

*Mail order department in Toronto, Eaton's, 1943.* (Archives of Ontario, Series F-229, T. Eaton Co. fonds, AO 4467)

# Copying

Staff copy each item on the customer order onto a separate departmental order sheet. Two or more items from the same department might go on the same sheet, if they appear close enough to one another on the list; *i.e.* if the girl can take the time to do this. Time is of the essence. Each girl has an upper and lower compartment on her desk - the more recent orders go on top, the least recent on the bottom. The copier will take the first item from the lower compartment and make out the requisite sheet or sheets. Copiers are credited so many orders per copier. This information is then sent to the wages office to help calculate the bonus to which the copier was entitled.

## Money Order Distribution

This department receives orders and paperwork from Copying and proceeds to count and sort them according to the eventual means of transport: post, express and freight.

#### La dynamique spatiale des marchés

The orders are stamped with a set time that is three hours in advance of the exact moment when goods are expected to reach Assembly. In effect it takes 80 minutes to accomplish tasks belonging to this department: 20 minutes each for stamping, checking, listing and delivery to the various merchandise departments. The remaining hour and forty minutes belong to the merchandise departments, who must get the goods to Assembly within the time limit. Particular care at this point is taken to ensure that the correct list of goods is addressed to the correct department. Sales list-makers and checkers work in pairs; two pairs of eyes are better than one. All the work is punctuated by intervals of 20 minutes. The ringing of the buzzer in one department is the signal that there is more work for the staff next in line.

### Assembly

In mail-order distributing, two pieces of paper are separated: the order sheets go to the individual departments, the shipping bills go to Assembly. Assembly is a crucial step in the system. The Assembly area, known in mail-order parlance as "the junction", consists of conveyors belts that carry the goods to various stations within the area and a series of storage bunks for each of the three main means of conveyance: mail (parcel post), express and freight. Workers responsible for taking goods off the belts were known as pickers; they sorted goods according to the schedule stamp on the accompanying piece of paper. The bunks take up a lot of space: at Eaton's of Toronto, Express has three units of 10 bunks; Parcel Post: 3 units of 18 bunks and 3 units of 36 bunks; Freight: 3 units of 6 bunks. Once the order is completed, on average this required 20 minutes, the shipping bill was sent to the billing section.

## Money Order billing

It is in the billing section that the order is checked for the last time, with respect to list of goods and amount charged the customer. Each "biller" represents the customer, to ensure that he or she is not charged too much or too little for the order. Among the tasks accomplished is the weighing of packages destined for parcel post, and the verification of amounts due by or to the customer using mechanical accountants (machines). Much trouble-shooting is done by both staff and management personnel. An efficiency bonus, charged against the Recording Section, of 5 cents is paid for each wrong address signified by a member of the billing section. A bonus of 10 cents was paid to the same for errors discovered in work done previously by the Copying Section. The bonus system likely served to keep everyone on his or her toes.





*Men and Women at conveyor belt with packages; landscape view, 1948.* (Archives of Ontario, Series F-229, T.Eaton Co. fonds, AO 5 392)

# Packing, Shipping

Items arrived in Packing from Assembly. The goods arrive in wicker baskets. They are then wrapped, labelled and strung before being sent along to the shipping department, probably by conveyor belt. At the Moncton mail order office of Eaton's packers handle 24 heavy, 30 light post orders, or 12 regular express parcels per hour. Men were used for freight and express packing, girls for parcel post packing. At Toronto in 1933, one finds a total of 352 parcellers, 209 of whom were women, 143 of whom were men. The job was apparently not an ideal one, one source reports: "Prior to the decline in business (due to the onset of the Depression) young boys and girls were engaged as parcellers and later promoted to sales clerks or other more senior positions."<sup>55</sup>



Loading the delivery van, Dupuis Frères Fall and Winter catalogue 1931-32, p. 3.

(Reproduction, Canadian Postal Museum Collection)

<sup>55.</sup> Royal Commission on Price Spreads and Mass Buying, Special Committee, T. Eaton and Co., p. 3,329.