Man's Job

Eileen McGann

This fine song, from McGann’s 1987 recording, Elements, has been reprinted in a recent edition The Little Red Songbook from the Industrial Workers of the World. The singer notes that it was “based on my experiences while working as a Bell Telephone installer a few years ago.”

I spent some time working on telephones,
Going into houses and putting in the lines;
I met a lot of people and I saw a lot of lives go by.
Though not completely unexpected, still I was surprised
By the many, many people who’d look me in the eyes
And say, “What’s a pretty little girl like you doing here?”
"That's a job for a man to do, so why the hell did they give it to you?"
"Couldn’t you find a secretarial job, my dear?"

Chorus:  "Hey, honey, whatcha doin' in a man's job?
Dontcha know the unemployment rate’s high?
A man needs a job, but a woman needs a man
To protect her and support her 'til the day that she dies."

The apartment was small, but it echoed as I entered.
All it had inside was a table, bed and chair,
But the old woman smiled at me and said she was glad I was there.
She said, "I haven’t much to offer, but please come, have some tea.
I'm really very lonely now, 'cause no one speaks to me."

I worked inside a building of Ontario Housing
And met a young woman with a two-year-old child.
He followed me round and he watched while I stapled and dialed.
His mother, speaking softly, said his father'd up and run,
And he'd taken all their money and left her with a son,
And the government hand-out is the only way that they can survive.
She had tried to find a job that was good enough to pay
For the day care that her little boy would need when she’s away,
But the salaries they offered were not enough to keep them alive.

But people asked.... Chorus