

CLI RESEARCH

A
DEAL
WITH THE
DEVIL

**An analysis of the feminization of labour,
the rise of the precariat and the
effects of contract work on Canadians**

A RESEARCH PROJECT OF

CFLR CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR LABOUR RIGHTS  +  CLI CANADIAN LABOUR INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL & ECONOMIC FAIRNESS

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- promoting fundamental labour standards in Canada that enhance union organizing and collective bargaining;
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DEAL WITH THE DEVIL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMINIZATION OF LABOUR,
THE RISE OF THE PRECARIAT AND THE EFFECTS OF CONTRACT WORK ON CANADIANS

Deal with the Devil

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMINIZATION OF LABOUR,
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EFFECTS OF CONTRACT WORK ON CANADIANS

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Introduction

Labour, a constant of life for most adults, has changed significantly since the dawn of the industrial revolution. As farms gave way to factories and work shifted from the production of sustenance to the sale of labour, working-class people discovered that a fundamental facet of their lives was evolving. From the mid-twentieth century, the working class saw accelerating change in its membership and in the nature of labour, the most concerning of which was the rise of precarity throughout the Canadian economy. Unstable employment, low wages and poor working conditions have become the norm for labour today, and improvements in the near future are unlikely. In October 2016, federal Liberal Finance Minister Bill Morneau's response to anxieties about short-term contract work, lack of benefits and temporary "gig economy" jobs was to say, "[It's] going to happen. We have to accept that" (Neidhart 2016). For many Canadians in the 21st century, precarity is the rule, not the exception and its effects are felt beyond labour and the day-to-day realities of working life. There are serious consequences for all Canadians that must be addressed.

Commissioned by the Canadian Labour Institute for Social and Economic Fairness, this paper provides an overview of interdisciplinary literature on the changing nature of work. The main objective is to examine the increasing feminization of Canadian labour with specific focus on the preponderance of contract work in both so-called low-skilled jobs and jobs traditionally viewed as professional. This examination suggests the devaluation of work stems from the neoliberal policies of the 1980s that abandoned social welfare in favour of privatization and austerity measures that severely lacked the ability to provide security, let alone prosperity, for the working class. Finally, by examining work

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devaluation, the paper addresses the widespread phenomenon of contract work and acknowledges it as a common challenge among different kinds of workers, pointing to the need for policies and strategies that better serve Canadian labour as a whole.

In the interest of cohesion, this paper will first focus on and evaluate the phenomenon of labour feminization specifically within a Canadian context. It will then transition to appraising employment from the perspectives of contract workers in both “low-skilled” and “professional” industries, as well as providing some insight into employer perspectives. Finally, it is imperative to examine Canadian neoliberal labour policies to understand where the “gig economy” came from, where it is going and why working-class Canadians must remain vigilant.

The Feminization of Canadian Labour

While the term “feminization” suggests a female-centric phenomenon, the increased presence of women in Canadian labour has had ramifications for all workers. As Melissa Cooke-Reynolds and Nancy Zukewich explain:

[The] “feminization of work,” ... [encompasses] three distinct developments: the entry of women into the paid labour force; their continued concentration in certain kinds of employment; and ... the increasing tendency for men to do the kinds of jobs traditionally performed by women. Thus, the feminization of work describes a process that affects both women and men and influences gender equality. (2004, p. 24)

There is value in beginning an analysis of temporary work with the concept of labour feminization, as they are often closely linked. The feminization of labour is the result of gendered labour relations born out of the rise of global capitalism. The ways that transnational business networks became increasingly globalized were dependent on a system of production that builds on, and perpetuates, deeply rooted inequalities based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, urban-rural res-

idency and marital status (Barndt 2002).

This oppression-dependence is particularly evident in the political shifts of the last 40 years as international trade soared to unprecedented levels and millions of people migrated in search of jobs. In the words of the political scientist Gregory Albo, the ascendancy of neoliberal capitalist policies such as deregulation, tax cuts on business and increased allowance of temporary foreign workers occurred because of a series of interconnected transformations: the economic turmoil of the 1970s, the rise of the New Right governments in the 1980s that responded conservatively to the economic crises, and the increased globalization of money, industry and governance structures during the 1990s (2002, p. 46).

Modern Economic Realities

Using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) labour force statistics from 1971 to 2001, Cooke-Reynolds, and Zukewich, continue to provide illuminating figures on the feminization of the Canadian economy and its impact on workers (2004, p. 25). The authors explain that Canada experienced the most dramatic increase in women's employment during this period compared to Australia, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

This rapid increase of working women aged 15 years and older in Canada has continued. In 2016, according to the Statistics Canada labour force survey estimates for that year, nearly half (47.7%) of the labour force was represented by this demographic, a significant increase of close to 30% in 40 years. Additionally, married women and those with children entered and remained in the labour force in strikingly higher numbers than in prior decades, a fact that radically challenges the previously held notion amongst labour theorists that capitalism depended on women making up the bulk of a "reserve army of labour" to be utilized when needed and who then reverted to secondary economic citizenship (Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004, p. 24).

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In their 2004 work, Cooke-Reynolds and Zukewich interpreted employment data in concert with age and gender statistics and determined that while women have made gains in Canadian labour force representation, men's participation still exceeded that of women (p. 24-26). Women's participation had increased both in manual work, doubling in agricultural and manufacturing fields, and in professional positions, up from 44% in 1987 to 54% by 2002. Though women moved from unpaid positions as caregivers into the paid economy, they continued to be employed in traditionally female-dominated occupations (e.g., nursing, cleaning services, etc.), and were still subject to a gender wage gap that had substantial effects on their vulnerability to temporary employment (p. 24). Finally, they found that women were still more likely to be employed in non-standard work (p. 26).

While Cooke-Reynolds and Zukewich noted that temporary employment had become a growing reality for all Canadian workers, their observations related to women's positions in the workforce are vital to fully appreciating the interconnectedness between the wider phenomenon of labour feminization and the rise of temporary employment. In fact, in many ways, the authors 2004 study was prescient. A 2017 Statistics Canada report noted that in 2009, 19.5% of women aged 25 to 44 and 20% of women aged 45 to 54 worked part time. The rates for men in the same age groups were 5.8% and 5.1% respectively, a significant difference.

In all, an analysis of labour force data from the beginning of neoliberalism in the 1980s to the feminized workplaces of the 2000s reveals that while there were material gains for women's workforce numbers, there was also a lack of corresponding employment increases for all Canadian workers looking for "good jobs" as temporary employment rose. Cooke-Reynolds and Zukewich (2004) state, "[In] addition to the insecurity of not having long-term employment, temporary jobs also tend to pay less than permanent jobs and recent wage growth has been slower for temporary than permanent work" (p. 26). The feminization of labour is the result of global capitalism, changing gender norms, and neoliberal policies, and it

has brought both benefits and detriments to Canadian workers. The feminization of labour is also intimately intertwined with precarity. The associated sequestering of men and women into certain gendered jobs has stalled workers' abilities to thrive because gender stratification discourages collaboration between women and men. Precarious work often occurs in conditions of exploitation, and exploitation is easy in places of division.

Temporary Work and Precarity

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines precarious employment “generally as a lack or inadequacy of rights and protection at work” (Fleury 2016). Often applied to informal work, this definition can also be used to describe various types of non-standard formal work “including subcontracting, temporary contracts, interim work, self-employment and involuntary part-time work” (Fleury 2016).

These work arrangements are considered to be more precarious because “they are associated with reduced financial security and stability stemming from lower wages on average, less access to benefits such as private pension plans and complementary health insurance, as well as greater uncertainty about future employment income,” not to mention that increased precarious employment in the public sector results in reduced access to public sector pensions and health plans (Fleury 2016). Furthermore, precarious jobs are associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes. (Fleury 2016)

The Lack of “Good Jobs”

The feminization of labour has helped shift the traditional workplace from one where nuclear families had one (male) breadwinner whose salary comfortably covered expenses to a more diverse, yet unequal, labour force where workers compete among themselves. Cooke-Reynolds and Zukewich's data illustrate a link between work-

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er vulnerability and the kinds of jobs that flourish in feminized labour. In many respects, the positions are permanent, but they are filled temporarily. Cooke-Reynolds and Zukewich's data exemplify this trend most predominantly in women. However, the rise of temporary employment in Canada, together with the heightening numbers of workers employed in non-traditional, conditional, and short-term jobs, suggests precarity is a permanent state of employment for many Canadians, regardless of gender.

According to Statistics Canada's Perspectives on Labour and Income, some one in eight Canadian workers hold a temporary position, and of those, "on average, their earnings are lower and they have less coverage under employee benefit plans" compared to their permanently employed peers (Galarneau 2010). While the report puts temporary jobs in a single data category, it does show that trends and underlying issues vary greatly according to the type of temporary job. Therefore, any responses to the trends of precarity should be considered with an appropriate understanding of those diverse difficulties. While "[in] general, temporary jobs are held by women, younger persons and relatively less-educated workers" commonly found in casual and seasonal positions within the retail, wholesale, construction and forestry sectors, a large percentage of temporary jobs are held by professionals, with the highest concentration of temporary professionals found in public-sector industries like health, education and public administration (Galarneau 2010).

The heterogeneous nature of the precariously employed workforce—coined the "precariat"—deserves a close, comprehensive investigation. While beyond the scope of this paper, such an investigation will be necessary in future political efforts if they are to respond to precarity effectively. The precariat (a portmanteau of precarious and proletariat) can be defined as a socio-economic group consisting of people who are being told by society, and by many employers, that they must put up with unstable work and "flexible" hours while being expected to subsist on what are often barely tenable wages. The precariat usually lacks job security, benefits and union protection, and its membership spans income and education levels

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from illegal migrant workers making sub-minimum wage to low-wage service workers to highly educated workers in contract- and freelance-dependent industries.

The Problem with Contracts

The ramifications of having a growing precariat class in Canada go well beyond the precariate itself. Nationwide, the feminization of labour has meant that women are encouraged to take jobs in fields with high amounts of precarity while men's rates of employment in these kinds of jobs continue to rise. These changes to the workplace have resulted in measurable differences in prosperity between the permanently employed and the staggeringly high number of temporarily employed workers. For example:

In 2009, one-half (52%) of temporary jobs were term or contract positions.¹ Nearly one million workers held this type of job. Since 1997, contract employment has been the main source of growth in temporary work. It increased by more than 3% between 2005 and 2009, despite the overall decline in employment in 2008. (Galarneau, 2010)

As of January 2018, per Statistics Canada Labour Force Estimates, there are some 1.8 million temporary workers in the Canadian economy, of which about 1.4 million are working in a term or contract job. Comparing temporary and permanent employment, the estimates show that there is an “average gap in earnings between temporary and permanent jobs...[ranging] between 5% and 21%, depending on sex and type of temporary employment” (Galarneau 2010). The report attributes some of this gap to “the different demographic characteristics of temporary workers,” like their tendency to be younger and less educated, as well as to company size, work arrangements and lower rates of unionization amongst temporary

¹ “Temporary jobs,” otherwise known as jobs that are not open-ended, can be further divided into categories such as “term jobs” and “contract positions,” which are incredibly similar in practice even though they are theoretically differentiated based on the period of time under contract. For example, some teachers are hired for terms under contract even though the job itself may last for years.

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workers. Similarly, the report shows that there is a gap in average hours worked per week with temporary jobs equaling 33 hours for men and 27 hours for women while permanent employees accumulated 38 hours and 34 hours respectively. All together, these statistics paint a picture of Canadian labour in which the workplace is increasingly feminized and increasingly precarious. Notably, the report attributes gaps in pay and hours to differences in gender and the nature of the work being performed which correlates with Cooke-Reynolds and Zukewich's concerns regarding the devaluation of feminized jobs.

Beyond the characteristics of the feminization of labour, there are several factors that relate to the rise in temporary work. The Galarneau report speculates that some labour laws intended to protect workers had the opposite effect, compounding economic difficulties faced by employers in the face of globalization, international trade expansion and the resulting increase in competition. Seeking to avoid the costs associated with permanent positions, some companies may have resorted to temporary employment in an attempt to remain competitive and profitable. Additionally, a changing labour force founded by "the increased participation of women with children, an aging workforce and, more recently, the increased number of immigrants," which are all facets associated with the feminization of labour, may have shifted trends in workers' preferences as temporary employment can be suitable for some workers looking for more flexibility (Galarneau 2010). And yet, while many pro-temporary employment proponents point out that contract work has been the major provider of jobs in the sluggish post-2008 economy, groups like the OECD counter that increasing inequality jeopardizes economic growth. In light of the aforementioned statistics, there can be no doubt that temporary workers face distinct disadvantages both within and outside the workplace.

Class Differences

Various studies demonstrate that increasing precarity of work contributes to class distinctions and that these distinctions are alarmingly apparent within Canada. The inequalities suffered by the emerging vulnerable class of Canadian workers facing precarity are varied in degree, depending on worker skill and region.

Using data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, ethnographers Naomi Lightman and Luann Good Gingrich investigated the consequences of employment insecurity on different demographics in the Canadian labour market. The authors found widespread, and deepening, economic and social divides in Canadian society “especially since the mid-1990s when tax cuts severely curbed the redistributive capacity of Canada’s social welfare system” (Lightman & Gingrich 2013, p. 122).

These disparities are also discussed in the analysis of labour force data found in Perspectives on Labour and Income. For less educated, younger workers, and particularly for those in jobs traditionally considered low-skilled, temporary employment severely limits ability both while in the positions and afterwards. An example of this lasting effect can be seen with seasonal employees, who made up approximately one-quarter of all temporary workers in 2009, and who were predominantly employed in fields related to seasonal fishing, agriculture and construction, with slightly lower concentrations in the retail trade and tourism (Galarneau 2010).

The report shows that regions reliant on blue-collar, resource-based industries have a commensurately larger share of seasonal jobs:

[These] regions experience sizeable variations in workers’ earnings during the year, workers maintaining their skills during repeated periods of unemployment, and some dependence on government transfers. In recent decades, these regions have been affected by the decline of traditional seasonal industries and are often faced with a limited supply of jobs in other sectors. (Galarneau 2010)

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Government unemployment figures from the fourth quarter of 2017 provide further evidence of the impact of precarious, seasonal or temporary work on whole regions. While the national unemployment rate sat at 6.3%, the more rural provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador (14.5%), Prince Edward Island (10.3%), and Alberta (7.8%) all had higher rates of unemployment. The disparity is even more striking when comparing these three rates of unemployment to those of urban provinces like British Columbia (4.9%), and Ontario (5.9%) (Labour Force Characteristics 2017). Unfortunately, under the conditions of rampant transnational business competition, and a neoliberal state intent on rolling back social welfare, in many cases the decision to enter the temporary, precarious workforce is often involuntary.

The OECD has expressed its concern about the disadvantages of temporary work spilling over into workers' home lives. Indeed, these disadvantages are apparent in certain regions in Canada where the decline in good jobs profoundly affects worker ability to continue living affordably in their region of choice.

It may be helpful to further contextualize this employment stagnation by explaining who exactly is being impacted. Recognizing British Columbia's shift towards more neoliberal labor market policies, a group of service providers in Metro Vancouver formed the Coalition for Women's Economic Advancement to "discuss and take action on their observations of women's worsening situations." Their work has provided startling information on the effects of precarity on women in a farming community and by extension reveals the insidious and oppressive nature of precarity (Reid & LeDrew 2013, p. 82).

The Coalition recognized that women in Canada saw significant improvements to their socioeconomic status after World War II. However:

"...economic adjustments undertaken globally since the 1980's halted and even reversed this progress...women as a group have experienced poverty and deprivation more significantly, and more deeply, than men...The main causes of women's poverty are labor

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*market inequities, domestic circumstances, and welfare systems”
(Reid & LeDrew 2013, p. 80).*

In looking at one particular town of approximately 5,000 residents in south central BC in 2006, , the unemployment rate was almost twice that of the province. The authors attributed this to the seasonal nature of the logging industry that fueled the village, as well as to “periodic shifts in the resource-based economy” (Reid & LeDrew 2013, 82). In addition to an overall spike in unemployment, village women accounted for only one third of full-year, full-time jobs. Finally, the report found that while the village as a whole had a lower average wage than the province, women’s median income was only 70% of men’s (Reid & LeDrew 2013, p. 82).

White-Collar Contracts

Many professionals are also finding there is an increase in non-standard work. American sociologist Arne L. Kalleberg wrote in 2000 that “[while] contract work has always existed in some industries, such as construction, there has been an increase in the purchase of services (especially business services and engineering and management services) by [North American] firms since the 1970s” (Kalleberg 2000, p. 350). Kalleberg found that as professional services firms began to outsource what had been done in-house, they began to rely on temporary, contractual arrangements to operate more cheaply and efficiently. Kalleberg concluded 18 years ago, “It is likely that the trend toward contract companies to supply business services (advertising, consumer credit reporting and collection, mailing and stenography, maintenance and cleaning, personnel supply, computer and data processing, protection, research and development) will continue” (2000 p. 351).

As with blue-collar contract workers, there are ramifications involved in the rise of contracted professionals. Again, Kalleberg found evidence that contract employment creates confusion within firms regarding who controls the contracted employees, who gives orders, who directs work, and who hires and fires (p. 352). This fragmented

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system of managerial responsibilities, split along lines of permanent and contract workers, leads to ineffective training, supervising and overseeing, to the detriment of contract workers. This is particularly harmful considering that contract workers are statistically more likely to be young, less educated and/or female, all of which are proven disadvantageous when it comes to worker ability to negotiate improved salaries or positions within the firm/field.

Thinking about the detriments of contract professional work, one is forced to question the widely-held notion that white-collar jobs are still automatically “good jobs”. Professionals in temporary jobs—already burdened with a personal sense of decreased job security, lower wages, poor hours and fewer, if any, benefits—must also contend with high levels of stress resulting, in part, from the societal impacts of the precarity. This is illustrated by the findings in *Precarity in the Nonprofit Employment Services Sector*, a study examining major overhauls in the structure of the non-profit sector in London, Ontario. Almost once completely served by permanently employed workers, the sector now has some of the highest levels of precarious professionals in the province, combined with weakening income security policies and programs, growing performance-based contracting-out and shrinking intergovernmental transfers. These stressors have taken a huge emotional toll on workers. (Fanelli, Rudman & Aldrich 2017, p. 331). The lack of income security for precarious workers in the non-profit sector increased their overall stress, anxiety and depression. At the same time, these workers were also acutely aware that their employment agency’s ability to serve out-of-work Canadians was diminishing, and that those they served faced even greater vulnerability than they did.

The study demonstrates how precarity in the non-profit social services sector is amplified by top-down and centralized relationships with funding partners. Moreover, the study found non-profit sector policymaking is divorced from the employment experiences of front-line staff, an effect that can be considered consequential of the aforementioned confusion regarding who exactly manages contract workers (p. 333). The authors state that since the 1980s, non-profit work has been increasingly “reshaped by processes of neoliberalization”

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that emphasized “performance-based funding, competitive contract mechanisms, enhanced accountability mechanisms, and downloading of responsibilities” (p. 335). They make key observations about the social and economic costs of the deregulation of social services, as they found “budget cuts specifically targeted at social policy expenditures resulting in the off-loading and (quasi)marketization of social services” (p. 335).

In a similar vein, a comparative study of long-term care homes in Canada and the United Kingdom reports that “despite evidence to the contrary, the private, for-profit sector is still regarded as a means of cutting costs while driving up quality.” But rather than improve quality, a major effect of privatization is increased closures of care homes due to “financial unviability” (Lloyd 2016, p. 483-485). The UK Government responded by having the Care Quality Commission take on “a market oversight function to keep a watch on the finances of companies that occupy a monopoly position” in areas where they would be difficult to replace (p. 485). The purpose of this oversight is not to “force changes to the practices of the companies but instead to ensure that local authorities are prepared to step in to provide alternative services for residents.”

Returning to the Canadian non-profit study, the authors note that expanding privatization of social services has diminished security for social services workers because competition increased and labor costs were driven down (Fanelli, Rudman & Aldrich, 2017, p. 335). Privatization also diminishes their professional value as the roles for private donors, venture philanthropists and social entrepreneurs inflate, further blurring the distinction between non-profit and for-profit organizations, and degrading the quality of public sector jobs and services (p. 335). These findings are similar to those of a 2017 Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) report on British Columbian hospital workers. Housekeepers and dietary workers faced work degradation, precarity and insecure futures as a result of increasing healthcare privatization. CUPE noted that when BC’s health authorities “contracted out these critical health services to multinational corporations starting in 2003, they effectively abandoned responsi-

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bility for the workers” (“It’s time to end precarious work in BC hospitals” 2017).

It is interesting to note that while CUPE, and other unions in Canada, are highly concerned with rising precarity, there does appear to be a schism in union outreach to precarious professionals outside the public sector. For example, the Professional Employees Association (PEA), which bills itself as “BC’s Union for Professionals,” breaks its membership down into ten “chapters,” which PEA explains are regarded as individual bargaining entities under the PEA umbrella. However, these ten chapters are almost entirely made up of public service workers in legal, health and academic fields, or in the government bureaucracy, and many are specifically based in one geographic region or even within one school (“Meet Our Chapters”). While PEA acknowledges on its website that “professionals... can’t find secure employment...[and term] contracts are the order of the day,” there are no clear explanations on how a contract professional outside the public service could become a PEA member. (“Why Join the PEA?”)

Additionally, while making great strides to improve worker conditions, CUPE has not been successful in organizing private-sector precariate professionals. In a 2017 publication in its periodical *Tabletalk* CUPE describes efforts to tackle and prevent precarity through workers’ organizations that “have demanded improvements to labour and employment law to provide greater protections and make it easier to organize vulnerable workers.” The article goes on to overview workers’ wins in making legislative change, citing employment law reviews in Alberta and Ontario, as well as increases in minimum wage to eventual targets of \$15/hour brought in by the NDP and Liberal governments in Alberta and Ontario respectively. Meanwhile, the NDP in BC has said it will increase the minimum wage, although it proposes a four-year phase-in, which has been criticized by community groups and unions as too long. (“We fight precarity when we mobilize” 2017). While the legislative changes are clear victories for lower paid precarious workers, it is somewhat disappointing to see that not much headway has been made con-

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necting private-sector professional precariat members to initiate similar processes of resistance.

The 1980s spike in neoliberal politics that facilitated deepening globalized capitalism occurred concurrently with the feminization of labour, changing the composition of the labour force. With precarious work, those left marginalized by feminized labour were taken advantage of and pre-existing inequalities exacerbated. Feminized labour, temporary employment and worker precarity have combined to create what might well be an unprecedented life of hardship for Canadians in the neoliberal era. The current socio-economic impact of precarious, temporary work can be seen in the data referenced earlier regarding unemployment, wage and hour gaps and declining social services.

It is also important to consider the future socio-economic impact of the “gig economy” on those workers most likely to be affected: young workers. Constantly moving from one short-term job to another means they miss opportunities to build skills, find mentors or move up career paths (Grant, 2017). These missed opportunities make it difficult to maintain relationships, buy houses, engage with the community, or simply feel established in life—all factors that will adversely impact the economy, labour market and sense of value young workers have in themselves and their work. (Grant, 2017). Indeed, there is an argument to be made that the increasing sense of dread most young people feel when considering their future job options is intimately intertwined with larger issues of social justice. While many Canadians think of Canada as a “classless society,” the reality is that youth who come from lower-middle or working-class backgrounds can no longer rely on professional careers to step up the social ladder. Classism in Canada is getting worse, not better. And this is to say nothing of the correlation between job or career insecurity and the increasing rates of depression and anxiety in Canada’s youth population (Findlay, 2017).

Employers' Rationale for Contracts

Nevertheless, the reality of the Canadian economy now is that temporary employment is on the rise, and Canadian workers need to understand arguments in favour of temporary employment argument if they are to resist the rise of precarity.

As the Statistics Canada report pointed out, contracts can provide a more flexible working arrangement for those looking to achieve a better work-life balance, such as students, parents of young children and older workers (Galarneau, 2010). Moreover, the author reports that “[in] general, temporary employees are as satisfied with their jobs as permanent employees,” although the report does not mention if respondents are in any way satisfied with the temporary circumstances of their positions (Galarneau, 2010). Finally, the report speculates that some temporary jobs can be “a foot in the labour market door for persons with no recent experience or no experience in Canada.” Theoretically, workers in short-term jobs can maintain and acquire skills that can be used to find permanent work, sometimes within the same firm that hired them temporarily. Too often, though, even the “permanent” positions offered are on a renewable contract basis (Galarneau, 2010).

On the corporate side, “[The] use of temporary labour makes it possible to adjust to fluctuations in demand more quickly, increasing companies’ flexibility.” This flexibility can improve a company’s competitiveness by reducing wage costs and hiring expenses as only the most productive employees are selected for permanent positions. (Galarneau, 2010)

As once said in an article for the periodical, *Training & Development*: “A relationship with an outside contractor is like a good marriage: You must have trust, and you need to treat him or her as a partner.” (Bodine, 1998)

And yet, the ability of a firm to treat its “partners” well seems to depend on its view of the work being contracted. A flexible job should not become synonymous with precarious work. While data from Statistics

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Canada and Kalleberg show contracting can save business costs, particularly when the work contracted was done previously by non-core employees, the lack of direct hiring creates incentives to decide that “there is little reason to pay high wages to workers who are easily monitored and replaced, or who perform work (such as janitorial services) that is peripheral to an organization’s main activity” (Kalleberg 2000, p. 351).

Kalleberg also found that contract workers had higher rates of hostile work environments, including lack of training, low trust and low commitment (p. 352). Additionally, his work noted there were “tensions between direct-hire and contract workers, and between management and labor, as unions charged that contract workers were used to reduce unions’ presence in firms and to provide cheaper... and less trained workers” (p. 352).

The rise of temporary employment requires considerable effort amongst committed neoliberals to dispute the detriments of the gig economy. This effort is best exemplified in “The Myth of Middle-Class Stagnation in Canada,” found in a 2017 Fraser Institute report:

[The] claim that the middle class has stagnated economically is a common meme in political debates across Western countries, including Canada and the United States. This meme spans the ideological spectrum and is often repeated as if its truth is settled beyond any question... [an] accurate understanding of middle-class living standards is important if we are to avoid false diagnoses of economic ills and any resulting reckless treatments of those “ills.” (Boudreaux, Emes, MacIntyre, & Lammam 2017, p. 160-161)

The article goes on to redefine income data variants. The authors argue that inflation adjustments are imperfect and therefore not to be trusted as indicators of real purchasing power. They state that despite all the information they present in their own paper suggesting social and economic harm from the gig economy, middle class Canadians are apparently thriving without anyone noticing.

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Interestingly, the paper does seem to acknowledge there are impacts of the feminization of labour on the middle class, even if it then goes on to dispute what those impacts are and their severity. The authors explain that workforce demographics are changing as a population made up of a “disproportionately large number of workers” develops and pulls down the average wage. The average wage, the authors argue, “will be pulled down even if the wages earned by each and every one of the workers in the population are rising significantly” (p. 162). They clarify that the effect of underpaying such a large group of workers, made up predominantly of “married women and...immigrants,” is “gives a falsely pessimistic impression of workers’ fortunes over time” (p. 162). Considering the authors highlight the importance of gaining an accurate understanding of economic trends to avoid false diagnoses or treatment of economic “ills”, their practice of excluding the 7,047,757 married Canadian women and 21.9 per cent of Canadians who report being or having been an immigrant in 2017 suggest their data may already be flawed (Statistics Canada 2017 & Grenier 2017).

Amending the Contract

Regardless of the opinions of neoliberals, employers, or finance ministers, the reality of the 2010s economy is one in which temporary work makes up the majority of job growth, one in which the faces of labour are radically different compared to previous generations and one in which contract work provides no guarantee of a sustainable livelihood. Minister Morneau’s statement that Canadians must accept this reality is not the most positive sign of a government looking to shift the direction of the economy. In researching this paper, the most relevant and recent piece of government research on precarious work to surface was a 2003 Statistics Canada report entitled, “Precarious jobs: A new typology of employment.” This report primarily concerns itself with defining the terms of precarity in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and noting the gendered nature of precarity, while its conclusion simply suggests the need for further research on self-employment and for a gender-based analysis. (Vosko, Zukewich, & Cranford, 2003). This rec-

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ommendation, together with the lack of any newer, more accessible data on Canadian precarity, suggests a serious lack of motivation to address work precarity on the part of any federal government of the last 15 years. Additionally, no easily accessible information on precarity was available on any of the provincial governments statistics web pages.

There are, however, many people who are concerned with increasing precarity. The labour movement, both national and international, has taken notice of the gig economy. For example, a June 2016 report, *Women and Public Sector Precarity*, commissioned by CUPE focused on the intensifying precarity within the public sector, the devaluation of the work performed in precarity, and the fact that “[Indigenous], racialized and LGBTTI women, and women with disabilities, face distinct and multiple disadvantages” (“CUPE Report,” 2016). In its abstract, CUPE states it commissioned the report so that its members could “show employers, politicians and potential allies that globalization... [has] diminished public sector jobs... [and that public] or private, no sector is immune” (“Report,” 2016)

Similarly, in 2011 the ILO released conclusions based on its “Workers Symposium on Policies and Regulations to Combat Precarious Employment.” In these conclusions, the ILO explicitly expressed its concern by stating, “Worldwide, unimaginable numbers of workers suffer from precarious, insecure, uncertain, and unpredictable working conditions” and suggested that the “universality and dimension of the problem [of precarious work] call for coordinated and comprehensive action at the international level” (p. 1). The ILO’s symposium conclusions suggest that while anti-precarity measures require comprehensive economic, fiscal and social policies, the most important tool to combat unstable work conditions is the expansion and strengthening of collective bargaining rights for all workers, regardless of employment length. The ILO conclusions argued that public sector employees, whose job security has been stripped by the process of marketization and privatization previously described, must have their bargaining rights guaranteed, and that “[governments] need to be exemplary as employers... [as quality] public ser-

vices are essential to sustainable development and cannot be based on casual employment” (p. 2). Finally, the ILO conclusions suggest that new regulations around temporary employment should be lobbied for by labour advocates to limit, restrict and reduce the resort to precarious forms of employment by establishing clear conditions under which an employer can hire temporary and agency workers, limiting the proportion of workers at a given enterprise on precarious contracts, and limiting the amount of time a worker can be on a temporary contract, after which they must be given a permanent contract.”

Conclusion and Response

Overall, the evidence regarding temporary employment and precarity suggests three things. First, the feminization of labour combined with its associated shifts in labour force demographics has changed the way most people work, and is related to the rise of temporary, precarious and non-standard work arrangements. Second, global capitalism and the resurgence of neoliberalism in the late 1970s to the present are fundamental reasons for the rise of precarious work as firms attempt to cut costs by increasing their temporary workforce, and these jobs are by-and-large not “good jobs.” Third, the lack of good jobs and the abundance of precarious work dovetail dangerously. Public services are suffering from an austerity attack including understaffing, budget cuts and precarity. Professional work is increasingly devalued, while young workers struggle to find a foothold in an unstable economy. Smaller, more resource-based economies suffer from a lack of growth. Finally, the fact that temporary work is often synonymous with precarious work has serious negative consequences for Canadian workers, especially marginalized ones who are more likely to work temporary jobs.

The response to precarity must be unified and intersectional, and it requires the involvement of union leadership and community-based organization and education. While national and international labour

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movements have recognised the harm of the rising gig economy, there is more work to be done to strengthen workers' collective response. It is imperative that unions and other pro-labour groups continue their efforts to unionize (or at the least, unify) lower paid workers in the most precarious industries, including the retail and service industries, and they must amplify the voices of precarious workers in resource-based economies whose livelihoods are increasingly seasonal and unsustainable. Additionally, pro-labour groups, both locally and nationally, must increase their efforts to reach out to professionals in both the public and private sectors, focusing particularly those precarious professionals who are already disadvantaged by their youth and/or gender. In terms of governmental responsibilities, there is much to be done by the Canadian state.

On the federal level, there is an obvious need to change the Minister of Finance's thinking about the threat that precarity poses. This could be accomplished by conducting more studies on the effects of precarity on Canada's future economic stability, but for workers a more helpful step might be to emulate the latest federal budget. The 2018 federal budget had an express "gender lens" which measured the impact of the proposed budgetary changes on women and tried to best address their needs. A similar "worker lens" or "precariat lens" in future budgets would be both a sign of federal government recognition of the severity of precarity and a potential avenue for real financial aid for the most desperate workers. As well, serious consultation and consideration regarding the direction of future federal and provincial social and economic policy is needed.

The current problem of precarity is in many ways the result of neoliberalism, and to continue with this economic ideology will only worsen the problem. The Canadian government and the Canadian public must engage in a discourse about the need to change our country's economic direction so it moves towards something more equitable, where our collective economic gains would be shared amongst the richest and the poorest, if such a gap would exist at all

There is a pressing need in Canada's increasingly precarious society to reassess our collective understanding of labour. As temporary, contract and non-standard jobs become the norm, the notion that it is

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acceptable for these types of jobs to be less well paid, less secure and less valued ceases to make sense, economically or socially. “Workers and their allies [must] recognize that all work should result in a decent standard of living,” and part of that recognition should include public and private dialogue between workers, their employers and the public about the effects of precarity (Morrison 2015, p. 230). Any large-scale push-back against precarity will also require the support and guidance of a variety of individuals including women, students, minorities, immigrants, those downsized out of a job and consumer advocates to ensure that all precarious workers’ voices are acknowledged, heard and amplified (Morrison 2015, p. 230).

Ultimately, and against the advice of Minister Morneau, Canadian workers do not and should not simply accept unfair, low-paid, temporary work. The truth is current workers are at risk of never getting a “good job” and, therefore, never achieving the life milestones of previous generations. This matters as Canadian workers’ failure to thrive is the result of the demise of Canada’s social security. The neoliberal policy revamp of the 1980s onward has had serious, detrimental effects on the health, prosperity and skill of far too many Canadians, making it increasingly difficult for them to make ends meet. The feminization of labour has changed the workplace drastically, and the continual stratifying of workers into categories of feminine and masculine, skilled and not, temporary and permanent, has allowed pre-existing gaps of inequality to widen. To ignore ever-increasing inequality is economically unsustainable and socially unjust. The fact that most people’s experience of labour has changed for the worse does not have to mean that precarity becomes the rule.

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