have to “boss them around.” Although she was a very good editor, she much preferred reporting to anything else.<sup>55</sup> For Norma Greenaway, CP was an important training ground, where Guild support, strong male mentoring and her own journalistic skills helped her advance further than the previous generation of women journalists at the news agency, despite the remnants of the “old boys” network still in play.

## Marriage, Motherhood, and the Glass Ceiling

THE FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, that, outside of the skills each woman possessed, there may have been practical reasons for management to start hiring and mentoring more women, such as pressure from the federal government in the mid-1980s. Feminist activists had been advocating for fairer treatment for women in the Canadian workplace, including affirmative action, for years, but it wasn’t until 1986 that the federal Employment Equity Act regarding hiring and promotions of women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities came into force, following another Royal Commission inquiry. While the new rules did not enforce affirmative action or hiring quotas, they did require Crown corporations, federal agencies, government-owned businesses and federally regulated companies like CP to report on their annual progress to the Canadian Human Rights Commission.<sup>56</sup> In the meantime, various feminist groups took on the issues of sexist content in the media and gender equality in the newsroom, topics hotly discussed at media

55. Greenaway, interview with author.

56. Commission on Equality in Employment, “Equality in Employment: A Royal Commission Report – General Summary,” *Canadian Women’s Studies* 6, 4 (Winter 1985): 5–7; Government of Canada, *Employment Equity Act*, S.C. 1986, c. 31.

conferences from the late 1970s into the 1990s, especially those organized by the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ), later renamed the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ).<sup>57</sup> Some female journalists formed their own newsroom caucuses<sup>58</sup> while the feminist media monitoring group MediaWatch issued progress reports<sup>59</sup> and articles about gender inequality appeared in the mainstream media as well as in journalism school and media trade publications.<sup>60</sup> News industry managers could no longer summarily ignore gender equity in hiring and promotions, especially as newswomen themselves began demanding it.

While some single women, like Greenaway, flourished at CP, those who were mothers and wanted to be in management still had a harder time climbing the corporate ladder than did their male peers, a situation that was typical of the news industry in North America well into the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> Patti Tasko's experiences are a case in point. In 1981 CP hired Tasko, who had just earned her Masters of Journalism degree from the University of Western Ontario, as an editor in Toronto, initially on desks that involved a lot of shift work, including overnights. As a young employee, she took on a number of reporting assignments as well. Personally, she always identified as a feminist, although she was not necessarily tagged as one around the newsroom, and was cautious, especially when she first started at CP. She did not habitually suggest prominent women's issues as news story ideas during the regular morning meetings, partly because she was afraid the editor in charge might ridicule her in front of the other staff. In other words, she felt a certain, somewhat intimidating anti-feminist resistance within the culture of the newsroom, which Greenaway

57. The CIJ/CAJ successively published *Bulletin*, *content*, and *media*. Carole Roy, "Colloque de femmes à Montréal," *Bulletin* 14 (Fall 1981): 14; "Women's Network," the women and media edition of *Bulletin* 17 (Summer 1982): 15, 23; Carole Roy, "Les murs du silence sont percés," *Bulletin* 15 (Winter 1981–1982): 10; "Women in the Media Magazine," special issue, *Bulletin* 47 (May 1992); "Changing Face '92: Women in the Media," special issue, *Bulletin* 50 (January 1993); "Women in the Media," special issue, *Bulletin* 54 (January 1994); CAJ conference program for "Women in the media '96: Breaking Rules, Making News," Ottawa, October 25–27, 1996; Beth Ryan, "Women Meeting Women," *media* 4, 4 (Winter 1998): 18.

58. Susan Korah, "Creating Gender Equity in the Newsroom: A Front Page Challenge for the Southam Task Force on Women's Opportunities," Master of Journalism thesis, Carleton University, 2001.

59. "A Good Day To Be Female?" (MediaWatch, 1992); "Focus on Violence: Survey of Women in Canadian Newspapers," (MediaWatch, June 1993); "Women Strike Out (1998 Newspaper Survey)," (MediaWatch, 1998).

60. CP, "Ontario Press Council Finds Few Newspaper Women in Top Jobs," *Calgary Herald*, 9 February 1978; Phyllis Wilson, "March of the Media Women," *Carleton Journalism Review* 1 (Spring 1977): 17–18; Eva Janssen, "Days and Nights on the Kid Shift," *Ryerson Review of Journalism* 9, 2 (June 1992): 4–7; Dona Harvey, "Women in the Newsroom: Re-shaping a Male-Dominated System," *content* (May/June 1989): 13–14; Janet Vlieg, "How Far Have Women Come in Journalism?" *media* 6, 1 (Spring 1999), 15–16, 24.

61. Robertson, *Gender, Journalism and Equity*, 95–136.

had also recalled in her anecdote about the abuse statistics story. Even Judy Creighton, CP's "family editor," sometimes had trouble persuading some of her male colleagues that women's issues were important.<sup>62</sup>

There was a tough culture at Canadian Press, especially during the 1980s, in the ways that managers and staff interacted, and the way Tasko adapted to it. At CP, "they hired men who were really male men," including one of her mentors, Jim Poling, Vice-President Editorial. At the same time, that was the period during which she did the best in terms of work assignments and promotions within CP Toronto, "but I also acted like a man. I knew what they liked," including decisiveness, one of her own qualities. She says that men and women are different, however, in how they display decisiveness. Men tend to make up their minds and assert their opinions about how to handle an issue quickly, whereas women want to hear all the pros and cons before they decide. "So, yes, I would say there was a mould for a successful CP executive and it wasn't necessarily somebody with traditional female traits." She said Poling had good instincts and she liked to think that he advanced good people "but he also promoted a certain type of person. And if you weren't that type of person and you want to get promoted, you pretended to be that type of person." She feels that she emphasized, or deemphasized, certain traits, depending on the person that she was working with at the time.

Like the other CP women, Tasko witnessed or encountered questionable behaviour in the newsroom over the years; for example, confirming the reputation of the man who liked to invite female staff members out to dinner. She said neither that particular man nor any of the other news managers ever sexually harassed her, but she did witness occasional, inappropriate comments or conduct from some male colleagues that made her uncomfortable. "But at least you knew where you stood with those guys. And if they said something to you, you could say 'oh, come on!' It was a public conversation you could have with them." She added, "I've been here for 30+ years. So obviously I did not find it too offensive a place to work, and if I had, I would've quit. I've never felt that. It's like family to me," adding that dealing with sexism is like having a difficult cousin who says idiotic things and whom you love anyway. Complicating the issue was the fact that CP actually hired and "promoted a lot of women," including herself, at least to a certain level and a few of the men she worked with over the years seemed to understand the importance of gender equality.<sup>63</sup>

One of them was Senior Editor Peter Buckley, one of her earlier mentors, "who did not fit that (macho) role and so was a really good guy to work for.... Peter was a long-time employee of CP and he worked in pretty well every bureau and all over the world ... a very articulate and thoughtful man and not at all what you think of when you think of a newsman of that era." He had a "stern and autocratic" air, which she attributes to shyness. "I mean, we were all afraid

62. Tasko, Greenaway, and Creighton, interviews with author.

63. Tasko, interview with author.

of him for the first ten years of our careers here – and then became friends.” In 1983, Buckley was in charge of revising the Canadian Press Stylebook, which, for the first time, included nonsexist guidelines for editors and reporters.<sup>64</sup> Tasko remembers that he was genuinely interested in equality issues, that he consulted the staff, including herself, and that he would chide any writer or editor who broke the rules by using sexist terms in their copy. By that time, she recalled, it was in CP’s interests to be more progressive, following the lead of several US newspapers as well as the Associated Press news agency, CP’s American affiliate, “because you wanted consistency throughout the wire.”<sup>65</sup> When she became Senior Supervising Editor in 1993, she was responsible for the CP Stylebook, which she continued to update.

There was a clear dissonance, however, between the news agency’s editorial guidelines on gender equality and its own management policies with regard to its staff. The women were expected to follow the same career trajectory as their male colleagues if they wanted to get ahead, Tasko recalled. Her own progress was delayed at first because the culture of CP at the time expected that those employees who wanted to become editorial managers were most likely to be the ones who had been willing to transfer, sometimes at short notice, to other CP bureaus to gain experience in different parts of the country. As she had married Greg Keenan, a newspaperman with irregular hours, she did not want to move out of Toronto, even though she was asked to do so several times. “When I first started progressing at CP it was really held against me that I wouldn’t move and lots of women did move, and sometimes at great personal sacrifice.” She noted that most of the senior men at CP never had to face that conundrum themselves because their wives either did not work outside the home or had jobs that were mobile. She was even less willing to move – in this case to the position of Halifax bureau chief – after she became pregnant with the first of her three children, around the same time the *Globe and Mail* hired her husband. She broke the news to CP’s president and chief executive officer, Keith Kincaid, with some trepidation. “I had to go in and see Keith at this point – I was as nervous as hell – and say that, ‘I just can’t do this’ and that I just found out I was pregnant. And I remember him saying to me, ‘Well, do you need to have the baby in Ontario?’” She explains that her extended family lived in the province and this was its first child in about 20 years. “I know he was pissed at me but to his credit he did not yell or scream or anything,” she added, a reference to the blunt, outspoken culture of CP at the time. Later, when she

64. *CP Stylebook: A Guide for Writers and Editors* (Toronto: The Canadian Press, 1983), “Sexism,” 237–238; Tasko, interview with author. Regarding Buckley’s previous career experience overseas, see Allen, *Making National News*, 214–215.

65. Tasko interview with author. Lewis Jordan, ed., *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage* (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1976), 224; Robert A. Webb, comp., ed., *The Washington Post Desk-Book On Style* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), 41–45; Howard Angione, ed., *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* (Dayton: Lorenz Press, 1977), 240; Tasko, interview with author.

was offered a post in Vancouver, she turned it down as well because it did not fit in with her husband's career goals. She recalls Kincaid telling her at that point, "You'll have a good career here, Patti, but you won't have a great career because you need to move, and you haven't been able to move."<sup>66</sup>

Kincaid remembered the essence of those conversations with Tasko and explained management's position at the time to the author. "There was no *requirement* that CP journalists move around before they were *considered* for promotion. It was just simply that *if* there was competition for a promotion, it would often go to a person who *had* moved around and thus might have broader qualifications," including wider knowledge of CP's member newspapers and broadcasters and of different regions of Canada. "This applied equally to men and women," he added. "Why would we promote the lesser qualified? To do otherwise, would it not be unfair to those who had made personal sacrifices?"<sup>67</sup>

Some other aspects of management policy were easier for married women with children. Management paid maternity leave for six weeks, which, Tasko recalled, was considered "pretty progressive" for the time. A pregnant employee could then apply for federal Unemployment Insurance, as it was then called, until it ran out after 25 weeks and she would return to work.<sup>68</sup> Since Tasko was working as a day editor with regular hours when her children were young, she was usually the first one to leave home for work, whereas her husband, who was a beat reporter, usually left later. That scheduling arrangement did not work when important news broke, however, and at any rate it did not cover all their childcare needs. After trying a daycare for a while, they hired a live-out nanny to accommodate their erratic schedules.

The mothers in the newsroom did not usually discuss their children at work, she said, especially early on. "We didn't have pictures of them. We didn't mention that they even existed," because they felt that people would complain if they had to leave the office to pick up their kids at daycare, or that they couldn't work late. That did not change until their younger male colleagues became fathers and started talking about their children's exploits. Still, even as late as 1997, when she became pregnant with her third child, "I certainly felt guilty about going on mat (maternity) leave." She quipped that she was so nervous about telling her immediate boss, Scott White, that she was going to have her third child, "you would've thought that he was the father." White was fine with the news, she says, but management did not find anyone to replace

66. Tasko, interview with author.

67. Emphases in the original. Keith Kincaid, email to the author, 9 December 2015.

68. Tasko, interview with author; CPD, CP Spring meetings, Toronto 1992, copy of human resources report from Norman Graham, manager of employee relations, Spring 1992, 1.

her while she was away, so that when she came back to the office, "I had about eight months of work to do."<sup>69</sup>

## Employment Equity at CP in the 1990s

CP MANAGEMENT'S EXPECTATIONS of its female editorial employees eventually came under the scrutiny of the federal government, perhaps because the news agency was slow to respond to the new rules under the 1986 Employment Equity Act. According to Kathy Viner, then of the Guild, when this law came into effect, CP's personnel management polled the staff, and adopted a general equity policy on its hiring and promotion practices, fast tracking promising newcomers, including women, into editorial management.<sup>70</sup> But, as Tasko attested, there were still internal barriers for women with children.

The 1990s saw the news agency go through a great deal of turmoil owing to a recession, increased corporate concentration of Canada's newspapers chains, the introduction of new technology and the resulting budget cuts, staff layoffs and union discontent.<sup>71</sup> By the mid-1990s, the median age of a CP employee was about 40 with roughly twelve years of experience, compared with earlier years when the news agency was regarded as a training ground for young journalists such as Reading and Greenaway.<sup>72</sup> Employment equity seemed to have ended up on the back burner while management struggled to keep the news agency alive, but this delay caused frustration among the female employees,

69. Tasko, interview with author.

70. Kathy Viner, the Guild's former staff person for CP-BN, email to the author, 12 May 2015. Kincaid, who was CEO then, did not remember the equity regulations being introduced. Kincaid, email to author, 9 December 2015.

71. "Hard Times Hit Canadian Press," *The Citizen* (Ottawa), 30 June 1990; Canadian Press, "Wire Service Employees Back Strike," *Globe and Mail*, 3 July 1991; Chris Cobb, "Bad News Squeezes Press Agency: Budget Freeze Signals Hard Times Ahead for Nation's Major News Co-operative," *The Citizen* (Ottawa), 18 November 1991; Shelley Brown, "CP Under Siege," *content*, (January/February 1992): 16–18; Bob Sutton and Mark Zvolinski, "Canadian Press Staff Votes 54% to Back Strike," *Toronto Star*, 19 October, 1993; Mark Palmer, "CP Rewired," *Ryerson Review of Journalism* 10, 2 (Summer 1993): 4–6.

72. CPD, CP Spring meetings, Toronto 1992, copy of human resources report by Norman Graham, manager of employee relations, Spring 1992, 1–2; copy of the 1993 Report of the Advisory Committee, 4–5; Spring Meetings, Toronto 1994, copy of the report from Jim Poling, Vice-President, Editorial, Spring 1994, 1–3, and from Norman Graham, manager of employee relations, "Human Resources," Spring 1994, 1–2; copy of Report of the 1995 News Study Committee, 1–6. See also Chris Cobb, "Canadian Press Plans to Cut \$7M, Reduce Service," *The Citizen* (Ottawa), 20 June 1996; Chris Cobb, "Canadian Press Scrambles to Survive: Southam, Hollinger Plan to Pull Out of News Co-op," *The Spectator* (Hamilton), 29 June 1996; Casey Mahood, "Black Favors Saving Canadian Press," *Globe and Mail*, 28 June 1996; Casey Mahood, "Canadian Press to Cut Back on News: More Editorial Employees than Expected Snap Up Buyout Offer," *Globe and Mail*, 26 October 1996; Casey Mahood, "CP Union Sues Over Pension Cuts," *Globe and Mail*, 10 January 1996; Canadian Press News Wire, "CP and Union Agreed to New Three-Year Contract," 11 June 1998, ProQuest document ID 359513833.

captured in a 1997 report written by Annita Newell for the Guild. Newell, who worked for CP in Toronto, accused management of all but ignoring the equity legislation since its inception.

She consulted a “random” and anonymous sampling of former and current women journalists at CP and BN across the country, and also questioned Jim Poling, Vice-President Editorial, the only person she quoted by name. Newell compared CP’s equity policies to those of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the public broadcaster. The CBC’s “Policy Statement on Employment Equity” included taking “appropriate corrective measures” if particular groups, including sexual minorities, were underrepresented, but that was not the case at CP. Its “Policy Statement on Employment Equity” said that the news agency provided for “equal opportunity of employment, regardless of race, sex, color, country of origin, citizenship, religion, marital status or handicap,” based on the professional merits of the individual. “We are committed to the principles of employment equity and will continue to ensure persons are hired and promoted based on demonstrated skills, abilities, qualifications and performance level.” The company vice-presidents were responsible for implementation while the VP for Human Resources was to monitor and evaluate it.<sup>73</sup>

Newell criticized CP’s policy as inadequate. “It’s a rudimentary, motherhood statement that fails to address the issue in any depth or set out any concrete goals for promoting equity,” she wrote, and summarized, in no uncertain terms, the complaints she heard from the former and current employees she had interviewed. “The women in the study have encountered problems ranging from sexual harassment and innuendo to management’s astonishing lack of understanding of family responsibilities. Their experiences paint a picture of rigid male dominance, dismissal of the importance of family and rejection of women’s management style.”<sup>74</sup>

At the time, women made up 28 per cent of CP’s editorial staff across the country. Of the 157 reporter-editors, 47 (30 per cent) were women but there were none in charge of editing on the main desks at the time, or working as technicians or photographers. There was only one woman covering sports. Four women out of fifteen employees (26 per cent) were promoted beyond the reporter-editor level. Of the eighteen people in senior editorial management positions, only one (Tasko) was a woman (5.5 per cent).<sup>75</sup> In comparison, female journalists working on newspapers in Canada were progressing at a

73. Newell, “Facing the Barriers,” Addendum Two, 16.

74. Newell, “Facing the Barriers,” 1.

75. Newell said that women made up 45 per cent of Canada’s workforce, many of them the sole wage earners in their families. She cited 1994 statistics, but not her source for them; the correct number may have been just over 50 per cent according to Statistics Canada. Newell, “Facing the Barriers,” 2–3; Statistics Canada, Table 282 – 0002, accessed 18 May 2016, <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=13>.

stronger rate, if somewhat unevenly,<sup>76</sup> while those in private and public television combined represented 37 per cent of editorial staff, partly due to Canada's broadcasting regulations regarding equity.<sup>77</sup>

CP did have an internal "Promotions" committee that was supposed to deal with equity among other considerations, but according to Newell, it was not a joint Guild-Company Equity Committee and therefore did not strictly comply with the Act to ensure that women and minorities were "hired, paid, treated and promoted in a fair and equitable manner."<sup>78</sup> Viner, who became the Guild's staff person handling employment issues at CP shortly after Newell completed her report, said the news agency had not consulted with the Guild up to that point. The management either appointed or asked staff members to join this "Promotions" committee, even though a number of them were not familiar with equity issues and would not have been the Guild's choice. She thought that some of the men were afraid that they would be discriminated against if they were not at the table.<sup>79</sup> Viner observed: "Rereading the files, I am reminded there was no hiring policy, jobs weren't always posted, and there were no 'real' job descriptions in place, yet it wasn't clearly understood that this created barriers. And there was *no* training budget of any kind so those promoted to management often lacked the skills to be effective managers."<sup>80</sup>

The first problem, according to Newell's report, was systemic sexism. There were still strong remnants of the "old boys' network" in CP's newsroom culture that had to be overcome; for example, while "much of the overt sexism has gone," women were still excluded on certain social occasions, "from the annual weekend at the boss's cottage to celebratory staff trips to strip clubs." Such informal get-togethers gave managers the opportunity to bond and to size up the younger men that they wanted to develop and promote, and the

76. Robinson surveyed Canadian newspapers by circulation: small (less than 50,000 readers), medium (50,000–100,000 readers), and large (100,000+ readers). In 1975, women made up only three to four per cent of the top management positions across the board. By 1995, 28 per cent of the journalists in middle management positions, such as day and night editor, and one third of the assistant managing editors, were women. The small circulation dailies offered women the best opportunities for promotion. There they made up 41 per cent of all assistant managing editors as compared with 21 per cent in medium circulation newspapers and 8 per cent in the metropolitan dailies. Only 12 per cent of the editors-in-chief were women, very little change on average from 11 per cent in 1975, except for the large metropolitan dailies where, in 1995, they made up 22 per cent of the editors-in-chief compared to 8 per cent on small circulation dailies and 10 per cent on medium circulation ones. Robinson, *Gender, Journalism and Equity*, 44–45.

77. Robinson does not include women in radio. Robinson, *Gender, Journalism and Equity*, 53–65.

78. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 12.

79. Viner, email to the author, 12 May 2015.

80. Viner's emphasis. Viner, email to the author, 12 May 2015.



relative newcomers the chance to impress them. Some women also reported hearing sexist jokes and other repartee at their expense, even from managers.<sup>81</sup>

Ageism was an inherent problem for both sexes at CP, as management favoured people in their thirties for promotions, rather than more mature veterans, a preference that, Newell's report said, "affects women far more because their childbearing years coincide with the years when they should be climbing the ladder. As a result, many women face the choice of having a family or advancing at work."<sup>82</sup> For those who decided to have children, the biggest problem was getting access to daycare during irregular working hours, as the CP-BN newsrooms ran seven days a week, 24 hours a day, a problem also experienced by women at the daily newspapers.<sup>83</sup> The contract the Guild and the company ratified in 1996 included a letter of understanding accepting part-time hours but women reported to Newell that some managers belittled them for asking for part-time or flexible shift work even after the agreement was signed.<sup>84</sup> The solution, Newell's report suggested, was "creative time management. But it must also have the full understanding and commitment of the employer and the parent's colleagues to succeed."<sup>85</sup>

The third barrier cited in her report was management's long-time emphasis on mobility. It quoted Jim Poling as asking, "Do you want a president, or VP, or vice president of editorial to be someone who started in Toronto and never moved anywhere else?" While a number of the women who took part in her survey agreed with him in principle that first-hand knowledge of different regions of the country was important for a CP editorial manager, "many say a rigid insistence on mobility remains a deciding factor ... regardless of other qualifications." Her report also noted that there were signs that CP was putting less emphasis on mobility and that it might not be realistic to expect it when staff members, their working spouses and their young families might be uprooted several times at great expense. Poling suggested shorter-term moves for a few weeks to a few months instead, adding that management could devote some funding to that project.<sup>86</sup>

The next barrier the report cited was management style, pitting male aggressiveness against consensus, which the women tended to favor. The report quoted Poling as saying, "My style is straight-ahead and aggressive. A lot of women I can relate to are more straight-ahead and aggressive," a statement

81. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 4–11.

82. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 5.

83. Emphasis in the original. A CP-BN Employee, "Child Care and Shift Work – A Mother's Perspective," in Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 18–19. Some newspapers were more progressive than others. See Janssen, "Days and Nights on the Kid Shift."

84. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 10–11.

85. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 11.

86. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 6.

that underscores Tasko's attempts to fit such expectations. He conceded that perhaps there was a way of combining the two approaches to leadership.<sup>87</sup>

In her recommendations, Newell asked CP to reevaluate its criteria for hiring and promotion and to state "clear and objective criteria, and do it in writing, and before proceeding to look for the best candidates in a realistic and up-to-date manner." She said management should look further than its member newspapers, journalism schools and other client companies when seeking candidates and not to judge them entirely on their willingness to move around the country or their malleability.<sup>88</sup> As for family responsibilities, she suggested on-site daycare which, she argued was not necessarily all that expensive and would be much easier on employees who were parents,<sup>89</sup> as witnessed by journalists at the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*, which had daycare centres in their buildings.<sup>90</sup> She also recommended a female advisory team "until there are enough of them in management to make mentoring as natural for women as it is now for men." Finally, her report stated that "gender sensitivity training is needed because the underlying sexist attitudes are so ingrained that men see them as harmless, or worse, don't even see them." She noted that a number of companies were offering it, "knowing that a fully utilized workforce is a competitive advantage."<sup>91</sup>

In 1997, the same year Newell wrote her report, the federal Human Rights Commission audited the news agency for compliance to federal equity policies, followed by an interim report and then a final one.<sup>92</sup> The Commission noted some progress at CP in its interim report, but roundly criticized its failure to be proactive in hiring visible minorities. It did not accept CP's argument that immigrants did not have the "family support" for journalism careers – because of mistrust of the media that originated in political circumstances in their countries of origin – or did not have the necessary language skills to operate effectively in a Canadian newsroom.<sup>93</sup> Viner said, "A real joint committee was set up during this time and a real Plan was written (with Guild input) in 1999."<sup>94</sup> It fell to Paul Woods, CP's Manager of Employee Relations, to deal with the issue. Woods was very supportive, Viner recalled, because he recognized that

87. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 7.

88. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 12.

89. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 13.

90. Janssen, "Days and Nights on the Kid Shift."

91. Newell, "Facing the Barriers," 14.

92. Viner, email to the author, 12 May 2015.

93. Graham Fraser, "Canadian Press Bosses Biased: Report Progress Noted, but Firm Falls Down on Hiring Minorities, Rights Body Says," *Globe and Mail*, 15 September 1999.

94. Viner, email to the author, 12 May 2015.

there were some serious problems.<sup>95</sup> In the year 2000, the company's Equity Plan, approved by the Human Rights Commission, instructed management to look for qualified candidates, including recent journalism school graduates, "from the designated equity groups," for entry-level positions to join its 310 full-time and 73 part-time/contract employees.<sup>96</sup> During this period, Viner said, three women were appointed as bureau chiefs, a management position, while Kincaid recalls that there were four women in that position when he retired in 1996.<sup>97</sup>

Regarding gender and family issues, the joint union-management equity committee report noted a number of improvements. CP no longer considered a journalist's willingness to move around the country as important as it used to be when viewing candidates for promotions. It was trying to retain employees who had family or other responsibilities through a number of measures: parental leave of one year, the option of working part time temporarily while retaining full time seniority, consideration of job sharing possibilities, allowing leaves of absence without pay, giving staff who worked overtime extra time off in lieu of more pay, and supporting those with health issues. Management also posted anti-harassment policies around the CP offices. The equity committee's

95. Viner's comments, telephone conversation with the author, 12 May 2015.

96. For reasons of consistency, I will use CP's designations. In its narrative Diversity Report for the year 2000, posted on the careers section of its website, CP said it had gained eight female employees and one male, but did not state if they were all journalists or if any were visible minorities. Of the five journalists and one clerical worker transferred from part-time to full-time positions, "one was a member of a visible minority and two were females" and several visible minority employees (no sex mentioned) were hired on a part-time or contract basis. Of the twelve employees promoted that year, nine were women and one was a member of a visible minority. Two-thirds of those promoted were journalists, but the narrative report did not provide a further demographic breakdown. Canadian Press Diversity Report, 2000, accessed 12 May 2015, <https://www.thecanadianpress.com/careers.aspx?id=106>. The annual diversity reports have since been taken down from the company website but the author has retained a copy. According to its company-wide statistics filed with the Canadian government for the year 2000, CP had no female senior managers and, among the eight males, there was one member of a visible minority. Among the 40 middle managers, fifteen were female, one person of each sex was a member of a visible minority and two males were persons with disabilities. Among the 277 full-time journalists, 58 were female, including one Aboriginal, two persons with disabilities, and six members of visible minorities. Four of the males were also members of visible minorities. There were 34 part-time/contract journalists, fourteen of them female, including one Aboriginal and two members of visible minorities. One of the men was also a member of a visible minority. Half of the females, including the Aboriginal woman, and both the female and male members of visible minorities, earned less than \$5,000 a year from CP. Accessed 21 April 2016, <https://equity.esdc.gc.ca/sgiemt-weims/pub/f.4rm1@-eng.jsp?cal=1997&eid=317&cal=2000&id=1>.

97. Viner, email to the author, 12 May 2015; Kincaid, email to the author, 9 December 2015. In 1990, the female bureau chief on Parliament Hill, quit her post after a falling out with the journalists there over standards, staffing, and financial resources. Kelly Egan, "Casualty of a Newsroom War," *The Citizen* (Ottawa), 17 November 1990, accessed 21 April 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/239500549?accountid=9894>.

report said that attaining equality, for both women and minorities, was still "a work in progress that will be constantly monitored and changed as necessary to ensure the company is meeting the goals of the (Federal Equity) Act." It added a rider, however: "How fast the company makes progress will depend on a number of factors including staff turnover and, especially, the company's future as a provider of news. CP has gone through tremendous change in the past five years and continues to evolve and develop new services in an ever-shifting economic environment."<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion

THIS STUDY DEMONSTRATES that the mentoring relationships between female employees and their male mentors at the Canadian Press news agency were quite complex, restricted and changed over time, mostly to the advantage of the women, but not always, especially if they had children. These dynamics are examined in the context of CP's position within the news industry, its management strategies, its white collar workforce, and its gendered journalism culture. Taken together, the evidence paints a picture of a newsroom management that slowly encouraged the upward mobility of its female staff, as long as they conformed to masculine expectations. Unionization in the 1970s, CP's obligations under federal equity regulations during the 1980s and feminist pressure from inside and outside the industry helped improve the position of the female journalists at CP-BN, but not for women with children, especially those who aspired to senior management, and did not result in appreciable newsroom diversity. While certain male mentors were more progressive than others, they were operating within a newsroom atmosphere that became more accommodating over the years but still retained its blind spots.

The oral history component of this article highlights the positioning of women journalists within that newsroom culture as they remember experiencing it. In their personal narratives, they recalled both outright and muted sexism in the way they were treated, while still receiving male encouragement for their ambitions as long as they met gender-based professional expectations. Much depended on where the women worked – for example, Edmonton, Toronto, or Ottawa – and on the men who were in charge of each newsroom. Each woman adapted certain coping strategies to try to get around the limitations placed in her way, such as playing at being one of the boys, confronting or dodging sexist behaviour, including sexual harassment, and adapting to a masculine leadership style.

The situation improved noticeably as more women came into the bureaus and proved their worth, but the glass ceiling stalled again even into the 1990s for married women, especially those with children, who were unwilling or unable to follow the same career trajectory as men. It took the combined muscle of

98. Canadian Press Diversity Report, 2000.

the female employees, the Guild, the federal Human Rights Commission and a more enlightened management to bring about strengthened employment equity policies at *CP*, almost fifteen years after the Act first came into force, and over 30 years after women started entering Canadian newsrooms as a cohort that was intent on equal opportunities with their male colleagues.