

**'THE BOB-SHINGLE REGIME THAT RULES THE FEMININE WORLD':
CONSUMERISM, WOMEN AND WORK IN 1920s BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2000

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of History)

**We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard**

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 2004

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Title of Thesis: 'The Bob-Shingle Regime That Rules the Feminine World': Consumerism, Women and Work in 1920s British Columbia

Degree: Master of Arts

Year: 2004

Department of History

The University of British Columbia

Vancouver, BC Canada

ABSTRACT

This project is a case study of the hairdressing industry in British Columbia in the 1920s. It argues that gender divisions persisted as consumerism became increasingly important to British Columbians, and that despite British Columbia's sometimes challenging engagement with international consumerism, the province's economy remained remarkably synchronized with international trends. It tells the story of the rapid expansion and feminization of hair services markets and businesses; examines the public and legislative debates about the importance of consumer services such as hairdressing and its customers; and reveals the persistence of gendered divisions in the early transition to a consumer services society. Using British Columbian newspaper reports, American and Canadian women's and union periodicals, city directories, national censuses, and government reports, the project looks first at the increasing pressures in the 1920s from business owners, advertisers, and magazine editors to adopt new, fashionable hairstyles and the sources of ambivalence among women about the new styles. It then turns to hairdressing as a business and source of employment, and after briefly reviewing the history of hairdressing in North America looks at the rapid expansion of hairdressing businesses in British Columbia during the 1920s; the demographic characteristics of hairdressing workers and entrepreneurs; and the feminization of the hair services industry. It also explores the connection between feminist ideals and women's entrepreneurship in the hair services field. Finally, the hairdressers' attempt to gain regulation from the provincial government is examined at the end of the decade, with a particular focus on how consumerism and hairdressing, its workers and customers, are characterized. The legislative and public debates about hairdressing regulation reveal anxiety about consumerism and persistent gender divisions as British Columbia began to shift toward a consumer-oriented society. It concludes that British Columbia, despite its primary resource economic base, remained remarkably in step with

international trends, from feminization of services to regulation of those services, of which hairdressing was just a beginning.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Society page reporters for <i>Vancouver Sun</i> newspaper, 1929.	12
2. Graduation Class of North Vancouver High School, 1921.	14
3. Graduation Class of North Vancouver High School, 1929.	15
4. Interior of Freer's Hairdressing Salon, Victoria, 1928.	25
5. Freer's Hairdressing Salon, Victoria, c. 1928.	25

In a moment of exasperation while trying to sort out the gender politics of the province's burgeoning hairdressing industry, British Columbia legislator Major R.J. Burde coined the phrase "the bob-shingle regime that rules the feminine world."¹ Bobs and shingles were the names given to two women's hairstyles that along with permanent waves and artificial dyes gained controversial popularity in the province in the 1920s. The styles were part of a new consumer beauty services and product regime in a decade that saw the province begin the transition from a primarily resource, production-dominated economy to a mass consumer services economy. The new economy relied on women working in low-paying service positions and women purchasing personal services. This case study of the hairdressing industry in British Columbia in the 1920s tells the story of the rapid expansion and feminization of hairdressing markets and businesses; examines the public and legislative debates about the importance of consumer services such as hairdressing and its customers; and reveals the persistence of gendered divisions in the transition from a producer-based to a consumer services-based society.

The international consumer society of the first third of the twentieth century was expanding and changing the activities of everyday life and appearance into more standardized forms in the far-flung reaches of North America. From its colonial beginnings onward, British Columbia produced resources for an international market (fur, coal, metals) and imported goods from elsewhere. As a result, British Columbia in the early twentieth century had more workers in industries that aided consumption (such as freight transportation) than the national average, but thought of itself as a cultural backwater, anxious to keep up connections with more metropolitan centres.² However, in the 1920s British Columbians saw, and by the end of the decade partially embraced, the expansion of an international culture of mass consumerism represented in magazines, advertising and film. That this study examines British Columbia is significant mainly in that it shows the incorporation of locales associated with resource production into the international consumer culture by the end of the 1920s.

The transition to a consumer services economy required concomitant changes in the workforce, although the historiography of consumerism has not always reflected it. Industrial production and union organization, which have received considerable attention from labour historians in British Columbia, have been traditionally associated with men, and historians' almost exclusive focus on them has overlooked work done by women, which was often service-oriented. Service industries became strikingly feminized over the course of the twentieth century, which has meant that service positions were marked by lower status and pay than those dominated by men in a sex-segregated job market.³ In addition to gender, class and status concerns deeply inform customer and personal service work such as hairdressing because workers and employers must meet and maintain their clients' status expectations, even though they may not be of the same class as those they serve. Hairdressers and fellow beauticians struggled with these issues in the 1920s in their attempts to have their industry government-regulated. While the hairdressing industry was expanding and women were on the cusp of becoming the majority of hair workers, commentators debated the implications of formally segregating hair services by gender and sanctioning the transition to a higher proportion of women working in consumer services.

Spurred on by renewed interest in material history, women's history, and postmodern theory, historians have attempted to periodize and definitively characterize consumer societies. In the twentieth century, the long-prevalent consumerism of the upper classes took on a new, homogenized face with the introduction of new services and products (notably in recreation and transportation), advertising, the dramatic expansion of mass-production and distribution techniques, the development of national brand names and chains of stores, and the standardization of products, all of which led to the increased accessibility of consumer products and services.⁴ Since then, a major issue in thinking about consumerism is the relative agency of consumers and the hegemony of consumer culture. Where members of the Frankfurt school

declaimed the powerlessness of consumers interacting with all-powerful advertising, mass culture, and consumer society, scholars in the 1980s trumpeted consumers who created, recreated, and refigured consumer products and activities to empower themselves.⁵ Similar debates about the character and value of consumers and consumerism enlivened the discussion of consumer services, such as hairdressing, in the 1920s in British Columbia.

Consumption has been, in Victoria de Grazia's words, "obsessively gendered, usually as female."⁶ Much of the debate about consumerism and mass culture has been taken up on gendered terms and British Columbians in the 1920s were no exception. Characterizations of women's consumption of commercial beautifying services echoed longstanding stereotypes of voracious, temporary, fickle, inconsequential, irresolute female shoppers, at the same time that women were ardently encouraged to partake of such services. Echoing Frankfurt School concerns about the "dumbing-down" effects of mass culture, some feminists have argued that the beauty industry is a persuasive agent of the oppression of women, distracting women from more important endeavours and encouraging both women and men to conceive of women solely as sexualized bodies.⁷ More recently, however, Kathy Peiss proposed that the purchase and use of beauty products and services provided women with a powerful tool of self-definition within the confines of a consumerist society, thus allowing women more agency in their engagement with consumer society.⁸ Despite some remediation of their harsher components, gender divisions and gendered characterizations of female customers, workers and industries easily made the transition from a production-oriented to a consumerist-oriented economy in British Columbia.

Consumption, women, and beauty have received little attention from historians of British Columbia. A review of the scarce literature on consumption in British Columbia would lead one to believe that it was not an important phenomenon until after World War II, with a meagre four related articles focusing on postwar consumer education, economic theory and gender.⁹ However, work in the US has shown that mass consumerism was rapidly taking hold in the late

1920s and was only temporarily halted by the economic travails of the 1930s and 1940s. The transition to a consumer society in British Columbia was emerging in the 1920s and has not been explored by historians. As well as going some way to open the topic of consumerism in British Columbia, the following study also focuses on British Columbian women. General histories of the province note that women saw some improvements in their social and economic condition in the 1920s, but that stringent restrictions remained and gender divisions were reaffirmed. This paper confirms that conclusion.

Consumer, business and gender studies converge in hairdressing, which has recently been the focus of an expanding body of research, especially in the United States where historians have concentrated on the politics of race, gender, images, business and work, and commodification.¹⁰ While racism obviously plays an important role in beautifying activities in North America in the twentieth century, gender issues are equally important. The field has often been separated into consumerism and business histories with more or less attention to gender, but an examination of both clients and entrepreneurs yields an excellent opportunity to connect them with gender.

* * * * *

Feminism, hairstyles and consumerism were connected in the first third of the twentieth century. Feminists of various stripes adopted short hair to show their rejection of a definition of femininity centred on domesticity. As women achieved suffrage, increasingly participated in the middle class workforce, and took advantage of opportunities in higher education, and new definitions of marriage they sought to represent changes in their social roles in their appearance. Short “bobbed” haircuts, blonde or coloured hair, and permanent waving of the hair all signalled engagement with post-World War I challenges to an older femininity that centred on domesticity.

Emerging out of the dialogue about the place of women in modern society was the concept of the New Woman: typical tropes of the New Woman were “the mannish reformer, the professional woman, the earnest labour activist, the free-spirited outdoor girl, and the sexually

assertive flapper.”¹¹ Despite the variety of representations of the New Woman, commonalities connected the figure of the picket-line labour activist and the high-stepping flapper: independence, assertiveness and lack of interest in domestic endeavours. While the New Woman of the 1890s had been linked with educational, social and political organization and activism, marked by an ambitious professional life and active recreational activities, the New Woman of the 1920s was also associated with self-expression, personal fulfillment, rational science, intellectuality and independence.¹²

In the 1920s, the new New Woman came to be represented by the worldwide trend for short and chemically treated hair. While shortening one's hair required little more than pair of scissors in a well-lit place or a trip to the barber, the grey-covering dyes, the blonde locks and elegant waves fashionable in the latter part of the decade necessitated more complicated technology. The machine to make hair permanently waved cost more than one person could afford and was designed so the customer could not operate it. In addition, increasingly powerful dyes needed watchful eyes to prevent mishaps.¹³ The new technologies allowed women to experiment with their appearance. However, the changes in technology do not explain why and how women were encouraged to purchase the services of the new technology or the meanings attached to changes in appearance.

After World War I, many feminists hoped they were on the cusp of a new and better world and wanted to sever their connection with the past. Short hair was one way to do that; dyed and blonde hair, which also became fashionable in the 1920s, was another. A short blond bob was a striking contrast to the long, raven-haired epitome of beauty of the nineteenth century. Freedom was also symbolized by youth, and suggestions to dye one's white hair made up the majority of hair-related advertising in Canada's national magazines. The short cut and hair colouring also denied respect for older, grey-haired women, who represented an older gender order. According to the *Chatelaine* beauty editor, short hair symbolized women's emancipation

and modernity. She wrote: “few women want to go back to hairpins—they refuse to be bound.”¹⁴ The new hairstyles seemed to embody the New Woman values of sexual, moral, and economic freedom and independence, and to remove women from the bonds of domesticity symbolized by long hair.

However, short and processed hair was not uncontested. In the early 1920s, short hair for women was controversial. One reason was that it symbolized a rejection of domestic-centred femininity. At the start of the third decade, a bob was a controversial action for a woman to take. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1920 story “Bernice Bobs Her Hair,” first published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the second most widely circulated US magazine in Canada,¹⁵ young Bernice boasts that she will have her hair cut into a bob in an attempt to become more popular and modern. To accomplish this transformation, she must relinquish many of the apparently feminine qualities, such as obedience, quietness, fragility and forgiveness, with which she was raised. Significantly, when Bernice is goaded into living up to her promise, the young modern social group that she hopes to win over demonstrate the limits of their modernity in their reaction to her physical transformation—they were shocked, disgusted, and dismayed. Short hair was obviously still contentious for women. At the conclusion of the story, Bernice escapes the social pressures of the modern clique, but the experience has changed her and she enacts tonsorial revenge on her primary tormentor, her cousin Marjorie.¹⁶ Hair is the arena within which the two cousins contest ways of being feminine. The story prompted a flurry of letters debating the definition of femininity described by Bernice’s actions.¹⁷

Another reason why short and dyed hair was contentious in the early 1920s was its association with deceit, loose morals and loss of respectability. Similar to attitudes about make up, dyed hair was considered a deceit, in which a woman tried to obscure her real age. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, one’s character was thought to be reflected in one’s outer appearance, and to change that appearance was a deceit.¹⁸ In North America in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, commercial care for one's appearance was associated with prostitution and an absence of respectability. The first hairdressing shops had difficulty finding a landlord to rent retail space to them, and cosmetics were associated with loose women.¹⁹ A 1922 short story in *Canadian* magazine about hairdressers moralizes the dangers of the city for young workingwomen and the potentially disreputable nature of the hairdressing salon. One of the young female employees, a manicurist, employed to be a pretty face on the main floor of a large barbershop (the hairdressing parlour occupied a second floor) finds herself pregnant by a local immigrant tailor. The moral dangers of the city and the use of young women as sexual allures to bring in business were controversial.²⁰ Women could not be excessive in their attentions, because of beautifying's associations with prostitution. For example, venereal disease education films tended to follow similar plot lines in which two young female friends move to an urban centre. One is serious, plain and a hard worker; the other becomes interested in fashion, her appearance, dancing and boys. The second one contracts a venereal disease, implying within the framework of the narrative a lapse of morals, while the first marries an attractive and rich man she met at work.²¹ In another short story, a young woman is chosen for a job when she takes the place of her more fashionable and "hung over" sister because, while plain, she looked sensible. She went on to marry the boss.²²

Despite the controversy, bobbed and processed hair spread rapidly through the new mass consumer culture, and in the process of becoming a worldwide phenomenon its feminist meanings were superseded by images of femininity focused on attractiveness to men. Circulation of new national, and particularly US, general interest and women's magazines expanded in the Canadian market.²³ In the US context, some scholars have argued that the expansion of media outlets and advertising created a national US culture, while others have proposed that the primary effect was to strengthen local communities. This study of British Columbia suggests one effect was to extend mass culture's reach throughout North America.²⁴

Corporations used mass production techniques to manufacture cosmetics and hair treatments, chains of hairdressing shops boomed, and companies and advertisers worked hard to disseminate new styles around the world. In the early 1920s, advertisers and magazine editors focused on offering female consumers choice and power as steps towards a utopia of liberation that they would achieve through consumption. Kathy Peiss points out that while female advertising agents were able to incorporate a variety of feminist role models in advertisements for cosmetics in the early 1920s, by the end of the decade, they had been superseded by Hollywood actresses. For example, a Pond's soap advertising campaign featured testimonials of feminist women, sometimes without an accompanying image, but by the end of the decade the campaign exclusively featured images of lounging, glamorous actresses. The Ponds campaign was featured in both Canadian and US magazines.²⁵

When both *Canadian* and *Chatelaine* magazines introduced beauty columns in the late 1920s, their writers and editors advocated that women pay attention to their appearance and adopt a new, young-looking hairstyle. While in the early interwar period, women's magazines in Canada such as *Chatelaine* refrained from naming specific products in beauty editorials or from allowing beauty editors to participate in advertising campaigns, many of the widely distributed US magazines permitted such activities, thus blurring the boundary between apparently objective advice and official endorsement. Even though the beauty editors of *Chatelaine* and *Canadian* refrained from naming specific products, their columns strongly echoed the messages of the advertisements that filled the pages of their publications. Both editors actively promoted products to battle the horrors of grey hair and advocated the importance of an appearance of youthfulness and verve, which was further reinforced by the prevalence of illustrations of women who sported short-cropped hair.²⁶

Films and other forms of popular culture such as musical theatre created and disseminated new visions of femininity that often emphasized short, waved hair and thick

makeup. Touted as the quintessential representation of the modern world, the young urban flapper on film wore the new, freedom-loving identity on her sleeve and indulged in all the trappings of consumer culture. Film production companies and beauty corporations often organized "tie-ins" in which products featured in the film were for sale in the lobby, movie houses held beauty contests using the products, and local drugstores were allowed to advertise in the theatre. Films featuring young female characters with short hair were popular throughout the 1920s in Vancouver's many theatres. Among the films playing in Vancouver at mid-decade were *Stranded in Paris* starring short-haired Bebe Daniels, *An Affair of the Follies* starring Billie Dove, a singing and dancing star who inspired Billie Holiday's stage name, *The Midnight Kiss* starring Academy Award winner and short hair wearer Janet Gaynor, and *Fascinating Youth*, which featured the platinum blond and bobbed Thelma Todd. *Fascinating Youth* also starred Charles "Buddy" Rogers, "America's Boyfriend," who subsequently went on to marry the shorthaired Mary Pickford.

Film stars such as Pickford were extraordinarily popular in British Columbia. In 1922, when Pickford and her then-husband actor Douglas Fairbanks stopped in Victoria on a cross-continent trip, people lined the streets hoping to catch a glimpse of the Hollywood stars. Pickford reiterated her New Woman status in an interview for the *Victoria Daily Times*. She spent the majority of the interview relating that when she traveled she was primarily interested in "how the women dressed their hair, what their garments were," and shopping. She came across as cosmopolitan and thoroughly modern. However, like many of the advertisements for cosmetics, her interpretation of the New Woman was limited: she went on to say, "[I am interested in] the thousand and one little things which I suppose will appeal forever to the feminine mind. It seems that I have been making the close-ups which [sic: while] Douglas has caught the long-shots."²⁷ The New Woman Pickford articulated here is one who while, cosmopolitan and consumerist, is strictly separated from the important and large field of male endeavour and intelligence. Many

scholars have argued that one of the major shifts in the 1920s in North America was that film and popular culture, newly nationalized in widely distributed magazines and films, succeeded elites as models of behaviour and appearance.²⁸ As film gained in popularity over the 1920s, and became increasingly monopolized by a few chains of theatres with the advent of "talkies,"²⁹ models of femininity such as Pickford became more common. The meaning of short and processed hair also shifted from shocking new definitions of femininity to attractiveness to men and attention to the feminine world of shopping and fashion. However, just because magazines and films encouraged women to buy beauty products and take on an independent and consumerist identity did not mean women would adopt them. Yet women, British Columbians included, did.

Consumerism, buying products previously made at home, became increasingly prevalent over the 1920s in Canada. According to David Monod,

the average Canadian ate 7.0 ounces of meat a day in 1922 and 7.4 ounces after 1925.... by 1928 this typical individual also consumed annually 10.5 pounds of store-bought biscuits, 29 pounds of butter, 13 pounds of candy, and a gallon of dairy-made ice cream. The average Canadian male bought three shirts a year every year from 1923 to 1929, one to two pairs of overalls, a collar, and either a set of suspenders or a pair of garters, while the average Canadian adult woman in 1927 spent \$80-100 on her own ready-made clothing (not including footwear or furs), almost half of which went to dresses and suits.

Even in rural areas, consumer spending rapidly increased to nearly catch up with the national average. After the economic recession of the early 1920s, British Columbians increasingly accepted and adopted consumerism. Spurred by increases in real wages, they had more income to purchase goods and services previously produced at home. At the same time, many businesses slashed prices after years of high inflation, further making goods and services accessible to greater numbers of people. The situation was conducive to expanding consumerism: money was available to purchase goods and prices were down.³⁰

At the same time, British Columbia was changing demographically and women benefited from improved economic and social opportunities. By the early 1930s, more British Columbians lived in urban centres, such as Vancouver and Victoria, than in rural areas, and more British Columbian women lived in cities than in the countryside.³¹ British Columbia had long been a province dominated demographically by men, and women were only just passing the 40% mark in the 1920s.³² Despite being a “masculine space” where most administrators, faculty and graduate students were men, the University of British Columbia was open to young women who made up twenty-nine percent of the students receiving bachelors and first professional degrees in 1930.³³ Mary Ellen Smith was elected as a Member of the Legislature for Vancouver in 1918 after a successful campaign that built on her support and leadership in developing services and provisions for women.³⁴ The late 1910s and early 1920s saw the provincial government strengthen social reforms for women such as mother’s pensions, minimum wages for women and girls, workers’ compensation, and provisions for neglected children.³⁵ It may have seemed that some of the promises of the previous generation of feminist activists were coming to fruition.³⁶

Another change was that young women were more likely to work before marriage, in service, as typists, and in new professional fields such as at local newspapers (see Figure 1).³⁷ Between 1911 and 1931, the percentage of women working in British Columbian cities doubled to approximately 20%. Urban women were more numerous in British Columbia than rural women (20% to 15%), but the percentage of rural women working for wages also doubled during the same period.³⁸ Until the 1930s, the majority of British Columbian female wage earners were under 25 years of age (the 1931 census shows a larger proportion of female workers in the 25 to 64 year range than previous years).³⁹



Figure 1. Society page reporters for *Vancouver Sun* newspaper, 1929. Stuart Thompson, photographer. (City of Vancouver Archives, photo no. 99-2409)

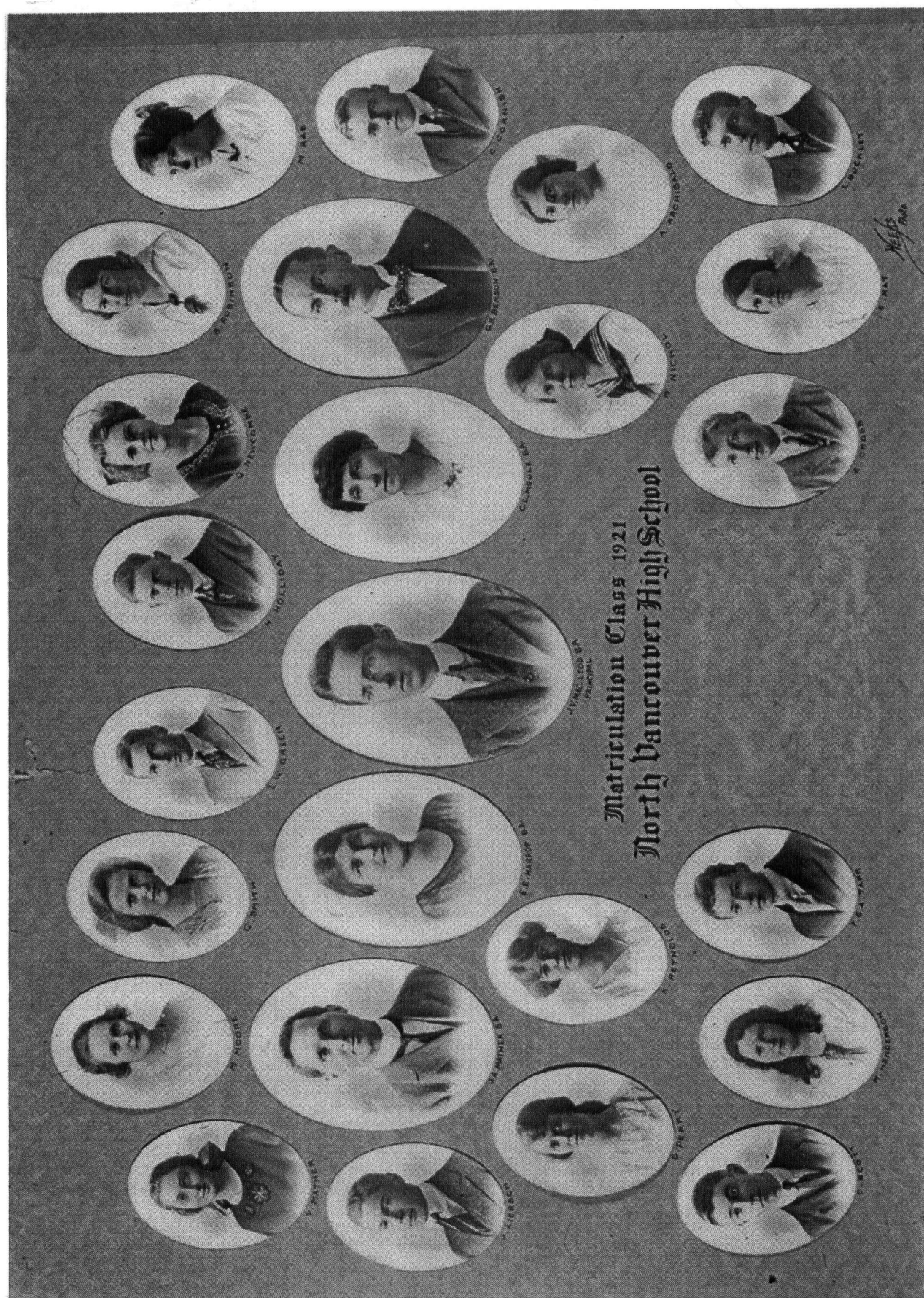
Women workers in British Columbian cities and towns carved spaces for themselves in the metropolitan milieu that emphasised the independence of the New Woman identity and associated it with consumerism. The demographic shift from rural to urban living in British Columbia transformed the foundation of individual and group identity from one based on personal ties and regional knowledge to one originating in self-presentation. Appearance was a crucial concern for young women workers. They created their own culture characterized by an interest in fashion and beautification, and by public activities such as window shopping and dancing. By the end of the 1920s, the idea that beauty could be purchased was pervasive even though conservatives found in women workers' short hair and knee-skimming skirts an example of feminist rebellion, the women themselves remembered beauty and attractiveness to men as their main goal. Joan Sangster's study of women workers in Ontario in the interwar period found that consumption of magazines and especially movies were important to the women she interviewed.⁴⁰ The figure of the New Woman (defined as Mary Pickford) fit the circumstances and aspirations of young urban workingwomen.

Women in the Lower Mainland area increasingly adopted the new hairstyles over the 1920s. An examination of graduation class photographs from a high school in North Vancouver,

a suburb of Vancouver, reveals a slow increase in the number of young women with short hair until by 1929, all female members of the graduating class had adopted the bob (see Figures 2 and 3). The trend dominated young women's fashion until the mid-1930s when longer, shoulder-length hair again became popular. The look did not appear to differ among young women who subsequently went on to university, the world of work, or domestic responsibilities. That young women, still under the supervision of their parents, embraced the look suggests that short hair was becoming increasingly acceptable, even normative. Indeed, young women workers, university students, and society girls continued to wear the short and waved look throughout the third decade and into the fourth. While none of these women left written details about their hair choices and what those choices meant to them, looking beyond British Columbia offers some suggestions.

As the decade progressed, getting one's hair trimmed short remained an event many women approached with trepidation, even as it became routine. Julie Willett recounts one hairdresser's reminiscence that many women were hesitant about the style and would insist that the hairdresser "go slow and not cut off 'too much at first.'"⁴¹ Some would have just the front or back cut on their initial visit. More complicated procedures with more apparatuses, such as permanent waving, also took a long time for even the most daring to try out. Yet, as Willett notes, and photographs from the period attest, short hair and trips to the hairdresser for maintenance became a familiar practice toward the end of the decade.

Many women had an ambivalent relationship with the new beauty culture. They were expected to care about their appearance but not excessively, because too much apparent attention to one's looks was interpreted as a sign of vanity and loose morals.⁴² Many women reported conforming to women's appearance standards because of formal and informal job requirements.⁴³ Marcella, the beauty editor at *Canadian* magazine, recounted the story of a widowed woman in her fifties who was refused every position she applied for until she dyed her



white hair light brown, after which she was welcomed by potential employers.⁴⁴ The new, short haircuts fashionable at the time were supposed to enable women to get and keep a job, then a man.⁴⁵ So, to be taken seriously, women could not look too made up because it connoted overwrought sexuality and immorality, but they could not look too drab or boring either, or men and bosses would ignore or fire them.⁴⁶ A modern look became a requirement for working life.

Women were also mocked for their beauty concerns, even though for women concern about appearance was very real. A 1929 story in *Chatelaine*, "Thrice Permanent," tells of Elsie Butts, a young woman who lives with her mother, works at a cafeteria, and has a pronounced stutter. Joe, a young suitor she adores, is jealous and prone to strong declarations of what he would do if any woman treated him wrong. Elsie persistently worries that she is not pretty enough and longs to get a permanent wave to make her more beautiful. One day, on impulse, she goes in for a wave. It takes a long time and she is late for her date with Joe. She apologizes profusely and Joe tells her that her concerns about her appearance were all for nought, as he planned to marry her from the first day he met her.⁴⁷ Simultaneously encouraging women to care for their appearance with consumer items and mocking or dismissing that care as unimportant was a common feature of health and cosmetic attitudes in the 1920s.⁴⁸

Women worried about health hazards of new beauty technology, such as permanent waving and colouring their hair.⁴⁹ Writers to the *Chatelaine* beauty editor were concerned that permanent waving would be "hard on the hair," which the editor, Mab, disputed with testimonials from a woman who had beautiful hair that had undergone the process ten times. Another beauty writer reported fears of poisoning from chemical dyes.⁵⁰ The most common injuries at the hair salon were burns caused by permanent wave machines, chemical solutions, irons and driers, and infections from manicures and hair plucking.⁵¹ Despite these concerns, many women adopted beauty styles that required trips to the hairdresser.

Increasing numbers of older women embraced the new styles. As Veronica Strong-Boag notes, for middle-aged and older women, adopting new styles such as dying one's white hair and wearing makeup meant getting or keeping a much-needed job⁵² as much as it indicated a personal identity for younger women. For example, in a 1926 column for *Maclean's* entitled "I'll Never Tell My Age Again!"⁵³ Nellie McClung, an influential feminist, noted how a middle-aged woman feared losing her job to a younger "lipstick beauty," and described a middle-aged woman who dyed her hair and looked much younger than her years as a wise example.⁵⁴ One beauty column in *Canadian* magazine in 1930 detailed the stories of four women whose hair had gone grey or white, which the author blamed on a life of hard work and relative poverty. The women's fears as a result of having grey or white hair reflected new definitions of femininity and their role. Two women were concerned about finding employment and reported experiencing age discrimination. Another feared that her husband would leave her or be unfaithful because with white hair she was no longer sexually attractive, a concern that reflected the increased importance of companionate marriage. The fourth expressed concern that her son would compare her unfavourably with his friends' mothers. The suggested solution was not relief from an unequal system that made hard work and poverty inevitable. Rather, consumerism was the answer: the solution provided by the column was to "escape...through the door of a hair dye specialist."⁵⁵ Dyed and short hair meant modernity for older women as well as younger women in a context that valued sexual allure and companionate marriage. Older women, however, were more likely to appear to be forced to adopt changes.

While feminists such as Nellie McClung supported the new style in print, some socialist feminist women argued against the new consumerist beauty norms. They criticized beauty contests; employers, advertising and films objectifying women's bodies; and women's rampant spending on cosmetics and hair treatments as distractions from more important issues facing female workers. Activist women were one version of the New Woman, one that encouraged

equality and respect for women, female leaders and female culture.⁵⁶ However, the same editorial board of the *Woman Worker* that discouraged women from participating in beauty contests wore fashionably short, styled hair and knee-length skirts.⁵⁷ Even critics of consumer culture found it hard to escape. Not all of the left opposed beauty culture. Other left-leaning publications included advertisements for beauty businesses. For example, one labour paper in Vancouver, the *Canadian Labour Advocate*, carried advertisements for a local hairdresser and a local beauty parlour.⁵⁸ Many of the legislators who supported the hairdressers' application for regulation were labour-affiliated. Mass consumption was complicated for working class people in that it could provide goods at inexpensive prices but the culture associated with it, which emphasized leisure activities based on consumption could be detrimental to their pocketbooks and activism.

Despite the exhortations of advertisers and magazine editors, many women approached the new hairstyles with apprehension, even as they increasingly adopted them. Women experimented with the new styles and negotiated the myriad pressures acting on feminine appearance. They were concerned about the social meanings of short and processed hair, of its health dangers, and the political implications of a new, consumerist beauty regime.

The figure of the New Woman took on a new appearance in the 1920s. The new look embodied the freedom and independence anticipated from the achievement of some of the goals of earlier feminists and the aspirations of the post-World War I generation for a more just world. Rapidly expanding film, publishing and marketing industries contributed to the commercial dissemination of the new look around the world and separated it from its feminist meanings. Despite their fears about the new look and the technologies that produced it, women in British Columbia increasingly adopted it over the 1920s.

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The popularity of the new hairstyles had a tremendous impact on how hair services were provided. While the first beauty shops were established in North America in the 1880s on the east coast, women in Vancouver did not have the opportunity to visit one until the 1910s. Even then, hairdressing services found little demand, and few businesses provided hair services to women. The changes in the industry were in step with more general changes in opportunities for women to work for wages. Hair and beauty parlours broadened their base of support over the 1920s from a small group of elite and wealthy women in urban areas to women of all classes throughout the province. With more female customers, the hair services industry struggled to negotiate gender boundaries among its workers and clients. It offered ambitious women entrepreneurial opportunities even as it cemented the gendered nature of women's work, both as consumers and as owners and employees.

In the early twentieth century, women's hairdressing and its associated beauty activities can be best characterized as having two components. First, most hairstyling and cutting were done without payment at home, and women made soaps and shampoos from locally procured or purchased ingredients. In instances where special occasion beauty help was required, a local woman might have informally offered hairdressing services in her kitchen for a little extra money. In some communities, this practice continued to be the main source of beauty services well into the middle of the twentieth century and beyond. For example, in 1947 in the one-company mining community of Britannia Beach, north of Vancouver, an inquiry into the potential for opening a beauty salon was met with a discouraging note from the General Manager of the company, C. P. Browning. "Britannia is very fortunate at the moment," Browning stated, "as it has a very competent hairdresser, the wife of one of our employees, who has set aside part of her own home as a shop, where she gives the ladies of the property any hair service that they require. Under these conditions, the field is taken, so I would suggest that you look to some other area for your undertaking."⁵⁹ The city directory lists no beauty shop in the town, leading one to

conclude that small, informal, in-home shops may have been more common in the twentieth century than written sources suggest.⁶⁰

The other component of hairdressing services was the beauty salon in large, cosmopolitan cities, frequented by wealthy women. Elite hairdressing shops appear to have been a substitute for skilled domestic servants. The customers of one of the first hairdressing shops in North America were drawn from acquaintances made by the owner when she was a domestic servant. Former servant Martha Harper established the Harper Method shop in Rochester, New York. Harper developed her clientele while a servant to a prominent local family, the mistress of which lent out Harper and her hairdressing skills and tonics to wealthy friends. A 1922 short story in *Canadian* magazine provides a not wholly sympathetic portrait of the customers such salons serviced. In the story, the typical customer is a spoiled, stingy bank owner's wife who made regular visits to the salon to have her look touched up and to be pampered by the solicitous staff.⁶¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hairdressing, and the beauty industry more generally, offered women unparalleled opportunities for entrepreneurship and independence. In many African-American communities, hairdressing and beauty shops were one of the few businesses not owned by whites, and one of the few places to work outside of domestic service.⁶² Thus, they were very attractive for ambitious women. Similarly, for Martha Harper the independence of her own shop and the opportunities for expansion evidently were compelling reasons to leave the steady wage offered by domestic service work.⁶³ Many hairdressers continued the tradition of independence.

When demand for hairdressing services outside the home increased, one might have thought that barbers would have stepped in to fill the void. After all, male barbers already cut hair, provided styling products, and gave relaxing massages for reasonable prices.⁶⁴ Barbers were well established, and barbershops existed in most towns and city neighbourhoods in British

Columbia. Initially, barbershops did take on this role throughout North America and in Vancouver.⁶⁵ When short hair first became fashionable, women in New York State lined up around the block to have a barber cut their hair.⁶⁶ Indeed, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1920 short story, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," it is to the local barbershop, rather than to the hairdresser's, that young Bernice goes to have her hair cut.⁶⁷ The barber initially expresses shock at Bernice's request but acquiesces in the face of her determination. Barbershops across North America adapted to the new market for hair services by advertising for female customers and including massage, manicuring and scalp massage for both women and men.⁶⁸

Yet barbers were ambivalent about women's presence in what might be seen as the homosocial male space of the barbershop, which was associated with gambling, prostitution, and private male gossip.⁶⁹ One correspondent to the *Journeyman Barber*, a union newsletter, described turn-of-the-last-century barbershops as follows:

the old time barber shop was the headquarters of all sporting elements, the information bureau of all sport and a loafing place for idle men, and the devil had something for idle hands to do at all times. If a horse race was matched, or a prize fight was promoted, or a badger fight to be pulled off, it was doped out in the barber shop. Musical instruments of all description could be found. If a man would come in that could play, business was suspended until the music ceased. The main literature was the *Police Gazette*, and the walls were literally covered with women and men champions of the world. If a sport hit town he would head for the barber shop and if he had the price of a can he was a full-fledged member of the boys. Ladies would not come into the shop at all. They would bring the children to have their hair cut and would wait around the corner until the job was finished. You could not blame them for staying on the outside for profanity and boisterous talk was very common, which would be embarrassing to a lady. No refinement could be found in the old-time barber shop.⁷⁰

Furthermore, many barbershops were located in male spaces such as pool and billiard halls and taverns.⁷¹ To protect the culture and identity of the barbershop, its operators and its customers, some barbers actively discouraged female customers.⁷² The male space of the barbershop, with its racy topics of conversation and vice-ridden associations, apparently

threatened notions of women's respectability for both female and male observers. The close proximity of customer and operator required by the work may have also deterred some women (and attracted others) for similar reasons. Threats to respectability and preservation of male space encouraged a new, woman-oriented, women-operated, beauty business space.

The hairdressing industry emerged in British Columbia in the second decade of the century with a distinctly feminine cast. In 1910 only one small British Columbian town near the Alberta border hosted a hair services business owned by a woman. Lillie Lawson worked in the village of Hosmer.⁷³ According to the census, twelve women worked in barbering and hairdressing in British Columbia in 1911, compared to 718 men hair workers, making women a miniscule 1.6% of the industry. The 1921 census lists eighty-nine women and 768 men for British Columbia,⁷⁴ with women now 11% of the industry. As I will show below, the trend toward the feminization of the hair services industry was just getting started.

In the early 1920s, only a handful of women are listed in the city directories of British Columbia as barbers, and only fifteen shops provided hair services explicitly to women. Vancouver had thirteen shops in 1924, and New Westminster and Victoria each boasted one. Almost all the shops were centred in the downtown areas. Two Vancouver shops diverged from the geographic pattern: one was established in the young woman workers' neighbourhood of the West End of downtown Vancouver; the other was located near 25th Avenue and Fraser Street.

Hairdressing in British Columbia did not just expand rapidly in the 1920s: it exploded. Hairdressing was first listed as a separate category in the city directories in 1922 with ten businesses listed in downtown Vancouver. In 1929, over 270 beauty and hairdressing salons were listed, dispersed across cities and small communities throughout the province. Of these, 198 were in the Lower Mainland and Victoria, and seventy-three had sprouted up outside the main cities. Here it is important to note John Belshaw's recent work, which shows that smallish towns at the centre of a larger resource industry district were socially, demographically, and

economically similar to large cities, suggesting that smaller centres might be receptive to services, like hairdressing, associated with cosmopolitan urban cities.⁷⁵

The majority of the owners and employees of the new hairdressing salons were female.⁷⁶ By 1931, the federal census listed 656 female hair workers, and 1,052 male hair workers in British Columbia.⁷⁷ They were 38% of hair workers, up from 11% ten years earlier, while men made up 62%, down from 89%. Women workers took over an additional third of the hair industry positions. The feminization trend continued, and by 1941 female hair workers outnumbered male hair workers, 57% to 43%.⁷⁸ Notably, the 1931 census indicates that almost 75% of the hair work apprentices were women, up from 60% in 1921.⁷⁹ The feminization of the hair industry became a source of considerable tension between male and female hair workers in British Columbia at the end of the twenties.

The trend toward increased feminization of services, of which hairdressing was just one, started in British Columbia as early as 1911. At that time, women made up 14.2% of the total services workforce. Ten years later, they were almost 22%, a 50% increase. By 1931, women made up almost 30% of all services, in a trend that continued throughout the century. However, women constituted a larger proportion of the services workforce in Canada as a whole compared to British Columbia, likely due to a more even gender split in the country compared to the region. The new hairdressing shops demonstrated domestic and feminine qualities. Many of the practices of the earlier hairdressing shops for the wealthy continued in an adapted form as the service became more accessible to middle and lower class women. Hairdressers often required customers to make appointments, while barbers worked on a first-come, first served basis. Shops provided increasingly specialized services such as permanents and colouring. For example, shops for wealthy women were divided into separate rooms in which customers would receive isolated, personal and private service.⁸⁰ In shops in the 1920s, partitions and curtains provided a separate space for each individual customer (see Figure 4). In contrast, barbershops were large open

rooms with many chairs. While many hairdressers operated out of their own homes, thus maintaining a decidedly domestic atmosphere, even the stand-alone shops retained a feminine and homey atmosphere with linens and flowers and rooms that “sparkled with cleanliness.” The concern for cleanliness and homeliness echoed increased standards of housekeeping and domestic pride and respectable distance from beauty services’ connection to prostitution and strains of nativism that characterized non-native businesses as dirty.⁸¹ Their placement in the city milieu was different. Barbershops often coexisted with tobacconists and pool halls, while hair salons occupied space in downtown department stores and hotels, spaces that already endeavoured to be comfortable to female customers.⁸² In contrast the reputation of barbershops as centres of gossip, one hairdressing chain forbade gossip, lack of courtesy and favouritism by staff.⁸³ The manner of service varied by market as well. Downtown shops for elite women worked to reflect and reinforce their upscale status and power through obsequious service and more elaborate decor, while the manner of hairdressers who worked out of their kitchens reflected a more relaxed attitude.⁸⁴ Gender and class differentiation continued to be important in the industry.

The female hairdresser could also be seen as the quintessential modern New Woman. She was socially and financially independent, often working and living far from her family. Indeed, the majority of hairdressers who owned their own shops in British Columbia did not live with family members or husbands.⁸⁵ Among those listed in the city directories, the majority had anglo-saxon names (even when the names of their shops adopted cosmopolitan conventions, like *La Parisienne*) and most were in their early twenties, conforming to the images presented in magazine advertisements and Hollywood films (see Figure 5).⁸⁶ (The numbers cited here may not include all who worked at hairdressing since many who provided consumer hair services in an informal manner likely did not report it). She was required to keep up with the modern world

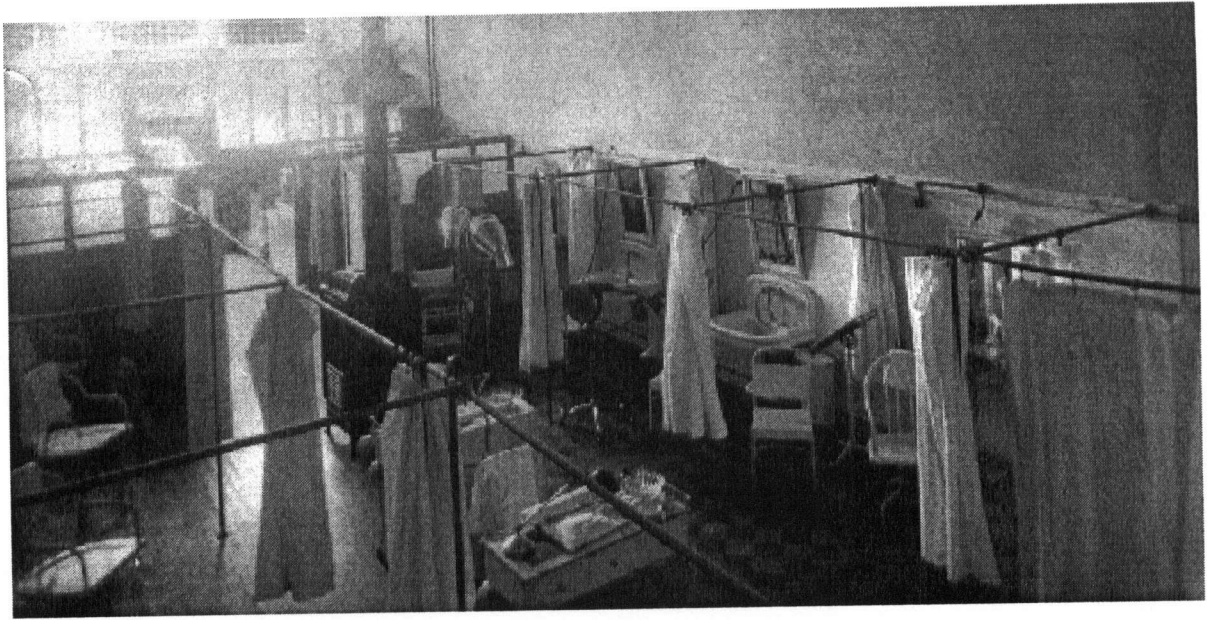


Figure 4. Interior of Freer's Hairdressing Salon, Victoria, 1928. (British Columbia Archival Record Service [BCARS], photo no. E-00542)



Figure 5. Freer's Hairdressing Salon, Victoria, c. 1928. (BCARS E-00541)

of appearances, film and mass media to look for new styles. Her work entailed a concern for making women into modern New Women like herself, through encouraging them to purchase her services and try out new products. For some female entrepreneurs interested in women's issues the hairdressing salon was an ideal location from which to work: it provided work and services to women. For example, the Harper Method franchise promoted female leadership and resisted attempts by male entrepreneurs to purchase the chain. C. Glendinning owned one Vancouver Harper Method shop but Harper Method newsletter readers were assured that Glendinning's wife was really in charge.⁸⁷ Women's independence was an important value in hairdressing because it justified women's paid and unpaid work.

Ironically, the demographic qualities that made hairdressing owners recognizable as New Women were also the features that made them most like the entrepreneurial women of thirty years earlier. Peter Baskerville's work on British Columbian women entrepreneurs shows that women often went into business in fields associated with women, such as housekeeping, boarding home ownership, laundries, and sewing services. Hairdressing certainly supports this generalization. Hairdressers were often financially independent like the New Woman trope, but not always by choice. At least half were married but separated or widowed.⁸⁸

What was hairdressing work like? As is the case in many jobs, the experience of hairdressing work was probably diverse regarding pay levels, job satisfaction and working conditions. On one hand, hairdressing was poorly paid, disagreeable, and sometimes dangerous. Female hair workers were paid about a third less than male hair workers throughout the decade. Like barbers, they worked long hours to provide service when needed, sometimes late into the night. The work could be unpleasant, such as when working with a customer whose hair was in remarkably bad condition, or who was difficult to please. The chemical and electrical technologies used to produce the desired results offered numerous opportunities for harm to operators and clients alike. On the other hand, like other forms of customer service work, such as

waitressing and retail clerking, one's personality and ability to manipulate the relationship with the customer was of foremost importance, likely leading to pride in one's ability to manage difficult customers. The technical skills required of the hairdresser offered the chance to use one's expertise to produce creative, high quality work. The relative independence of beauty parlour work compared to factory or stenographic work, the status that the parlour accorded to its workers through proximity to upper and middle class female customers, and the opportunities it offered for social interaction and experimentation with new beauty products may also have made employment in beauty parlours attractive to young women.⁸⁹

The distance between employer and employee was not great in most hairdressing shops; many employees could entertain the prospect of becoming owners. The main "commodity" one sold was one's skill and labour. Hairdressing was a relatively inexpensive business to get into, particularly for women who worked at their own or their client's home. The larger downtown operations represented a greater investment: hot air driers cost one hundred dollars in 1934 and permanent wave machines cost over \$300 in US dollars.⁹⁰ The costs could be reduced, particularly if one took over a pre-existing shop or bought used equipment. Capital costs were relatively low, and the industry seems to have been open to those able to scrape together only a little bit of start-up money.⁹¹

By the end of the 1920s chains had established a presence in British Columbia's hairdressing industry. Marinello, Blue Bird, and the Harper Method all had more than one shop in British Columbia. Many of the chains had schools and provided assistance in establishing a business. However, they also reduced the control that an individual hairdresser had over how she conducted her business. For example, the Harper Method chain had strict rules about how massages would be done, how hair would be washed and what services would be provided.⁹² Hairdressing chains were created and developed by female entrepreneurs who promoted women

workers but in the mid and late 1920s all but Harper were bought out by large male-run organizations that were less interested in promoting female leadership.

Hairdressers were part of larger changes in society in the 1920s. The creation and expansion of women's beauty space was furthered by the availability and permissibility of female workers to staff them. After the recession of the late 1910s and early 1920s, the service industry expanded in Canada, and women filled many of the new service positions.⁹³

Hairdressing, a personal service *par excellence*, neatly fits into the narrative of an expanding and feminized service sector of the economy. Hairdressers were among a wave of women workers and entrepreneurs who catered to the expanding number of female consumers. Many hairdressing business owners retained a feminist vision of their work providing services to women and employment for young women. With the expansion of chain stores into British Columbia, the newly emerged local, small business, female leadership in the industry became less prevalent in the larger international consumerist changes happening in North America.

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The rapid expansion of hairdressing and high degree of organization among hairdressers brought the debate about women's roles as consumers and workers, and about the importance of international consumerism, to the British Columbia legislature in the late 1920s. The central issues for legislators and British Columbians were the recognition of the importance of female-dominated consumer services, the definition of female hair services and its customers, the feminist desire for separate leadership of the predominantly female hair services business, and protection for female hair services consumers from international practitioners. Legislation was achieved at the end of the decade, and while it granted recognition and leadership to the hairdressing industry, it enshrined gender divisions that continued to limit women's entrepreneurial and consumer opportunities.

The call for regulation of hairdressers was inspired in part by similar legislation passed for barbers in the early 1920s. In 1923, the barbers' union approached the British Columbia Legislature to ask for regulation of the barbering industry to protect practitioners from competition.⁹⁴ The impetus for seeking legislation was the union's longstanding policy of Asian exclusion, which focused on Chinese and Japanese barbers, and an increase in the number of Asian businesses expanding beyond Asian sectors into white neighbourhoods. The move was part of a larger pattern of white attempts to manage retail competition through exclusion of Asians.⁹⁵ The focus of the International Union of Journeymen Barbers on legislation to protect their members' skilled status through an appeal to customers' concern for hygiene standards aided the unionized barbers' quest for regulation.⁹⁶ Hygiene control went hand in hand with racism and nativism, as white native-born people used public health fears to construct a portrait of recent immigrants and non-whites as dirty, germ-ridden and immoral. Concern for hygiene was felt most keenly among educated elites, and those who served them had to adopt the concerns of high status customers to maintain their business. While businesses that catered to elites often pushed for hygiene regulation, businesses that catered to lower class customers often resisted increased regulation and its associated costs.⁹⁷ Even though the federal government had effectively banned Chinese immigration in 1923 and satisfied many of the proponents of Asian exclusion, the barbers, led by their union, felt that they needed additional legislative support to discredit Asian barbers and discourage whites from patronizing Asian hair services. However, the resultant law had nothing to say about Asian barbers and specifically excluded female hair workers from its benefits.

The initial bill was an object of great comedy in the legislature because it upset status and gender norms. Newspaper reports repeatedly commented on the jokes, incredulity and laughter incited by discussion of the bill. The uneasiness indicated by the humour centred first on treating the upper working class occupation of barbering as a profession along the lines of upper middle

class medicine and law. Members repeatedly commented that men could cut their own hair, thus devaluing the skill of the service provided. British Columbians expressed similar views: one letter to the editor of the *Victoria Times* argued that professionalizing barbers was ridiculous and went on to list occupations that would be preposterous to regulate: “farmers, butchers, bakers, confectioners, fishmongers, the grocer who handles our butter and lard and cheese, the restaurant and hotel keeper, the boarding house keeper, and why not the plumbers, above all?”⁹⁸ Many of these professions were regulated later in the decade, indicating that the barbers’ bill was part of a larger trend toward increased regulation of consumer services. In the early 1920s, however, concerns about maintaining status were central.

Not only did the barbers’ bill threaten class identities, it also threatened the masculine identities of MLAs. Most of the men of the House showed themselves to be experts in the finer details of barbering, to the hypocritical giggling response of the room. Some suggested that the members forego barbering services altogether and several thought men’s appearance was unimportant. Proponents of the bill criticized poking fun at the subject and suggested that attention to appearance and its provision was a serious subject for men to contemplate. Frank Browne of the Canadian Labour Party was one of the legislative members who chastised the MLAs for their mockery of barbering, claiming that it was serious business.⁹⁹ Barbering was likely a subject of disdainful attention because it was a personal service. Although services had long been dismissed as unimportant to productive men, the increasing economic significance and intense feminization of the service sector made the demands for recognition of the hairdressing industry from men with power in British Columbia more urgent, however uncomfortable it made some legislators.

The bill eventually passed in December 1924, giving barbers professional status and providing health-related restrictions, training regulations and an official association to regulate themselves. The barbers’ bill was supported by labour-affiliated MLAs such as Thomas Uphill of

the mining community of Fernie and Frank Browne, from the working class Vancouver suburb of Burnaby.¹⁰⁰ The Barbers' Act defined barbering as follows:

engaging in the shaving of the face or cutting or trimming or singeing of the hair or beard for hire, gain, or hope of reward, or in connection with any of the foregoing, the shampooing or massaging or the treating [of] the head or face, or in respect of any of the aforesaid the charging for any material used in connection therewith.¹⁰¹

The legislation defined barbering solely by the functions of the barber, rather than the identity of the customer. It provided for centralized control of the industry through an examination for admittance to a new professional association in charge of regulation. It apparently provided ample protection for barbers.¹⁰²

Despite inclusion in the bill's first draft, female workers were excluded from the provisions when the bill was in committee. In excluding women hair workers, the Barbers' Act classified work done by women workers as unprofessional, not worthy of status, and irrelevant. A supporter of the bill, Major Burde, independent Liberal MLA from Alberni, accused "'back number' barbers" of opposing the bill. Burde argued that the bill was designed to discourage "'cheap and dirty'" barbers and sought to stop Asian and women barbers "who had made [Burde's] own face like 'a cactus field.'" The legislation did not formally exclude Asian workers, against whom the barbers' union had a longstanding official policy, but the bill's proponents hoped the medical and training provisions would exclude them in practice. The same year, the provincial government had recognized that it could not limit the rights of Asians to purchase business licenses on the basis of nationality, despite pressure from civic governments.¹⁰³ With the legislation, the barbers were successful in protecting hair services as an officially masculine preserve.

That barbers did not protest women's exclusion, and may even have encouraged committee members to enact the provision, is not surprising. The leaders of the International Journeymen Barbers' Union had pushed for legislation since the mid-1910s but only accepted

women into the union in separate locals around the same time as the British Columbia legislature debated the bill, so including women in the legislation was unlikely a priority.¹⁰⁴ Membership was later extended to cosmeticians and manicurists, but Asian workers continued to be excluded. The legislation established a conservative position that emphasized the ephemeral nature of women's consumerism and women's working and entrepreneurial endeavours.

The Barbers' Act had little effect on the magnitude of growth in women's hairdressing. The 1924 city directories listed fourteen hairdressers in British Columbia, nine in the Lower Mainland and five in smaller rural centres. In 1927, city directories listed 141 businesses, seventy-nine in the Lower Mainland and sixty-two in smaller centres. The tenfold increase in hairdressing businesses points to women's amplified interest in the service despite the implied message of the legislation.

Hairdressers were unhappy about the legislation and their exclusion from it.¹⁰⁵ The Barbers' Act must have made the limits to recognition of women's work in consumer services outside the home stand out in stark relief. Likely, they were disgruntled because the 1924 Barbers' Act denied them the protection and status that regulation offered men. Even though hairdressing was becoming an important new component of the hair services industry, the law effectively shut them out, made it illegal for them to cut hair, and denied formal recognition of their work.

Hairdressers' resolve to gain regulation of their industry was only strengthened by the expansion of the industry. As hairdressing grew, the larger British Columbia shops organized to campaign for government regulation of the industry. Most other Canadian provinces would wait until the 1940s or later to regulate hairdressers, further pointing to the strength of the British Columbian hairdressers' organization. Regulation appeared to offer multiple advantages: the standardization inherent in regulation connoted modernity; regulation further legitimized and professionalized their work, separating those who worked in larger businesses from those who

worked on their neighbours' hair in kitchens; regulation protected and legitimized the capital and training investments that large downtown businesses and their employees had made; and regulation offered protection in the eyes of consumers, making the regulated industry more attractive and trustworthy to potential customers, thus gaining their confidence.

James C. Scott argued that categorization and standardization are essential to a modern state. The decision to regulate hairdressers required legislators to categorize different kinds of hair service work to establish standards of acceptable practice. Standards make idiosyncratic local practices easier to regulate and more susceptible to power from the outside.¹⁰⁶ In the case of hairdressers in British Columbia, the most powerful hairdressers, those in downtown Vancouver, looked for the assistance of the provincial government to limit the many small, part-time hairdressing businesses through standardization.

Despite repeated offers from barbers' representatives to include hairdressers in the provisions of the Barbers' Act, they declined, preferring to be responsible for regulating themselves. In this they acted in a manner similar to other predominately female occupational groups and feminist groups. A strong strand of feminism in the first third of the twentieth century promoted the principle of separate but equal. Proponents argued that women needed space to become active leaders of their own organizations, attuned to women's concerns, and that mixing with men did not allow them such opportunities because of a persistent preference for male leadership. Like waitresses, hairdressers wanted to run their own organizations and be recognized as a separate occupational group.¹⁰⁷

Mary Ellen Smith, Liberal member for Vancouver, introduced the hairdressers' bill on February 8, 1927 in the last year of the Liberal government's term.¹⁰⁸ The bill was modelled on the barbers' legislation and included the regulation of beauty schools, provisions for hygiene and the creation of a mandatory association to monitor the industry. In addition, like the barbers' bill

it induced a cascade of chuckles among the members of the legislature.¹⁰⁹ Upon its introduction, members mockingly moaned, “No! No!” Regulating hair services remained controversial.

The first hurdle for the bill was negotiating the gender boundaries of the hair industry. The government committee (made up of Major Richard Burde [Independent], Tom Uphill [Independent Labour], Canon Joshua Hinchliffe [Conservative], Paul Harrison [Independent Liberal], and Mary Ellen Smith [Liberal])¹¹⁰ called a meeting of barbers and hairdressers to discuss whether the hairdressers would be incorporated into the barbers’ regulation or have separate legislation bill. Representatives from 1,150 barbershops, all male, and over 200 hairdressing parlours, mostly female, attended.¹¹¹ According to newspaper reports, the afternoon meeting was heated. The barbers’ representative (and likely some members of the committee) favoured including the hairdressers under the Barbers’ Act as members of the Barbers’ Association, while hairdressers held out for separate regulation.¹¹²

The hairdressers’ representative, Gordon Wismer (a lawyer and future Attorney-General in the post-World War II coalition government), argued that the legislation would protect female customers; “under existing laws,” he stated, “patrons of beauty parlours and hairdressing establishments are at the mercy of ‘beauticians’ who came here from the United States and undertake to make a woman of fifty look like a girl of twenty.”¹¹³ The xenophobia evident in discussions of the barbers’ bill resurfaced again as a fear of profit-hungry, unethical US practitioners. As Patricia Roy notes, by the end of the 1920s, anti-Asian sentiment was on the wane and was not an important component of the politicians’ discussion.¹¹⁴ Wismer’s comment appealed to fears of international consumer culture, a culture that magazines and film promoted, and that portrayed women as front line consumers. It also underlines the importance of the consumer in the debate over the bill, and specifically the importance of protecting women consumers from their own apparently whimsical and gullible judgement.

Gender and class divisions were evident in discussions at the meeting. J. B. Clearihue, a barber, argued that since 95% of barbers did bobs and marcelling, the legislation would require barbers to pay dues equalling \$37,500 to the Hairdressing Association. In addition, if regulation forbade dying and processing hair, they would lose a large portion of their business. One hairdresser worried that under the new legislation she would have to pass an exam in shaving, a task that she had never been asked to perform in her fifteen years in the business. A consistent complaint against the bill was that the proposed exam required skills in many more areas than any hairdresser ever used. Committee member Paul Harrison worried that the provisions were too vague and wide and would, for example, be imposed on nurses who trimmed patients' hair.¹¹⁵ A. M. Rohne, a consistent opponent of the bill and operator of Society Beauty Parlours and Beauty School in downtown Vancouver, complained that people did not understand the bill, that newspapers treated it as a joke when it was serious business, and that graduates of her school would not be able to find work, even though they were trained, specialized workers. In response, Henri Gautschi, the owner of one of the oldest elite downtown Vancouver beauty salons, Maison Henri, opined that British Columbia beauty schools were incapable of producing adequate graduates.¹¹⁶ All of the named industry representatives were from large, urban shops, suggesting that despite their stated fears of competition from unethical US immigrants, the competition they feared may have been from the smaller, kitchen operations.

The meeting impressed upon committee members the gendered differences and contentions within the industry. They found that the conflict arose "out of the confusion that exists in the rights of either class under the bob-shingle regime that now rules the feminine world." Regulation demanded a clear definition of classifications of service and worker, while what had developed in the industry was a service that was not clearly gender segregated. "Barbers want to be beauticians, and beauticians want to be barbers'!"¹¹⁷ stated an exasperated Burde. The negotiations resulted in a stalemate, and committee members were hesitant to move

forward. Indeed, the committee declared that the whole bill would have to be redrafted and that barbers and hairdressers should work out their differences privately before returning to the committee. As Ruth Milkman notes in her study of gender segregation, male workers' resistance to substituting female for male labour can deter owners from employing women.¹¹⁸ The same concern might explain legislators' ambivalence toward condoning the substitution of female labour in hair services.

A week later, on March 1, an unreported number of hairdressing bill lobbyists "invaded" the legislature to show their support for the bill.¹¹⁹ Despite this support, when the committee spoke to the redrafted bill the next day, they reported that the hairdressers and barbers had yet to resolve their differences and suggested it would be better for them to negotiate a solution together than for the government to legislate one. However, if the groups were unable to agree, the committee recommended passing legislation for the hairdressers because the substantial investment made by owners of hairdressing businesses (for example, in capital outlays and licensing fees) made it unfair that they not receive the same professional protective benefits as barbers.¹²⁰ This argument reflected most forcefully the concern of larger businesses for professionalization and protection of their higher status.

The legislative session ended without a report from the committee, effectively ending any hope of passing the bill. The omission incited supporters Burde and Uphill to walk out of the legislature in disgust.¹²¹ One of the primary reasons why the bill was unsuccessful was that the barbers opposed separate regulation of hairdressers. The importance of maintaining their hold on the industry was likely persuasive enough to convince the government to ignore the bill until the legislative session had closed, which effectively killed the proposed legislation.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the dearth of regulatory controls, hairdressing salons continued to spring up throughout the province between early 1927 and late 1929 when the Hairdressing Association again approached the legislature for regulation.¹²² According to city

directories, the number of shops in British Columbia effectively doubled between 1927 and 1929, from 141 to 270.¹²³ The biggest gain in numbers, however, was in the cities of Vancouver and Victoria, where the combined total in 1927 was seventy-nine shops. The number leapt to 197 in 1929 as more entrepreneurs, almost all women, tried their hand at attracting some of the increasing demand for hair services.

In 1929, hairdressers tried again, still with support from labour-affiliated MLAs. At the end of the decade, the political climate had changed somewhat. The Conservatives had defeated the Liberals in the 1928 election on a platform of restricted spending and new leadership. Mary Ellen Smith was defeated and did not return to Victoria. In addition, the hairdressers had made their peace with the barbers. In 1928, British Columbia newspapers announced that hairdressers had agreed to take the barbering exam to cut hair, recognizing one of the boundaries of the hairdresser/barber divide.¹²⁴

On February 6, 1929, Tom Uphill again raised the possibility of hairdressing regulation in the legislature with the introduction of a private members' bill. The Conservative government had been reluctant to let him proceed, on procedural grounds, but Uphill pleaded for its admittance "on account of the ladies," and to cater to the "flapper vote" which had recently been given attention by the press in England. Others cited instances when the government had allowed bills to proceed under similar circumstances. Eventually the interests of the "flapper vote" won out and the speaker permitted its introduction as a public bill in the hands of a private member.¹²⁵

The 1929 bill, like its predecessor in 1927, had a chequered history in the legislature. It was drastically revised in committee but stayed there for more than four weeks, until Uphill cried foul on February 28 and arranged for the reintroduction of the bill on March 13. When the bill was reintroduced, the Conservative cabinet harshly criticized it. Just before the legislature passed the bill, an opponent, Dr. L.E. Borden, proposed amendments that would prevent the colouring of hair and the removal of superfluous hair with the use of electrical or other apparatus, including

x-rays. The amendment can be construed to indicate a lack of faith in female consumers and the lengths to which they were willing to go for "beauty." The fear harkened back to concerns about fifty-year old women who would believe they could look twenty years old again and the dangers of new technologies. However, the bill passed with Dr. Borden's amendments.¹²⁶

The bill was a victory for the Hairdressers' Association, which was made the industry's regulator and fee collector and defined hairdressing work as a separate skill set. The powers of examination and enforcement were centred in the southwest of the province and allowed the Association to determine who could legitimately call oneself a hairdresser. The first appointees to the examining board were three prominent owner/operators, of whom the latter two were female: W.M. Yates of the Ideal Hair Parlour, D. Enwright of Dorcas Beauty Parlours, both of downtown Vancouver, and Mrs. Ross of Esquimalt.¹²⁷ In this instance, the introduction of government regulation, in this instance, did not just mean regulation by government but regulation by the owners of the largest businesses.

One implication of the new Act was that it asserted government authority in the area of consumer services. Both local and international beauty shop chains had to conform to its hygiene and safety regulations. While international companies had been required to abide by local laws long before British Columbia's Hairdressing Act, the Act represented an intrusion into the operation of the consumer services industry.

The bill again generated debate over the role of women as consumers and workers and the need for hairdressing regulation. In late February, an unreported number of hairdressers attended the legislature in support of the bill and its protection of the health of customers from "unskilled practitioners."¹²⁸ A letter to the *Victoria Daily Times* from Nancy Hanks echoed earlier characterizations of hairdressing as a symptom of wasteful, irrelevant feminine consumption, and a diversion dictated by the temporary whims of fashion. In contrast, she argued, barbers provided a service of permanence, which adequately met women's hairdressing

needs.¹²⁹ In this case, hairdressing is a stand-in for consumerism. Its customers and practitioners are assumed to be female, and like the Frankfurt School's constructions of modern female consumers, were described as flighty, impermanent and irrelevant. The debate thus centred on how seriously to treat new consumer services.

The legislative discussion of the bill centred on how to define hairdressing, particularly in relation to barbering. The initial draft presented the following definition:

“Hairdressing shall mean and include, with hands or the use of any method of mechanical application or appliance engaging in any one or more of any combination of the following practices, viz. and to wit: arranging, dressing, curling, waving, permanently waving, cleansing, cutting, singeing, bleaching, colouring or similar work upon the hair of any female person, or the cutting or trimming of hair upon any male person, for the fitting of any wig or toupee.”¹³⁰

It also included provisions for the following services to women: “massaging, cleansing, stimulating, manipulating, exercising, beautifying the scalp, face, neck, arms, bust or upper part of the body, [and] manicuring the nail.”¹³¹

The 1929 Act left cutting men's hair to barbers, while defining the customers of hairdressers as females, boys under seven years of age, and men being fitted for wigs and toupées. While the definition of barbering emphasized the work being done, the definition of hairdressing specified the gender of the consumer. The definition protected the masculine space of the barbershop while enshrining hairdressers' role in the beauty industry as one concerned wholly with young women consumers. The distinction reiterated a gendered characterization of women consumers as passive. No group of workers or operators were excluded from the bill.

Another strand that ran through the discussion of the legislation was a concern to protect women consumers from themselves. One hairdresser representative articulated a fear of the unscrupulous hairdresser who would entice gullible women customers who were so desperate to change their bodies and their look under pressure from employers and popular culture that they would believe anything.¹³² Similarly, a last minute censure on the use of x-rays and hair

colouring and hair removal was meant to protect female consumers from some of the more serious health risks involved in modifying the body for beauty. It also perhaps suggested some reticence about modern technology. Women were portrayed as heedless of danger in their pursuit of beauty, confirming stereotypes of feminine vulnerability to sellers' promises and warnings. Perhaps we can also read the concern as an implicit criticism of the regime of beauty, which the mostly female hairdressers actively supported as their livelihood.

Despite these fears, the bill supported the permanence and importance of women's employment in hair services as workers and entrepreneurs. The benefits of regulation, such as higher status and potentially safer working conditions, would extend to both workers and owners. The legislation codified the gender definitions that had developed in the hair industry, but it recognized women as individual entrepreneurs and service workers and provided at least tacit support for women's beauty regimes.

* * * * *

One of the primary categories for analyzing modern society is gender, and the designation of some jobs as female work and others as male is serious business. While considered common sense in everyday life, the task of defining and categorizing the gendered nature of the hairdressing industry confused and confounded legislators to the extent that they preferred to leave issues of definition to the members of the industry themselves. At the root of Major Burde's confusion was concern that hair workers seemed to be moving out of their prescribed gender roles, epitomized in his comment that "barbers want to be beauticians and beauticians want to be barbers."¹³³ The final resolution that the barbers' would retain their rights and privileges to cut anyone's hair, but hairdressers would be limited to cutting the hair of women and children, clarified and confirmed the gendered division of customers and the character of the work. More than defining business territory was at stake. It substantiated the gendered designation of consumer service work.

Burde was remarkably prescient in commenting on a feminine “bob-shingle regime.” Consumer services have comprised ever-larger parts of the North American economy and are both provided by and primarily purchased by women. However, feminization of consumer service industries and the hairdressers’ push for legislation allowed public discussion of the role of beauty services in the burgeoning consumer sector of the British Columbia economy. That discussion revealed the deep-seated ideas embedded in the new consumer society: women consumers are irrational, easily persuaded, and fickle; masculine cultures should be separated from feminine influence; and segregation by gender is better than men and women working in close proximity. Despite the transition to a more consumer-driven society, a change that might have suggested increased power for women and a breakdown of gender boundaries, those divisions remained remarkably resilient.

With its resource-exploitation background, British Columbia has experienced an ongoing struggle with international consumerism. Today, the province attempts to create a local identity—based on functional outdoor recreation clothing in which to tour the local wilderness—while keeping up with international edgy trends for asymmetrical haircuts and pointy-toed shoes. The 2010 Olympics will provide an excellent example of the confluence and contradictions of British Columbia’s local/global identity in fashion. However, British Columbia has remained remarkably in step with international trends, from feminization of services to regulation of those services, of which hairdressing was just a beginning.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ "Impasse Threatens Beauty Shop Bill," *Vancouver Province*, February 23, 1927: 7.
- ² Census and Statistics Office, *Fifth Census of Canada 1911* (Ottawa, ON: C.H. Parmlee, 1912) vol. 6, table IV, "Number of persons 10 years of age and over engaged in gainful occupation in Canada by aggregates, nativity and age periods;" Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Sixth Census of Canada, 1921* (Ottawa, ON: F.A. Acland, 1924-1928) vol. 4, table 2, "Occupations of the population 10 years of age and over, classified by sex for provinces, 1921;" Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Seventh Census of Canada 1931* (Ottawa, ON: J. O. Patenaude, 1934) vol. 7, table 4, "Gainfully occupied, 10 years of age and over, by occupation, age, and sex for Canada and the provinces, 1931."
- ³ Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation during World War II* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.
- ⁴ John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993).
- ⁵ A concise summary of the positions of the Frankfurt School and 1980s theorists can be found in Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 99-103. For a critique of the 1980s celebratory position, see Susan Bordo, "Material Girl," *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, 10th anniversary edition, with new preface by the author and new forward by Leslie Heywood (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 260-268.
- ⁶ Victoria de Grazia, "Introduction," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. Victoria de Grazia with Ellen Furlough (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 1.
- ⁷ A popular proponent of this position is Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto, ON: Vintage Books, 1991). For a more theoretically informed and complicated argument, see Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*.
- ⁸ Peiss, *Hope*, 269.
- ⁹ Judith Stamps, "Consumer Education and the Philosophy of Competitive Individualism in British Columbia," *BC Studies*, no. 83 (1989): 68-93; Thomas A. Hutton, "The Innisian Core-Periphery Revisited: Vancouver's Changing Relationships with British Columbia's Staple Economy," *BC Studies*, no. 113 (1997): 69-100; Robyn Dowling, "Femininity, Place and Commodities: A Retail Case Study," *Antipode* 25, no. 4 (1993): 295-319; Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood, Masculinity, and the Good Life During Canada's Baby Boom 1945-1965," *Journal of Family History* 24, no.3 (1999): 351-373. In the Canadian context, Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: the Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999) is essential reading. The exception to studies of the earlier period is David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1930* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
- ¹⁰ For a recent overview of the field, see Philip Scranton, ed., *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender and Culture in Modern America* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001). On race and beauty, see Julie Willett, *Permanent Waves: The Making of the American Beauty Shop* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000); Tiffany Melissa Gill, "'I Had My Own Business... So I Didn't Have to Worry': Beauty Salons, Beauty Culturists, and the Politics of African-American Female Entrepreneurship," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 169-194; Ayana D. Bird and Lori B. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2001); Ingrid Banks, *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power, and Black Women's Consciousness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000). Kathy Peiss' recent book about the cosmetics industry in the US addresses gender directly. See Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1998).
- ¹¹ Peiss, *Hope*, 135.
- ¹² Gwendolyn Davies, "The Literary 'New Woman' and Social Activism in Maritime Literature, 1880-1920," in *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes*, eds. Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 234; Willett, *Permanent*, 40-41; Peiss, *Hope*, 135.
- ¹³ Willett, *Permanent*, 31-5.
- ¹⁴ Mab, "How Does Your Permanent Wave?" *Chatelaine* 2 (April 1929): 32, 37.
- ¹⁵ Mary Vipond, "Canadian Nationalism and the Plight of Canadian Magazines in the 1920s," *Canadian Historical Review* LVIII, no. 3 (March 1977): 44. In 1926, the *Saturday Evening Post* was the second most popular US magazine in Canada after the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Mid-decade, the *Post* had a circulation one and half times that of the leading Canadian magazine, *Maclean's*.
- ¹⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," in *The Collected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, with an introduction by Malcolm Crowley (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 39-60.
- ¹⁷ Malcolm Crowley, "Editor's Note," in *The Collected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, with an introduction by Malcolm Crowley (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 3-4.
- ¹⁸ Peiss, *Hope*, 22.
- ¹⁹ Plitt, *Martha*, 40-42.

- ²⁰ Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 126.
- ²¹ Strange discusses the Canadian film, *Her Own Fault*, in *Girl Problem*, 192-3. For a US example, see Stacie A. Colwell, "The End of the Road: Gender, the Dissemination of Knowledge, and the American Campaign against Venereal Disease During World War I," in *The Visible Woman: Imaging Technologies, Gender and Science*, ed. Paula A. Treichler, Lisa Cartwright and Constance Penley (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 44-82.
- ²² Detailed in Strange, *Girl Problem*, 197; Beatrice Redpath, "The Galleons of Spain," *Chatelaine* 1 (March 1928): 20-1, 48-50; Murial Watson, "Cotton Stockings," *Chatelaine* 1 (May 1928): 21-2, 43-4.
- ²³ In June 1926, the best selling magazines in Canada were *Ladies*, *Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Pictorial Review* with a combined circulation of 408 905. The most popular Canadian magazines at the end of 1925 were *Maclean's*, *Canadian Home Journal* and *Canadian* which had a combined circulation of 162 671. Vipond, "Canadian Nationalism," 43-45.
- ²⁴ Lizabeth Cohen articulately makes the opposing argument in *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 157.
- ²⁵ On choice, see Cynthia Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 242; Peiss, *Hope*, 126-127.
- ²⁶ See advertisements and Mab's column, "The Promise of Beauty," in *Chatelaine* throughout the late 1920s; Eileen Wedd, "The Long and the Short of It: Some Actual Demonstrations of the Well-Dressed Head," *Chatelaine* 2 (January 1929): 22; Barman, *West*, 244. See also Valerie Korinek, *Roughing It In the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press: 2000), 33-5, 43-58, regarding the relationship between *Chatelaine's* editors and the advertising department of *Maclean's*, their parent company.
- ²⁷ "'Doug' and Mary Fairbanks are Greeted Here," *Victoria Daily Times*, September 26, 1922: 1, 8.
- ²⁸ For example, see Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), xxii.
- ²⁹ Cohen, *Making*, 126-127.
- ³⁰ Monod, *Store Wars*, 111. Based on statistics from Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1931 Census, and the papers of the Select Committee on Agricultural Conditions. Barman discusses increased wages: 12% from 1922-1929 (*West*, 239). On lower prices, see Monod, *Store*, 128-37.
- ³¹ In 1921, the population of urban areas was 47% of the population of British Columbia, and 50% of British Columbia women lived in cities; in 1931, 57% of British Columbians lived in urban areas, and 60% of British Columbia women lived in urban areas (Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 1, Table 12 "Numerical distribution of the population by quinquennial age groups, sex, rural and urban, Canada and provinces, 1931-1921"). In 1911, women were 39% of Vancouverites (Canada, *Fifth Census*, vol. 1, table 1, "Area and Population of Canada by provinces, Districts and Subdistricts in 1911 and Population in 1901"), in 1921, women were 45% (Canada, *Sixth Census*, vol. 1, table 16, "Population, Canadian, British and foreign born, classified by sex for counties and census divisions") and in 1931, women were 47% of Vancouverites (Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 1, table 19, "Population by sex in cities and towns of 10,000 and over, 1871-1931").
- ³² Barman, *West*, Table 11, 369.
- ³³ Lee Stewart, *"It's Up To You": Women at UBC in the Early Years* (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press for the UBC Academic Women's Association, 1990).
- ³⁴ Barman, *West*, 230; Elizabeth Norcross, "Mary Ellen Smith: The Right Woman in the Right Place at the Right Time," in *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on Women's Work in British Columbia*, ed. Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro (Victoria, BC: Camosun College, 1984), 360.
- ³⁵ Barman, *West*, 225.
- ³⁶ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1988), 1-3.
- ³⁷ Marjory Lang and Linda Hale, "Women of *The World* and Other Dailies: The Lives and Times of Vancouver Newspaperwomen in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century," *BC Studies*, no. 85 (1990): 3-23.
- ³⁸ Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 1, table 13, "Wage earners, 15 years of age and over, by age and sex, showing average earnings and average number of weeks employed during the period June 1, 1910 to June 1, 1911, also average earnings per week employed, for cities of 30,000 population and over."
- ³⁹ Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 1, table 8, "Wage earners 15 years of age and over, by age and sex, showing average earnings and average number of weeks employed during the period June 1, 1910 to June 1, 1911, also average earnings per week employed, for Canada and the provinces"; Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 1, table 9, "Wage earners 10 years of age and over, by age and sex, showing average earnings and average number of weeks employed during

the period June 1, 1920 to June 1, 1921, also average earnings per week employed, for Canada and the provinces"; Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 1, table 10, "Wage earners 10 years of age and over, by age and sex, showing average earnings and average number of weeks employed during the period June 1, 1930 to June 1, 1931, also average earnings per week employed, for Canada and the provinces."

⁴⁰ On the impact of demographic changes, see Elizabeth Haiken, *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 38-9; Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 167-9; and Peiss, *Hope*, 146. On urban working women's culture, see Strange, *Girl Problem*, 157-9, 189-97; and Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 62-7. On the importance of beauty, attractiveness and mass media, see Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 86.

⁴¹ Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 35.

⁴² A short story example can be found in Jane Levington Comfort, "Thrice Permanent: The Story of a Girl who Felt She Wasn't Pretty Enough," *Chatelaine* 2 (September 1929): 13. See also Strange, *Girl Problem*, 192, and Colwell, "End of the Road."

⁴³ Strange, *Girl Problem*, 189; Alison Prentice et al, ed., *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd edition (Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1996) 259; Peiss, *Hope*, 192-3.

⁴⁴ Marcella, "Why Should We Grow Old?" *Canadian Magazine* 73 (April 1930): 34, 35.

⁴⁵ Wright, "Feminine Trifles," 243-5.

⁴⁶ Strange, *Girl Problem*, 193; Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 259; Peiss, *Hope*, 192-3.

⁴⁷ Comfort, "Thrice Permanent," 13, 62, 65, 6.

⁴⁸ Peter Stearns, *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1997), 80.

⁴⁹ Mab, "How Does Your Permanent Wave?" 5.

⁵⁰ Marcella, "Old," 34, 35.

⁵¹ Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 96.

⁵² Strong-Boag, *New Day*, 179.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 182.

⁵⁴ Nellie L. McClung, "I'll Never Tell My Age Again!" *Maclean's*, March 15, 1926, 15, 55.

⁵⁵ Marcella, "Why Should We Grow Old?" 34-35. The accompanying illustration is of a woman with elongated limbs with arms and one leg raised, smoking, and an overweight man who appears to have suddenly stopped at the sight of the woman, and has one hand raised to his mouth.

⁵⁶ Margaret Hobbs and Joan Sangster, ed., *The Woman Worker, 1926-1929* (St. John's, NF: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1999), 14, 29, 39, 111, 118.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

⁵⁸ *The Canadian Labour Advocate*, September 25, 1925; 8. Advertisement for G. Val Mulligan of 4098 Hastings East in Burnaby, British Columbia. The text of the advertisement is as follows: "Tobacconist/Barber Shop/Toilet Preparations/ 'Ladies' Work a Specialty/ Two Barbers Always in Attendance." And advertisement for Myrtle's Beauty Shop, 3972 Hastings St. East, Burnaby, British Columbia, which promised "Beautiful Hair/ Are you satisfied with yours? / For Marcelling, Shingling and all forms of BEAUTY CULTURE we/ are at your service. / Daily from 9 to 7 and by appointment." The shop also sold hosiery.

⁵⁹ Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Britannia Mining and Smelting Co., Add.MSS 1221, Box 50, file 27, C. P. Browning to Lillian Stebbings, March 17, 1947.

⁶⁰ Peiss, *Hope*, 30; see also Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth Century Social Discourse," *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 169-188, who paints a more detailed portrait than Peiss in her illustration of the class-based quality of censure against finery and artifice. Karen Thure's article on Martha Harper notes that in 1888, when Harper was looking for space to rent for her first shop, many building owners were reluctant to rent to her for fear of the scandal (read prostitution) associated with an evident alteration of one's appearance. See Thure, "Martha Harper Pioneered in the Hair Business," *Smithsonian* 7 no. 6: 95-6. Peiss' conclusions about women's homemade beauty products use are based on nineteenth century recipe books and consumer surveys. See Peiss, *Hope*, 168.

⁶¹ Thure, "Martha Harper," 95-6. For a more in depth look at Martha Harper, see Jane Plitt, *Martha Matilda Harper and the American Dream: How One Woman Changed the Face of Modern Business* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Baldwin Acland, "As One Woman to Another," *Canadian Magazine* VLX (Nov. 1922-Apr. 1923): 159-163.

⁶² Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 26.

- ⁶³ Thure, "Martha Harper," 96.
- ⁶⁴ See Canada, Department of Labour, RG 27, vol. 316, strike 261: 2 for a price list of services barbers offered.
- ⁶⁵ See *The Canadian Labour Advocate*, September 25, 1925: 8, for an advertisement for G. Val Mulligan of 4098 Hastings East in Burnaby, British Columbia. The text of the advertisement is as follows: "Tobacconist/Barber Shop/Toilet Preparations/ 'Ladies' Work a Specialty/ Two Barbers Always in Attendance."
- ⁶⁶ Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 41.
- ⁶⁷ Fitzgerald, "Bernice," 39-60.
- ⁶⁸ Letter from Thomas A. Speaker of San Antonio, Texas, International Union of Journeymen Barbers local 187, in "Correspondence," *The Journeyman Barber* 8, no. 2 (March 1917): 75.
- ⁶⁹ Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 41-6; Howard Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 121-125.
- ⁷⁰ Letter from Thomas A. Speaker of San Antonio, Texas, International Union of Journeymen Barbers local 187, in "Correspondence," *The Journeyman Barber* 8, no. 2 (March 1917): 74-75.
- ⁷¹ *Henderson's British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Henderson's, various years); Chudacoff, *Bachelor*, 121.
- ⁷² Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 42.
- ⁷³ *Henderson's British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory* (Vancouver, BC: Henderson, 1910).
- ⁷⁴ Canada, *Fifth Census*, vol. 6, table 1, "Occupations of the people compared for all Canada, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911"; Canada, *Sixth Census*, vol. 4, table 2, "Occupations of the population 10 years of age and over, classified by sex, for provinces 1921."
- ⁷⁵ John Belshaw, "Rurality Check: Demographic Boundaries on the British Columbia Frontier," in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, ed. Ruth Sandwell (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 195.
- ⁷⁶ *Henderson's British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory* (Vancouver, BC: Henderson, 1919).
- ⁷⁷ Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 7, table 40, "Gainfully occupied, 10 years of age and over, by occupation, age and sex, for Canada and the provinces, 1931."
- ⁷⁸ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Eighth Census of Canada, 1941. Huitième recensement of Canada* (Ottawa: E. Cloutier, 19--), vol. VI, table 6, "Wage earners, 14 years of age and over, by occupation and sex, showing average earnings, average weeks employed and the number of wage earners by amount of earnings and weeks of employment during the 12 months prior to the census date, June 2, 1941 for Canada and the provinces."
- ⁷⁹ Canada, *Seventh Census*, vol. 7, Table 40, "Gainfully employed, 10 years of age and over, by occupation, age and sex, for Canada and the provinces, 1931"; Canada, *Sixth Census*, vol. 4, table 2.
- ⁸⁰ Acland, "As One Woman," 160.
- ⁸¹ Plitt, *Martha*, 72; Backhouse, "'Bitterly Disappointed,'" 240; Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 45-46.
- ⁸² See *Henderson's British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory* (Vancouver, BC: Henderson's, various years) and the *Canadian Labour Advocate*, September 25, 1925: 8, for an advertisement for Myrtle's Beauty Shop at 3972 Hastings St. East, Burnaby, British Columbia, which offers beautiful hair, marcelling, shingling and "all forms of Beauty Culture," as well as reasonably priced silk hose. On department stores' attempts to become a women's space, see Wright, "Gender Trifles,"; Benson, *Counter Culture*; Janice Winship, "New Disciplines for Women and the Rise of the Chain Store in the 1930s," in *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth Century Consumer Culture*, eds. Maggie Andrews and Mary M. Talbot (London and New York, NY: Cassell, 2000), 23-45; Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).
- ⁸³ Plitt, *Martha*, 72.
- ⁸⁴ Comfort, "Permanent," 65, 67; Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 64-67; Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto, ON: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1999), 234-40; Plitt, *Martha*, 72, 119.
- ⁸⁵ Drawn from city directories. One hundred and fifty-eight were lived separate from other adults and 121 lived with adults with the same family name. In eighty-two cases, I could not determine the living arrangements of the individual.
- ⁸⁶ Canada, *Sixth Census*, 1921, vol. 3, table 40; Canada, *Seventh Census*, 1931, vol. 7, table 40.
- ⁸⁷ Plitt, *Martha*, 116.
- ⁸⁸ Peter A. Baskerville, "'She Has Already Hinted at 'Board'': Enterprising Urban Women in British Columbia, 1863-1896," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* XXVI, no. 52 (November 1993): 205-227.
- ⁸⁹ In 1921, the average weekly wage for female hairdressers was \$14.94; male was \$23.77 in Vancouver. Canada, *Sixth Census*, 1921, vol. 3, table 40, "Wage earners 10 years of age and over by age groups, weeks employed and earnings for the census year, in cities of 30,000 and over". In 1921, women made \$14.24, and men, \$20.96. Women

hair workers consistently made a third or less of what men did. However, note that by the 1930s, when hairdressers were well established, men's earnings were down, perhaps reflecting that the higher priced women's services were increasingly being taken care of by female hairdressers. Both barbers and hairdressers were generally paid a flat rate plus a commission. On long hours, see Backhouse, "Bitterly Disappointed," 240, and on the challenges and satisfactions of customer service work, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 40; and Acland, "As One Woman to Another," 159-161. On the status and product benefits of consumer service work, see Susan Benson, *Counter Culture: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 210-5, which is based on Alice Kessler-Harris' description of feminine work hierarchy.

⁹⁰ Willett, *Permanent Waves*, 95.

⁹¹ John Benson, *Entrepreneurism in Canada: A History of 'Penny' Capitalists* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1990), 109; James Conley, "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919" (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1986), 633-5; William Birthright, "Journeyman Barber's [sic] International Union of America," *Canadian Congress Journal* XX, no. 9 (September 1941): 66-68.

⁹² Plitt, *Martha*, 76.

⁹³ Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 251.

⁹⁴ "Barbers to Raise Profession to the Plane of Medicine," *Victoria Daily Times*, August 28, 1923: 2; "Stricter Barber Rules Approved by Legislators," *Victoria Daily Times*, November 27, 1924: 8.

⁹⁵ Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem,'" in *Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings*, 2nd edition, Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth, ed. (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc, 2000), 297-298; Roy, *Oriental Question*, 116-129.

⁹⁶ See for example, James O'Shanessy's contribution to the monthly column, "Organizer's Dept," *The Journeyman Barber* XIII, no. 8 (September 1917): 356-7, and A. M. Simon's article "The Barbers' Union," *The Journeyman Barber* XIII, no. 5 (June 1917): 189-194.

⁹⁷ See Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 178-9 on nativist fears and business reactions; and Roy, *Oriental Question*, 45-6 on racist fears.

⁹⁸ Newspapers regularly commented on jokes and comedy about the bill. For example, see "Fears Higher Hair-cut Cost," *Vancouver Province*, December 12, 1924: 13; "Razor Bill Ships Sea of Criticism," *Victoria Colonist*, December 17, 1924: 4; "Barbers' Bill Trimmed in House," *Vancouver Province*, December 17, 1924: 5. Quote from "Barbers to Raise Profession to the Plane of Medicine," *Victoria Times*, August 28, 1923: 2.

⁹⁹ "Barbers' Bill Trimmed;" "Sees Danger Lurking in Barbers' Bill," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, December 5, 1924: 2; "Barbers' Bill Gets Severe Trimming: 'Not What It Used to Be' After Members of the House Committee Finish With It," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, December 3, 1924: 3; "Fears Higher Hair-Cut Cost"; "Stricter Barber Rules Approved by Legislators," *Victoria Daily Times*, November 27, 1924: 8.

¹⁰⁰ "Plans to raise barber standard raise protests," *Victoria Daily Times*, December 5, 1924: 20. For more on Uphill, see Robert McDonald, "'Simply A Working Man': Tom Uphill of Fernie," in *A World Apart: The Crowsnest Communities of Alberta and British Columbia*, eds. Wayne Norton and Tom Langford (Kamloops, BC: Plateau Press, 2002), 99-112.

¹⁰¹ British Columbia, *Statutes of British Columbia*, 1924, c. 5, s. 2; 1936, c.3, s. 2.

¹⁰² "Barbers Win Fight for Professional Status in Province," *Victoria Daily Times*, December 18, 1924: 2.

¹⁰³ "Fears Higher Hair-Cut Cost;" "Barbers' Bill Gets Severe Trimming," 3; Roy, *Oriental*, 116.

¹⁰⁴ Birthright, "Journeyman Barber's [sic]," 66-8.

¹⁰⁵ "Barbers' Bill Gets Severe Trimming," 3.

¹⁰⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁷ Stewart, 'It's Up to You', 6; Willett, *Permanent Waves*; Cobble, *Dishing*, 178-80.

¹⁰⁸ For more on Smith, see Margaret Hillyard Little, "Claiming a Unique Place: The Introduction of Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia," *British Columbia Studies* 105-106 (Spring/Summer 1995): 194; and Norcross, "Mary Ellen Smith", 357-364.

¹⁰⁹ "House Called on to Define 'Hairdressing,'" *Vancouver Sun*, February 4, 1927: 3; "Members Find Fun in Hairdressers' New Legislation," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 8, 1927: 7; "Bobbed Hair Bill Launched," *Vancouver Sun*, February 8, 1927: 2.

¹¹⁰ The committee was appointed on February 9, 1927 to review the bill. Burde, a former newspaper owner, had been elected as a war veteran's politician in 1919, and in the subsequent decade supported the interests of veterans and the resource industries (forestry and fishing) that provided the economic lifeblood to his Vancouver Island constituency. For example, he introduced legislation for male minimum wages in the forestry industry. He was, as

might be noted in his comments in the debate over the barbers' bill, strongly anti-female and anti-Asian, and was censured on at least one occasion by the Victoria Council of Women for his derogatory comments in the Legislature about MLA Mary Ellen Smith. ("Women Demand Apology Be Given Mrs. Smith," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 17, 1921: 17). Tom Uphill was a fiery, long-serving MLA who spoke for the mining interests and workers of his Crownsnest Pass region. During his time in the legislature, Paul Harrison, a lawyer, supported anti-Asian measures and the development of infrastructure on Vancouver Island. Canon Joshua Hinchliffe was the first clergyman elected to the British Columbia Legislature and supported a variety of reform measures for veterans, the elderly, and mothers, as well as electoral reform. Mary Ellen Smith engaged actively in several women's organizations, campaigned for suffrage and, after her election in 1918, introduced a number of measures to provide government assistance to women. The composition of the committee suggests that the hairdressers' bill was considered by the Conservative government to be a labour and women's issue. Committee members were all to some degree affiliated with social reform and labour interests.

¹¹¹ Vancouver Public Library (hereafter VPL), Legislative Session Clipping Books, February 22, 1927.

¹¹² VPL, Legislative Session Clipping Books, "Baldheaded Members Counted on by Lady Barbers," *Vancouver Vancouver Province*, February 4 1927: n.p.

¹¹³ "Battle Waged on Law," 9.

¹¹⁴ Roy, *Oriental Question*, 130.

¹¹⁵ VPL, Legislative Session Clipping Books, "Battle of the Beauty Parlours Breaks Out Again," February 22, 1927: n.p.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ "Impasse Threatens Beauty Shop Bill," *Vancouver Province*, February 23, 1927: 7.

¹¹⁸ Milkman, *Gender at Work*, 7.

¹¹⁹ "Barbers' Bill Somewhat Trimmed Goes to House," *Vancouver Province*, March 1, 1927: 1.

¹²⁰ "Hairdressers' Bill Supported," *Vancouver Sun*, March 2, 1927: 18

¹²¹ "Independents Walk Out in Protest When Barber Bill is Killed," *Vancouver Province*, March 8, 1927: 22.

¹²² One newspaper reports that a hairdresser bill went to committee in February 1928, but no other mention is made of it. "Hairdressers' Bill In Committee Soon," *Vancouver Sun*, February 29, 1928: 16.

¹²³ *Henderson's British Columbia Gazetteer and Directories* (Vancouver, BC: Henderson Publishing, 1927 and 1929).

¹²⁴ "Beauty Parlours and Barbers Said to Have Agreed," *Victoria Colonist*, December 22, 1928: 3.

¹²⁵ "Barbers' Bill Brings Debate," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 6, 1929: 5; "Hairdressers' Bill Proceeds," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 9, 1929: 12.

¹²⁶ British Columbia, Department of Labour, *Annual Report*, (Victoria, BC: Printer to the King, 1928), J9; "Tolmie Quizzed on PGE Offer," *Vancouver Sun*, February 28, 1929: 13; "Protests Delay in Hairdressers' Bill," *Victoria Daily Times*, March 9, 1929: 7; "Uphill Getting Action on His Beauty Measure," *Victoria Daily Times*, March 13, 1929: 9.

¹²⁷ "Vancouver Men on Hairdressing and Chiropody Boards," *Vancouver Province*, April 17, 1929: 26. First initials and ownership information from city directories; Mrs. Ross was not included in the directory.

¹²⁸ "Open Fight for Hairdressers Examinations," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 29, 1929: 1.

¹²⁹ "The Hairdresser Bill," *Victoria Daily Times*, March 5, 1929: 4.

¹³⁰ "House Called," 3. Later definitions, in British Columbia, *Statutes of British Columbia*, 1929, c. 28, s. 2; 1934, c.26, s. 2, did not substantially change the character of the definition of services, although colouring and removing hair with electricity were later added.

¹³¹ "House Called," 3; British Columbia, *Statutes of British Columbia*, 1929, c. 28, s. 2; 1934, c.26, s. 2.

¹³² "Battle Waged on Law Affecting British Columbia Hairdressers," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 22, 1929: 9.

¹³³ "Impasse," 7.

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