



Credit: Sak

asked why they didn't complain. Their standard answer is "not enough time." Why not make time?, I asked. No one in a blue collar job wants to stand out as a disturber of the peace, especially if they need the job. They will not complain unless things get extremely bad. Do you need a Ph.D. in Psychology to know this? Why, perhaps once in the four years they had been employed, did a government official not just contact them and ask how are things going, let them know they are there if any problems arise? At least make the effort. A humanitarian gesture. It's appreciated. We were student labour: who cares? My thought is that they are future professionals. Why not get one foot up in regard to attitude? They did not even know T.T.C. had such a thing as an affirmative action office. We really need more apathy and excuses. Lets drag on another fifty years or so.

Every three months or so I get in contact with approximately fifteen women whom I have met through various networking channels. Out of the fifteen, only *two* are actually doing what the taxpayers' dollars sent them back to school to learn to do. One is a truck driver and drives a truck for her brother's company; the other is a stationary engineer and the token woman employee. Two more of us are in the casual temporary mould – looking for work every six months – and the rest are back doing what we did before . . . job

ghettos, traditional work, minimum wage. Why? We got tired, no one cared, we floundered and had nowhere to turn for support. No one made the effort to reach us. Our savings ran out, our kids needed winter coats, too many people said no.

No one went to the personnel office and got names and telephone numbers for those women who applied for non-trad work today. Where are those statistics . . . the nameless women without the loud vocal cords, the public forum, the polished veneer – the women who really did give it a shot? What affirmative action office knows how many women tried and failed because no one reached them? Where are the government reports on them, what awards are *they* in line for?

I have been told repeatedly, and most often by men, that I am too vocal, and have asked what exactly am I trying to prove. *I believe if you talk long and hard someone who matters is bound to listen* I have also been told that I will tire, give up – that we all do eventually. Women, of course, are made of finer fluff: we succumb if our hands get dirty.

My future wish is to buy a few pieces of heavy machinery and perhaps be in a position to give some other optimistic woman a chance. I will maintain my belief that, if I can do the job, at least give me the chance to try.

Marcia McMillan, a heavy machine operator, is currently employed with the Toronto Transit Commission as a temporary casual employee in a position in which she can not use her training and specialized skills. She is a fighter on behalf of all women struggling for recognition in non-traditional work.

HEIFER

I see you prance by the gate
waiting to stalk me again
tail extended and up
you give yourself away, foolish
heifer.

the bulls in the pen are interested
but put off by skittish cavorting
your wild and rolling eye,
comic and unpleasant. I expect you
my haunch flexed
the hoof is raised.
rowdy girl, you rout and grab
lunge hard up my udder.
the blow is dead-on
to your lowered shoulder
you stumble.

I regret

if your pink-dotted, wet nose
was bruised again
ramming into my flank.
but you don't say excuse me much
never remember your loss of milk
teeth.

my staring is more timeless:
simple with years of letting
the dust of it all drift and settle.
in other words, you don't notice
how ethereal I've become lately
you always bullying for a suck
violating our fresh sense of space.

the sunset radiates
since you bug me
I pivot and amble toward it.
my tail slaps you
as my shoulder shivers away flies.
the sensation moves little sputters
down to my udder
where a tugging
makes me suddenly odd and off
struggling to recall
a tender-mouth calf.

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