



Trouble on the Line

Film Summary: A Historical look at female telephone operators in British Columbia and some of their early activism with specific reference to the first strike in the Canadian telephone industry.

Curriculum Application

Social Studies 10

Social Studies 11

(as a prelude to women's role in the 20th century work force)

The Essential Question:

What role did the women operators play in the success of the 1902 Telephone strike?

Summary of the Lesson Activities

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option (15 minutes)
2. Reading exercise of supplementary materials (Lesson Activity 1 and Lesson Activity 2)
3. Activity questions that go with the supplementary materials that are suitable for either individual or group approaches
4. Extended activities that go with the supplementary materials that are suitable for either individual or group approaches

Learning Objectives

1. To demonstrate a basic knowledge of the lives of working people in the telephone industry, their working conditions and the efforts they made to improve them through the union movement.
2. To demonstrate an understanding of the impact that the introduction of the telephone had on both economic and social life of British Columbia in late 19th and early 20th century.
3. To demonstrate an understanding of the role that women played in the early unionization of the telephone industry.

Materials and Resources Provided

- [Trouble on the Line-Working People: A History of Labour in British Columbia](#)
- A class set of “History and Chronology Leading to the 1902 Strikes of the Telephone Workers” (*Lesson Activity 1*)
- A class set of “A Glimpse Into The Life of Mary McIntyre” (*Lesson Activity 2*)
- Appendix 1 Key Teaching Points
- Extension Activity 1 Further Studies

Additional Suggested Materials

- [The Labour Movement in British Columbia 1840-1914](#)
- [Labour Heritage Centre- Revolution in a Wire](#)

Vignette Questions

1. Why were women hired instead of men to be telephone operators?
2. What benefits did women receive in becoming operators? What were some of the restrictions faced women in entering the labour market? (consider: restrictions related to types of jobs, rates of pay, age, and marital status)
3. Why didn't the unionized linesmen working for the New Westminster and Burrard Telephone Company want to represent women operators?
4. Discuss the reasons as to why the women operators were so important to the success of the strike.
5. Why were jobs of linesmen and operator so important in the early telephone system?
6. Suggest some possible reasons as to why the company was prepared to settle the strike so quickly by conceding to the demands of the workers.

Lesson Activities

1. This lesson is designed to be taught in conjunction with a Grade 10 unit on the development of BC and its history in the late Victorian period. Previous teaching on this subject is advised. The lesson may also be used as an introduction to the changing roles of women in the early 20th century as part of the Social Studies 11 curriculum.
2. Handout Lesson Activity 1 History and Chronology Leading to the 1902 Strikes of the Telephone Workers. Have the students read the first page and provide the vignette questions before showing the vignette.
3. Following the viewing of the vignette, students can review individually or in small groups the remainder of the notes in Lesson Activity 1 that detail the events and outcomes of the strike.
4. Appendix 1 provides a list of suggested responses and teaching points on the key questions of the activity.
5. Extension Activity 1: Provides for further Studies related to the Telephone Workers Strike.
6. For additional activities on the topic proceed to Lesson Activity 2- A Glimpse into the Life of Mary McIntyre—A Member of the Telephone Operators Auxiliary.

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Al Cornes

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Lesson Activity # 1

Trouble on the Line

History and Chronology Leading to the 1902 Strikes of the Telephone Workers.

Brief History of the Telephone and Its Introduction to British Columbia

1875- Alexander Graham Bell successfully transmitted sounds over what was to become the telephone. One-to-one telephone systems did not require switchboards, multi-users did.

1878- The first telephones were installed in British Columbia on Vancouver Island. Small companies appeared within a short span of time across the province. Where feasible, the telephone companies used the existing telegraph poles and wires

1880—Victoria and Esquimalt Telephone Company was formed, acting as an agent for Bell Telephone of Canada

1881- In British Columbia boys were often the first operators. In addition to working the switchboard, they swept the floor and collected the fees from the customers. Shortages in collections were taken out of their meagre wages of \$10 per month

Establishment of New Westminister and Burrard Telephone Company

1883-- Telephone service was established between Port Moody (the western terminus of the just completed Canadian Pacific Railway-CPR) and New Westminister.

1886—Telephone service was moved to Tilley's book store at 11 Cordova Street in Vancouver when the CPR moved its western terminus from Port Moody to Vancouver. The company was renamed New Westminister and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company (it was previously named the Port Moody and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company)

1886 - Dr. Lefevre, a surgeon with the Canadian Pacific Railroad, purchased shares in the telephone company, joined the Board of Directors, and became actively involved in the day to day management

1888-1890- women started working as operators, they were more polite than boys and could be paid the same wages as the boys

Unionization of Telephone Workers at the New Westminister and Burrard Telephone Company

1901—lineworkers working for New Westminister and Burrard unionized as Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Linesmen constructed the physical plant of the telephone network, set the poles, strung the wire, installed the switch board and kept everything in working order. Wire work was hard, dangerous and involved long hours. The proliferation of poles and electric wires across each city created a major safety problem for the linesmen....there were few regulations requiring the separation of telephone lines from "hot" wires. On more than one occasion sagging telephone wires touched a hot wire and electrocuted a man working on a connecting line miles away.

Fall 1902--- In the fall of 1902, the women operators at New Westminister and Burrard Telephone Company joined Local 213 as a women's auxiliary. The women's group operated as a sub-local which was independent of the men.

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Telephone Strikes of 1902

September 1902—A dozen linesmen objected when management instituted a new operating procedure and insisted that the men provide their own tools.

September 16, 1902—the linesmen walked off the job. The company attempted to blacklist the workers, discouraging other companies from hiring the strikers. The strike continued until the company agreed to the workers' demands. A summary of the resolution is provided below. The resolution of the strike was as follows:

- a. **Union Recognition** of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers;
- b. Reinstatement of the striking workers;
- c. A promise of **no discrimination** (meaning that the company would not discriminate against them as a result of initiating and participating in a strike);
- d. A promise to furnish all tools except those electrical workers customarily owned themselves;
- e. Notification to other companies that the dispute had been settled;

Soon after the settlement, there was a major misunderstanding over what **recognition of the union** meant. The union was of the view that "**recognition** meant that the union had the right to bargaining with the company in the name of its members.

The company disagreed, saying that it meant nothing more than the company recognized that a large number of its employees were members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

The first strike set the stage for further bargaining between the company and the two groups of workers: the linesmen and the operators. Over the fall of 1902, both the linesmen and the telephone operators formulated their bargaining demands.

Operator Demands

- The operator demands were: a wage increase of \$2.50 per month, sick leave with pay (operators had to pay the wages of their replacement if they were ill) and an end to the company's use of unpaid trainees.

Linesmen Demands

- Wage parity with linesmen in Seattle. (The Seattle linesmen had just won the 8 hour day with a new wage rate of \$3.25 per day)

November 25, 1902- union demands were submitted to the company

November 26, 1902- The Superintendent of the company (Kent) responded by saying they would have to await return of the key owners, William Farrell and Dr. Lefevre.

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November 26, 1902 (later in the day) - both the linesmen and operators commenced a full scale strike at the Vancouver operations of the company. The switching technology meant that the operators' strike paralyzed the city's telephone network. Almost all subscribers had to contact the central offices' switchboard to be connected by an operator.

The linesmen's strike a few months earlier had not disrupted telephone service. However, the operators' strike paralyzed city telephone service and became an immediate and pressing public issue.

Company Response To The Strike - Superintendent Kent accused the union of making impossible demands with almost no notice of strike while the key directors were out of town. He further accused the union of forcing the women out on strike. This infuriated the union who felt the company was trying to deny them the recognition they had won in September.

November 28, 1902- operators in New Westminster went on strike, shutting down the New Westminster switchboard. A few days later linesmen in Victoria, members of Local 230, struck the Victoria and Esquimalt Telephone Company in support of their fellow union members in Vancouver.

November 28-30, 1902—a group of Vancouver businessmen proposed that they would take control of the company thus permitting the resumption of telephone service until the return of the company directors. The union accepted the scheme but the company refused to agree. Public opinion, which had been sympathetic to the operators, swung solidly in favour of the union.

November 29, 1902—The company places ads in the local paper recruiting strike-breakers to work as operators.

December 1, 1902- The business community publically laid the blame on the company in a letter that was published on the front page of the Daily Province.

December 1-3, 1902- Heavy rainstorms tangled wires and knocked down wires in most of the outlying areas, leaving only the downtown business centre telephone system still working. Although the company managed to recruit a few strikebreakers as linemen, the system continued to deteriorate throughout the strike.

Early December, 1902—The company and the union attempt to reach an agreement. The two outstanding issues were union recognition and the fate of the strikebreakers. In the end, the union got closed shop and the strikebreakers who wanted to stay had to take out membership in the union.

December 12, 1902- The seventeen (17) day strike is resolved.

December 15, 1902—The contract is signed

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Results of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 213, 1902 Strikes

Strike #1 September 1902 Strike-- Linemen Walked Off The Job After New Westminster and Burrard Insisted That The Men Provide Their Own Tools (Operators Were Not On Strike During This Period)

Issue In Dispute	Results/Resolution of Dispute
1. 1.Requirement That Workers Provide Their Own Tools	1. A promise to furnish all tools except those electrical workers customarily owned themselves;
2. 2. The promise that all strikers workers would be reinstated(workers had no job security or protections from taking strike action and could be dismissed by company or not rehired for projects)	2. Reinstatement of the striking workers
3. 3. Fear of discrimination as a result of striking	3. A promise of no discrimination for taking strike action
4. 4. The company would not recognize the IBEW as having any legal status/would not represent them as the sole bargaining agent of the workers	4. The company recognized the IBEW
5. No clear negotiating process – Union proposed that an agreement that an Arbitration Board be established to settle disputes in the future.	5. The proposal was set aside for consideration in the future

Strike #2—November 26, 1902 – Operators and Linemen Walk off the Job – The strike last approximately 2 ½ weeks – (Contract Signed December 15, 1902)

RESULTS FOR OPERATORS

Issue	Terms and Conditions Before The Strike	Final Result: Terms and Conditions in the New December 15, 1902 Contract
Union Membership	Employees not required to be members of the union Non-union employees could be hired to undermine the union	All employees are in the union both operators and linesmen Non-union members could not be hired to undermine the union Union recognition was confirmed
Wages	\$15 per month/	An immediate increase of \$2.50 per month given to every operator who had been six months of her present salary. Scheduled increases every six months until the top limit was reached. (\$30 per month after two years , June 1904) Assistant Chief Operators and Long Distance Operators: \$32.50 per month in the first year and \$35.00 per month thereafter

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Trainees	Trainees could be required to work for up long periods without pay	Trainees could be placed on probation for no longer than 10 days then they started at the \$20 rate
Sick Leave	Operators were required to pay the wages of the person who replaced them in the event of an illness	3 days sick leave per month with pay
Hours	Not clear from the research. It was likely an 9 hour day with a 6 day work week (54 hours)	Eight hour work day with an approximate 47.3 hour work week (1 in 6 Saturdays is a holiday), although the company reserved the right to request that they work Sundays
Rotating Saturday Afternoon	Operators were supposed to have one Saturday afternoon in six as a holiday, but the company rarely gave them this half-day because of the constant shortage of operators	The rotating Saturday afternoon for operators was retained with a promise by the company to hire enough staff to allow the operators the time off. This meant that the operators had one Saturday afternoon in six as a holiday

RESULTS FOR LINEMEN

Issue	Terms and Conditions Before The Strike	Final Result: Terms and Conditions in the New December 15, 1902 Contract
Union Membership	Employees not required to be members of the union Non-union employees could be hired to undermine the union	The union won a closed shop. All employees were in the union, operators and linemen Non-union employees could not be hired to undermine the union. Union recognition was confirmed.
Scope of membership and contract coverage/ Exempt staff	Not specified	The contract applied to "all electrical workers", including the operators and exempted only the chief inspector, the general foreman, the chief day and night operators and the very small office staff
Max Hours Wage rate	9 hours per day ov \$3.00 per day/ \$0.33 per hour	8 hours per day \$3.20 per day for journeymen/\$0.40 per hour (Same hours as Seattle but \$0.05 per day less)
Ratio of apprentices	No ratio established which meant the company could use cheaper apprentice labour to replace journey men	A ratio of one apprentice to every two repairmen was written into the contract along with the stipulation that apprentices could not install telephones
Fear of Discrimination against strikers	Open to employer to discriminate against employees who supported the strike	No discrimination against strikers

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Process for Dealing with grievances and complaints	No process	Company recognition to a union appointed grievances committee
Duration of contract	No set term	1 year
Renewal of Contract after term	No provision	Automatic renewal unless one month's notice given

Conclusions

The telephone had become an important service for Vancouver business by 1902. At that point there were over 1,000 telephones in the community, many of them rented to business.

The union achieved great success given the challenges of the time. The wage rates for operators jumped ahead of those in other parts of Canada such that the Vancouver workers' starting rate in 1903 was \$2 per month more than the starting rate at the commencement of the Bell operators' strike in February 1907. In Vancouver, the maximum rates in 1903 were \$30 per month after two years, while in Toronto those same rates were \$25 per month after three years.

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Lesson Activity #2

A Glimpse into the Life of Mary McIntyre— A Member of the Telephone Operators Auxiliary



Professional Dress Is A Must At All Times. It forms part of the discipline of a well run telephone exchange. Library of Congress -USZ62-11823

Written By Mary McIntyre-- March 1903 in the City of Vancouver, British Columbia

Introduction

In the late fall of 1902, both the telephone operators and the linesmen in Vancouver launched the first strike in the Canadian telephone industry. This is a glimpse into the life of one of the women in that dispute.

Personal Details

My name is Miss M. McIntyre and I am a 21 years old telephone operator at the Vancouver telephone exchange of the New Westminster and Burrard Telephone Company (NWBTC) whose offices are located at 603 West Hastings Street.

I live with my parents in the Fairview District of Vancouver at 677 West 7th Avenue near Heather Street.

My dad, Mr. James McIntyre, is a carpenter and my brother, Mr. Tom McIntyre, is a **linesman** who works for NWBTC.

Outside of my work as an operator, my church activities, and my social life, I serve on the executive of the Telephone Operators.

Getting Ready for Work

As you can see from the photograph of the three women below, my work wear is business attire but not too formal. I have several full length skirts that are wool broadcloth and trimmed on the front and sides as well as around the bottom. The skirts mostly have a flounced look and are lined throughout.

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For a top, I wear sleeved high-necked blouses or waists to go with the skirts. Two of my blouses have mutton-chop sleeves. One of them has a bodice ruffle across the top.

The loose-sleeved blouses allow greater movement for operating the switchboard. All of the blouses I have are white.

I have two pairs of shoes for work use. Both pairs are medium in height and are narrow with pointed toes.



"Operators Ready For Work"/source: Pinterest:
<http://www.pinterest.com/creativecostume/1906-shirtwaist/>

I have a pair of waterproof boots for winter. I also have a suit that I wear to church and another dress that is reserved strictly for special occasions.

My mother, a skilled seamstress, makes most of my skirts, blouses and jackets using her new Singer

Sewing machine. It is a treadle model that you power with your feet. She is both talented and fast.

Mother makes most of the most of the clothes for the family with the exception of shoes and some undergarments



"Mother Using Her New Single Treadle Sewing Machine. Library of Congress-USZ62-53209.

Clothes off the rack are very expensive as are the items that you order from Eaton's catalogue. For example a skirt, similar to the ones she makes is \$7.50 (1/3 of my monthly wage) in the catalogue but she can make it for less than \$2.50.

She just made me a new all wool double breasted jacket which will be great for work.

Our dry goods, including fabric, thread and ribbon come from Woodward's store which has a dry goods department at its Westminster Avenue (Main Street) location. For some things we will use the mail order services of the T. Eaton Company in Toronto. Ordered items take about three weeks by mail.

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Lucky, my guard dog who doesn't guard

Getting to Work From Fairview to Downtown

Getting to work involves walking from my house to 9th Avenue (Broadway) and then catching

public transportation to West Hastings Street.

After four years of working downtown, Lucky, my Scottish terrier, still doesn't seem to realize that his job is to stay at home and stand guard at house and my job is to get to work on time. Despite my protests, he invariably follows me for at least part of the distance and turns around only after I yell at him several times!

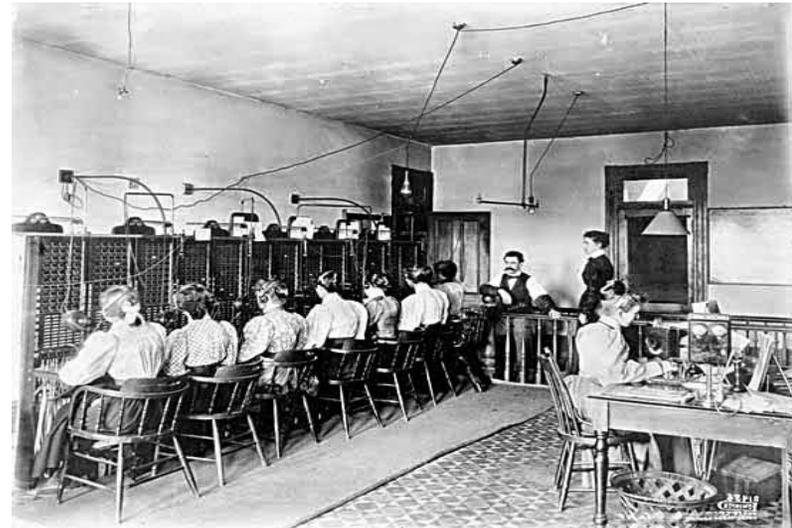
This effort usually adds an extra five to ten minutes to my time, which usually leaves me rushing to work.

My Work as an Operator

I have worked at the telephone exchange since 1898. I started when I was seventeen. You can see me and the other "**hello girls**" in the next picture. I am the one at the far end to the left with my back to the camera. I am a proud member of Telephone Operators Auxiliary which is part of **local 213** of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Our **exchange** office was opened here in 1886 after our company was forced to move its operations from Port Moody when the Canadian Pacific Railway moved its **terminus** to Vancouver.

The telephone service was moved to Tilley's bookstore on Hastings Street, which managed to escape the **great fire** of 1886 through good fortune. Mr. Tilley's son, Charlie, a young teen, ran the exchange along with a teenaged friend, J.H. King. The two of them were responsible for ensuring the system ran on a 24 hour basis.



Vancouver Exchange of the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company, 1898. Studio: Dominion Photo Co. Vancouver Public Library 23795

Charlie slept in the telephone office with a bell near his bed to so that he wouldn't miss any calls. As there were only 100 telephones in Vancouver at the time, Charlie did manage to get a fair amount of sleep from what I have read.

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Everything is different now. There have been some big changes since those early days. When I started working in 1898, fifteen years after the start of the company, our first long distance telephone was installed at the Province newspaper offices. Also that same year, the first pay phone was installed at English Bay, the most popular public beach in the city.

A new friend of Dad's, Mr. Walter Nichols, says that Dr. James Lefevre and a British investor now own BC Telephone which, in turn, has controlling shares in our company as well as telephone companies in Victoria, Vernon, Nelson, Kootenay Lake, and Nanaimo. They have controlling shares of Canadian Western Telephone and Telegraph. There is talk that the individual companies will soon become one large organization, likely the BC Telephone Company.

Mr. Nichols ought to know, he is the editor of the Daily Province newspaper.

All the workers joined the union by the fall of 1902, because the working conditions were poor. As operators, we were earning \$15 per month, we had to pay for the replacement if we were sick, and we were required to work six days per week despite promises that that we would have alternative Saturdays off. There were no provisions for overtime; you simply stayed at work until the job was finished. To top it off, the company employed unpaid trainees for long periods of time.

The linesmen were concerned about the length day, given the strenuous nature of the work.

Prior to the start of the strike, they were working for 9 hours per day at a pay rate of \$3.00 per day (or \$0.33 per hour). The use of apprentices was not regulated, which meant that the company could use cheaper apprentice labour to replace journey men anytime they wanted.

As of 1901, Vancouver has more than 29,000 residents and over 1,000 telephones. That is one telephone for every 29 people! We now have over 37 operators who work for the company in both Vancouver and New Westminster.

Most of the operators I work with are young single women between ages 17 and 25.

The company has a policy that they do not employ married women. Still, most of the girls are anxious to get married and have a family before they become too old and people start calling them a **spinster** or an old maid—a fate worse than death!

In order to keep their jobs some girls go off elsewhere to get married in the hopes that no one will find out. It doesn't usually take long before someone tells our boss and they are ushered out the door.

Limited Options for Women

While I have my complaints, I am happy to have this job. Even if you are not married there are few respectable sources of employment for women. Other jobs open to women include **domestic service**, day care, dressmaking, working in factories, teaching, and nursing.

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I would need more education if I wanted to go into teaching and nursing and I am not sure that I want to spend more time going to school. I attended Vancouver High School at Oak and West 12th for four years and decided it was time to find work.

I didn't want factory work because the work is dirty, the pay is very poor and the work is hard. Elizabeth, one of my school friends who lives just down the street, works in a clothing factory and she says that her girls have just organized the first union of women workers, a local of the Shirt, Waist and Laundry Workers International Union.

Elizabeth and her co-workers concluded that unionization is necessary because the **sweatshops** are a tough way to survive. She told me one local clothing manufacturer employed a woman hatmaker without pay for one year and then offered her \$1.00 per week while the men were making \$10 to \$15 per week and other women were making \$2.00 per week.

Benefits of Being an Operator

Compared to most other jobs, telephone work is clean, interesting and carries a lot of prestige with it. We even have visitors come to the exchange to marvel and watch us as we talked to customers who are many miles away from our Hastings Street location. It seems like a miracle compared to the telegraph and the work is exciting at times. Your voice is heard over the line, it is much more personal and more people get to use the system at once, compared to the telegraph.

As a result of our strike in November and December of 1902, the telephone workers, both operators and linesmen, have their first written contract and it has now been implemented.

My new salary is now \$20 per month not \$15. In two years time, it will be \$30 per month.

In addition to the new pay increase, the length of our work week has now been reduced and we now have three paid sick leave days per month.

Under the new contract, the company can no longer employ unpaid trainees for more than 10 days. After that they must employ them on a paid basis starting at \$20 per week. All of the employees, with the exception of managers must be in the union.

Despite the new contract, there are still some significant issues that my co-workers would like to fix in our next round of negotiations.

Aside from long hours on the switchboard, our complaint list includes: the requirement to wear the **head telephones** at all times, too few breaks, too much sitting with little chance to stretch or move around, upper body and neck stiffness, writers' cramps in the hands as a result of constantly inserting and removing cables, and unexpected high pitched sounds that we hear through our head telephones. In the long run, we think that these sounds could prove harmful to our hearing.

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<http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2012/06/30/archives/then-and-now/operators-heard-1907.html/attachment/3phoneat500>

In addition, we are required to take all the responsibility for electric shocks that we receive from the switchboard. Like the linesmen, we have concerns about whether or not we can be electrocuted while operating the board.

We also have to memorize the position of hundreds of telephone numbers on the board directly in front of us which leaves us with headaches and stress.

While the company is small right now, we can see that the telephone work is becoming more regulated. Individual operators are having less say in the planning and conduct of our work.

We have learned that the manager in Victoria is forcing new operators to sign a copy of the Central Office Regulations when they are hired. We don't have a copy of them yet, but we have heard they include such things as the requirement to remain at work as long as necessary and sit at their work station with their head telephones at all times. The list goes on. These regulations sound more like the army than working for a company.

Given that there is one supervisor for every three or four workers, we could face a lot of direct harassment from our management if these new work rules are introduced.

Our chief operator says that she doesn't listen in our calls but she does hear all of our side of the conversation. She is there to make sure that we handle each call correctly and in accordance with company procedures.

We are expected to use only the language approved by the company. Numbers can only be read one way. (The number 2000 could only be spoken as "two oh, double-oh." 4001 was "four, double-oh, one.")

The company also directed us to give the time in "railroad style": not "twelve minutes to nine" but "eight forty-eight." The rest of our speech is limited to a handful of approved expressions, including:

"Number?", "They don't answer."

"Line busy."

"Line out of order."

"I have no such number; please refer to your directory."

"Telephone has been taken out."

"I will give you Information."

"I will give you the Chief Operator."

Lastly, an operator has to be fast.

Central is expected to take care of six or seven customers a minute. During our busiest periods rush hour we can be expected to supply dozens and dozens of connections in a 60 minute period.

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My Brother Tom

As for **linemen**, my brother Tom is lucky because he is on the permanent staff at the telephone company. Many of the linesmen are only temporary and are called in when there are specific projects underway.

The **linemen** have a difficult and dangerous job that involves constructing the physical plant, setting the poles, and stringing the wire. Serious falls and electrocutions are all-too-frequent an occurrence.

Just to be safe, Tom has had his will and testament drawn up and **notarized** and he has taken out a life insurance policy to look after his family in the event of his death at work.

Tom has mixed views about the women being part of his union. He is appreciative of support that the operators gave the **linemen** during the dispute last year but he doesn't agree that the two groups should be bargaining together as the operators have much lower wages than the linesmen and he is concerned that this might have a negative impact his wage negotiations when they are bargained together. As well the women outnumber the men in Local 213 and Tom thinks that the married men have more of a stake in the outcome of negotiations than the single women.

Tom and I often discuss the role of women. I think that they should be allowed to work when they are married. He disagrees. I think that women should have the right to vote. He disagrees. Only three years ago (1899), a bill was introduced into the BC legislature to extend provincial

voting rights to women. It was narrowly defeated in a vote of 15 (yes) to 17 (no). I hear that here are at least five US states that have given women the right to vote!

Why not here?

My Boyfriend

I have a young suitor who usually takes me out on Saturday night. His name is Mr. Ian Stewart. I know him from our church (Fairview Presbyterian Church).

Mr. Stewart is a little older than me and works for a construction company as a carpenter. He has just completed his apprenticeship and is currently working on the new Heather Pavilion of the Vancouver General Hospital which is due to open in 1906.

Now that is settled into his job as a **journeyman** carpenter, I am hoping that he might find enough courage to propose matrimony.

He takes me to church socials which are held on Saturday afternoons, something that my new work schedule will sometimes allow me to do as I now have one Saturday afternoon in six as a holiday.

In the summer we go for long strolls down to Stanley Park or I go to English Bay with Ian and my friends to relax on the beach or a swim in the water.

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Me (centre) and my friends relaxing at English Bay (my boyfriend is not in the picture)
(Circa 1901) City of Vancouver Archives AM54-S4-: Be P97.1

Sometimes Mr. Steward and I will just go window shopping either to Woodward's new store at Hastings and Abbot or at the Hudson's Bay Company store at Georgia and Granville.

Other times, we just walk along Westminster (Main Street) to see all of the shops or walk to the other direction to visit the new Carnegie Library at the corner of Westminster (Main) and Hastings.

We also participate in the Telephone Operators' Social events.

The condition of my living with my parents is that I must abide by their rules. As my mother is very religious, that means that Sundays are set aside for attending church and studying the bible. Her Sunday rule is that the only social activity that can occur must relate to a church activity. She

prepares all of our Sunday meals on Saturday so that she can keep to her own rule. Her other Sunday rule is that there can be no card playing, dancing or other amusements on Sunday. Under her rules, going for walks is permitted. Ian and I try hard to honour her rules.

Telephone Operators Executive

I am now a member at large of the executive of the Telephone Operators Auxiliary of Local 213. I am also sitting on a joint social committee (joint with the linemen) of five women and five men which has the responsibility of organizing social activities for Local 213.

Just six weeks after the end of the strike, we just a great dance and social event at O'Brien Hall on Wednesday, January 28 and a good time was had by all. Eighty couples came to the event. Ian and I went of course. The telephone operators entertained themselves and their friends at dancing, games and food.

Plans are in the works for a union picnic at Stanley Park.

The big event will be in the late fall, close to Christmas. We have already booked the Pender Street Hall. The electrical decorations will be one of the features of the gathering and we are hoping to use coloured lights for the first time.

We are planning for over two hundred. A formal dinner is being planned along with dancing to the live music of a local band.

I am so looking forward to this event!

Appendix 1: Trouble on the Line

Suggested Teaching Notes for the Key Questions Related to the History and Its Introduction to British Columbia, the Chronology of Events Leading to the 1902 Strikes of Telephone Workers at the New Westminster and Burrard Telephone Company

1. Definitions (terms are in **bold** related to the introduction of the telephone and the strikes of 1902.)
Find the meaning of the following terms: **strikebreakers**, **no discrimination for striking**, **union recognition**, **local** (in the context of a union), and closed **shop**. (See <https://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/public/TeachingResources/YouthUnionsYou/glossary.pdf>)
2. Discuss the reason as to why the women operators were so important to the success of the strike.
3. Using the information that you have from the vignette, Lesson Activity 1 and 2, discuss the reasons as to why the union was successful in its negotiations with the New Westminster and Burrard Telephone Company.
4. Health and Safety was a big concern for both groups, yet health and safety issues were neither advanced nor achieved. Why do you think that was so?
5. What were the important achievements of the strike?
6. Union recognition was an important issue in the first strike (September 16, 1902). What do we mean by the term? Why was the union so anxious to achieve it? Why was the company so anxious to avoid recognizing the union?
7. Both groups achieved gains in establishing apprentice-journeyman & operator/trainee ratios. Why is this such an important issue for the union? Give examples of where the same type of issue arises today.
8. Generally the business community does not involve itself in other employer's labour disputes. When they do, it is usually to side with the employer in the dispute. Why the business community did chose to involve itself in this dispute, including publically laying the blame on the company in a letter that was published on the front page of the Province on December 1st?
9. Using the information that you have from the vignette, Lesson Activity 1 and 2, outline the factors that were positive and negative for both the union and the employer
Draw a line down two separate sheet s of paper, label one at the top "Union" and the other one "Employer" on the left column write " positive factors" and on the right column write "negative factors" .

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Question 9 (con't)

For example---

Factor Analysis Related to the Union

Positive Factors	Negative Factors
Union members gave solid support to the strike. No one went to work	Union negotiators were very inexperienced
The calling of the strike one day after tabling proposals should have turned public opinion against the union. Instead because of the company's handling of the business community proposal, public opinion turned the company	If a life or death situation had emerged and someone had died (ie accident, medical condition etc), public opinion could have turned very quickly

Factor Analysis Related to the Employer

Positive Factors	Negative Factors
Company had been successful in introducing the telephone to Vancouver and New Westminster	Company was caught by surprise when the second strike started. They were not able to find replacements/strikebreakers for the operators
	The business community jumped into the dispute very quickly/company underestimated the desire of the business community to keep the telephones running
	Labour relations were completely unregulated and companies were left to try to sort out what to do when a strike occurred.

At the end of your analysis, prepare a list of the most important factors that contributed to the success of the strike.

Extension Activity 1 Trouble on the Line

Further Studies related to the Telephone Workers Strike of 1902

1. Using the information that you have from the vignette, Lesson Activity 1 and 2, discuss the challenges faced by women in securing respectable jobs in the 1900 British Columbia work force. Do any of the challenges you have outlined still exist today. If so, which ones? (considerations: public attitudes, comparative wage rates between men and women, restrictions as to the professions that women can enter, limitations on work after marriage and/or family,
2. In the period 1900 to 1915, there were a significant number of unions created specifically to represent women. Review the Rosenthal article and prepare a brief summary of the purpose and activities of three of the following unions who represented women in the Vancouver/BC workforce:
 - a. Retail Clerks Protective Association
 - b. Bookbinders' and Tailors' Union
 - c. Tailors' Union
 - d. Shirt, Waist and Laundry Workers' Union
 - e. Factory Workers' Union
 - f. Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union (under various names)
 - g. Home and Domestic Employees' Union

The names of the unions reflect jobs and professions that women had access to. What professions/jobs appear to be missing from this list?

In addition to the Rosenthal article, try to locate any additional information on the unions that you have selected.

3. Look at the Knowledge Network vignette entitled *By Women, For Women* which will give you an appreciation of women's issues in the workplace in the 1970's. The video is about an attempt to organize a union in the banks by the independent union SORWUC. Write a brief paragraph comparing the challenges in the 1970's compared to the challenges of the early 1900's. The vignette can be viewed at: <https://www.knowledge.ca/program/working-people-history-labour-british-columbia> (Using the search function, type in **For Women, By Women**) The short vignette should come up)

Sources:

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Rosenthal, Star. "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver 1900 to 1915," *BC Studies* 41 (1979): 36-55. <http://bcstudies.com/issues/union-maids-organized-women-workers-vancouver-1900-1915>

Sangster, Joan. "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 3e 109-129 <http://www.lltjournal.ca/index.php/llt/article/download/2383/2787>