
PART TIME WORK:

POLICIES FOR WOMEN (AND MEN)

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En 1976, environ 1.397.000 personnes avaient un emploi à mi-temps, ce qui est une contribution non négligeable. L'auteure nous donne une définition du travail à mi-temps, nous parle de la sécurité d'emploi et nous dit que les avantages sociaux sont distribués au prorata.

Les avantages du travail à mi-temps sont les suivants: un meilleur moral, un absentéisme moindre et une utilisation plus importante des compétences de chaque employée. Aux Etats-Unis, une loi fédérale a exigé en 1978, que le gouvernement crée des carrières à mi-temps à tous niveaux. Depuis, le travail à mi-temps à augmenter de façon significative.

PART-TIME WORK with full-time employee rights and benefits took a leap forward at the Toronto Board of Education in

1973, when the new *Sub-Committee on Part-Time Employment* launched a pilot project on part-time employment. The adoption of the following recommendation set the plan in motion:

In view of the changing life-styles of both men and women, and the benefits to the employer of retaining experienced personnel while they are concurrently fulfilling family responsibilities or pursuing further education, the principle of continuous part-time employment with full benefits on a pro-rata basis for qualified staff be adopted; and that a committee be set up to develop plans for extending part-time employment, the planning committee to include representatives of the Union, the Personnel Department, the Senior Officials, and the Women's Bureau. (Advisory Committee re Selection of Qualified Women for Positions of Responsibility)

From the outset, management and union agreed to relax employment regulations. Employees were enabled to move *voluntarily* from full-time to part-time positions while maintaining union status, permanent status and seniority; salary, sick leave, vacation, health and insurance plans were pro-rated.

Ten years ago, the Advisory Committee's priorities centred on women in full-time employment, as well as sex-role stereotyping in schools. These concerns did not leave members with much time or enthusiasm for discussing part-time work. Establishment of the *Sub-Committee on Part-Time Employment*, therefore, provided a necessary focal point for both men and women and the continued support of women's groups for the efforts of the Sub-Committee has been invaluable.

The Sub-Committee initiated a number of studies, endorsed by the

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Women's Committee and a long-range plan, on which the implementation of part-time work was based, began. The first, *A Study of Interest in Part-Time Employment Among Non-Teaching Employees of the Board* (approximately 3,000 individuals in a full range of occupations), resulted in a program which included reports on supervisors' attitudes to part-time employment and contractual impediments to part-time work and the naming of a Part-Time Co-ordinator to arrange: 1) part-time options, 2) an annual offer of part-time employment to full-time non-teaching staff, 3) periodic reports to the Sub-Committee on the progress of the part-time option.

THE LEAP from theory to practice was taken by the Catalyst Organization in New York City which had promoted and documented successful part-time arrangements since 1963. Our plans were reinforced by their research. Their pioneer work on part-time employment contributed to an understanding of this alternative. In the U.S.A. the result was the Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act of 1978, legislation which calls upon federal agencies to create part-time career positions at all levels. Since then, the federal part-time work force has increased by about 20,000 and the

number of professionals among part-timers has increased to about 40 per cent.

The final phase of our research program called for 'A Study to identify various types of part-time work including those arrangements currently implemented within the Board.' We now had five years of the Pilot Project behind us (it included more than double the original number of employees). In June of 1978, our Report, *Permanent Part-Time Positions of Non-Teaching Staff at the Toronto Board of Education*, was published. The definition of part-time used as the basis of our Report was 'part-time work for which job security and all benefits are pro-rated, i.e. allocated proportionate to the amount of time worked.' The purpose of the Report was to identify successful part-time positions and to demonstrate that these employees were as committed and as skilled as full-time workers.

In nine case studies our Report examined the following positions: Administrative Assistant, Educational Assistant, Reference Librarian, Cataloguing Librarian, Matron, Psychoeducational Consultant (School Psychologist) and School Social Worker. These studies document education, experience, schedules, fringe benefits, union status, attitudes of part-time employees to their work and employers' attitudes towards them.

THE RESULTS indicated that the average length of part-time service was seven years, that eight of the nine employees had post-secondary education and that two upgraded their academic qualifications while on part-time. Salary and career benefits (OHIP, pension, sick leave, vacation, insurance and so on) were pro-rated for the majority.

Among the most frequently reported benefits of part-time employment were improvement of morale and reduced absenteeism, as well as increased opportunity for each employee to use special skills to advantage.

A Supervisor from Student Services says: 'Part-time Social Work employees often contribute more time to the employer than is contracted for. . . The part-time nature of the job tends to provide a change that often generates enthusiasm for the work.'

A Librarian points out: 'The job has allowed me to stay active professionally, while pursuing my role as a caregiver to my son and husband.'

A Matron stated that, since she was approaching retirement, she did not want to work full-time.

An Educational Assistant said that being able to work hours suitable to her family life made her position a very pleasant one. By working mornings only, she was able to make other commitments

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for the balance of the day.

SINCE 1973, the Sub-Committee on Part-Time Employment has met regularly. It now includes a broad range of representation. Our role is one of continuing vigilance.

Marion V. Royce, Founding Director of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labour, Ottawa, defined the situation in the following statement to the 49th International Labour Conference on *The Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities* (Geneva, 1965): '... Recognition should be given to the need to ensure that the terms and conditions of part-time employment be such as to safeguard the position of both full and part-time workers.'

Recently, we sponsored a workshop on part-time employment for Department Heads at the Toronto Board of Education and we continue to provide input into affirmative action and union meetings.

There are no pat solutions to the problems associated with part-time work, particularly in a climate of job insecurity. Equal treatment of the part-time worker can ensure that part-time jobs do not undermine conditions of work and benefits won by unions over the years. Recognition clauses in Collective Agreements which exclude employees who work fewer than 24 hours a week must be altered, so that Collective Agreements include all employees.

In addition, these complex issues require continuous effort: integration of part-time work with full-time work to allow employees flexible movement between them; inclusion of part-timers in promotion; reduction of pension penalties when an employee close to retirement wishes to reduce working hours.

THE RATIONALE for part-time work was expressed by Dr. Ratna Ray, Director of the Women's Bureau for Labour Canada, in her response to criticism of the proposed inclusion of part-timers (fifteen hours and over per week) in the Unemployment Insurance Program (January 1981). She wrote that a total of 1,397,000 employees, both men and women, held part-time jobs in 1979. 'These figures,' she said, 'surely do not point to "incidental contributions" to our country's labour force and to its economic sustenance.'

Doris Anderson (formerly head of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa), replying to the same criticism, reported that women make up about 40 per cent of the work force, that they work to support themselves and their families and that many of them work part-time.

American Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, writes: 'The second feminist agenda, the agenda for the 80's, must call for

the restructuring of the institutions of home and work.'

ABC-TV's Barbara Walters (a single parent) debunks the super-woman mystique, when she confesses: 'One thing that has been exaggerated by the women's movement is the feeling that you can have *everything*. I want to say that it is very tough to have a full-time career and juggle a personal life. It *does* make a difference in your personal life. There are still great problems in a woman being married, having a child, and having the career. Okay, now I've said it.'

Urie Bronfenbrenner, American psychologist (author of *Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R.*), believes that part-time work is the solution to effective parenting. It will enable working parents to become involved in the development of daycare programs.

Part-time work in Canada, a recent submission of the Canadian Council on Social Development to the Advisory Council on Employment and Immigration Canada (September 1980), emphasizes that part-time work is a viable alternative and should afford equal opportunities for women and men.

WOMEN, united in their efforts though affirmative action, unions or bargaining agents, can help to restructure rigid work patterns. Part-time work is one option on the road to greater control over working and personal life.