

Rosie the Riveter's Daughter: Women and Industry Training in Contemporary New Zealand

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Abstract

Nicky Murray:

Training and skill development are key elements in the attempt to secure pay and employment equity for women in New Zealand. Despite a greater equality of opportunity that the 'knowledge society' seems to promise, and the growing perception that girls are in some way advantaged in the contemporary education system, women remain substantially under-represented in industry training in New Zealand. Part of the reason for this is simply a reflection of the smaller proportion of women who work in industry: the 'engine room' of our society remains male-dominated. But the nature of work which women tend to perform - part-time, casualised and in support roles, also means they are less likely to receive training.

This paper draws on my Master's thesis, *A History of Apprenticeship in New Zealand* (2001) and on my current PhD research on industry training. It is also informed by a recent EEO Discussion Paper, *Modern Apprenticeships: Training for the Boys?* (2003) and the Industry Training Federation's report, *Women in Industry Training 2000-2003* (2004). I first briefly survey the historical place of women in the apprenticeship system. I then examine the 'positive action' initiatives of the late 1970s and 1980s, which attempted to increase the number of women apprentices and to broaden the participation of women in non-traditional occupations. In 1992, the apprenticeship system was replaced with the employer-led industry training strategy. I discuss the impact that this had on women's training. Finally, I examine the current situation, focusing on the gross gender imbalance of the Modern Apprenticeships initiative, which was introduced by the Labour/Alliance government in 1999.

Ana Gilling:

I will begin by discussing the broad labour and skills issues facing a number of industries in New Zealand, in particular, significant skill shortages. One of the key strategies for addressing skill shortages is to recruit large numbers of women (especially young women) into specific trades. I will discuss the ways in which some industries have gone about recruiting young women (case in point - electricians), and what can still be done - by industries, and by government to make it easier for women to enter, and stay in, employment in industry in New Zealand.