Raising Money, Having Times: Social Reproduction and the Jubilee Guilds of Newfoundland, 1936-1949

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The Jubilee Guilds

- **The Jubilee Guilds**: an educational organization developed in the wake of the the **1929 Tsunami** on the Burin Peninsula, amid the **Great Depression** in Newfoundland.
- The Jubilee Guilds' goal was to **help the people of outport Newfoundland help themselves**.
- The organization was created to educate the people of the outports in **various topics** such as **home economics**, **craft works**, **agriculture**, and **health**. It operated as the Jubilee Guilds from 1936 until 1968 when they transitioned to the "Women's Institutes of Newfoundland" (Richards, 132: 1987)
- The focus on educating outport communities places the onus on individuals to **improve their circumstance**, rather than highlighting **a need for structural changes** or **outside assistance** (e.g., from the Newfoundland Gov't).
- Although the initial goals of the Guilds were not primarily focused on the sale of home made goods, it developed into a main activity throughout the mid 1940s.

Archival Data

- I examined a series of **interviews** carried out in **1976** by a student researcher employed by the **Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institute**.
- These sources detail the **main activities** of each branch, and explore **participants understandings** of how the **Guilds shifted relationships** and **household activities** in outport Newfoundland. I limited my analysis to those discussing branches active from 1936 to 1949, prior to Newfoundland joining Canada.

Objectives

- This ongoing research aims to:
  - Explore the way **unpaid reproductive labour** was used and understood as a way of **making communities more 'self sufficient'**.
  - Specifically, I'd like to **highlight women's contributions to community**.
- This research is being carried out as part of my **Major Research Paper** towards Memorial's Master of Arts Degree in **Sociocultural Anthropology**.

Theoretical Framework

- I will be using **Social Reproduction Theory (SRT)** to examine the **paid** and **unpaid labour** that **women** carried out and learned about in the context of the **Jubilee Guilds**.
- **Social Reproductive Labour**: the reproduction of labour on daily, weekly, annual, and throughout generations (Roseman, Gardiner Barber, and Neis 2015: 183).
- **SRT** has been developed by **Marxist Feminist scholars**, and serves to **expand the definition of the working class** (Bhattacharya, 2017: 14).

Unpaid Labour in the Jubilee Guilds

- Activities described in the interviews fell into **several main categories**, including:
  1. **Food Preservation**
  2. **Craft Activities**
  3. **Social Gatherings**
  4. **Fundraising**
  5. **Health Training**
- These activities, alongside the commentary that women in the guild were **responsible for making 'nearly everything'** her family needed, demonstrates the importance of **women's unpaid reproductive labour** and **cottage production** to **survival** in the Great Depression.
- The **social** events, and general **social** nature of the Guild Branches, was stated as the **most important** aspect in **almost every interview**.
- The (largely) **unpaid labour** performed by **women** sustained not only **isolated households**, but also created **networks of community support,** such as sharing of recipes, resources, and the distribution of aid within communities.
- These are the preliminary findings of my ongoing research. I intend to further develop analysis of the way the Guilds contributed to social reproduction.

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