1988

Hanging In, Solo (So What's It Like To Be the Only Female on the Job?)

Susan Eisenberg
Hanging In, Solo (So What's It Like To Be the Only Female on the Job?)

**Abstract**
A poem.

**Keywords**
poem, women's rights, gender

This article is available in Labor Research Review: https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/lrr/vol11/iss1/7
to establishing equality for working women. And it will be extremely important for the labour movement to fight against a free trade deal that will have such negative consequences for women.

But with only one-third of the female labour force represented by unions, it is important that more and more women's workplaces be organized. While this is not an easy task in many sectors, it is encouraging to see one of the largest organizing drives ever

---

**Hanging In, Solo**
*(So What's It Like To Be the Only Female on the Job?)*

*On the sunshine rainbow days*
*womanhood*
clothes me in a fuchsia velour jumpsuit
and crowns me with a diamond hardhat.
I flare my peacock feathers
and fly through the day's work.
*Trombones sizzle*
as my drill glides through cement walls
through steel beams.
*Bundles of pipe rise through the air*
at the tilt
of my thumb.
*Everything I do*
is perfect.

*The female of the species*
advances 10 spaces and
takes an extra turn.

*On the mudcold-gray-no-
sun-in-a-week days womanhood*
weighs me down in colorless arctic fatigues;
hands me an empty survival kit;
and binds my head in an iron hardhat
three sizes too small.
I burrow myself mole-like into my work, but
*my tampax leaks;*
*my diamond-tip bit burns out after one hole;*
*my offsets are backwards;*
*all of my measurements are wrong.*
*At each mistake, a shrill siren*
alerts all tradesmen on the job
to come laugh at me.
*Everything I do*
must be redone.
underway. The Communications Workers of Canada is once again trying to unionize the 17,000 clerical employees at Bell Canada, located in offices throughout the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. If successful, this will be the largest single private-sector group to be unionized since the organizing drives of the 1940s. And it will be an important step in continuing to strengthen women's presence in the Canadian labour movement.

The female of the species
loses her next turn
and picks a penalty card.

On most days, those partly sunny days that bridge the rainbow sunshine days and the mudcold-gray days, womanhood outfits me in a flannel shirt and jeans and hands me a hardhat just like everyone else's. I go about my work like a giraffe foraging the high branches, stretching myself comfortably. As I hang lighting fixtures and make splices, I sing to myself and tell myself stories.

Everything I do is competent enough.

The female of the species advances 1 space and awaits her next turn.

Susan Eisenberg ©1982

* Susan Eisenberg is a member of Local 103 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in Boston. In 1982 she graduated from IBEW 103's apprenticeship program in its first class to include women. A recent book of her poetry, It's a Good Thing I'm Not Macho, is available from Whetstone Press, 94 Green Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Eisenberg gives poetry readings for labor and women's groups and conferences.