

UNION WOMEN SPEAK

Vol. 1 No. 2

October 29, 1976

UNITED BANK WORKERS REPORT

Barb Ross
SORWUC Local #2

On August 16th, 1976, proud and excited employees at the Victory Square branch of the CIBC in Vancouver applied for union certification. This was the first of such applications for unionization in the history of the Bank, and as is the law, the Bank could not harass or intimidate these employees in any way as it is their legal right to join a union of their own choice.

They joined the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada, within which they have already formed their own Local (Local No. 2 - "The United Bank Workers of Canada")

The purpose of SORWUC, a union for working women, is to organize workers in retail stores, offices and other places which employ mostly women, since the majority of working women in B.C. are not in unions and are greatly underpaid.

Within the weeks following the application for certification, ten (10) bank branches were organized and have also now applied for certification and these bank branches include: 4 Bank of Montreal - 1 in Cloverdale, Langley, Edmonds & Kingsway and Ganges on Salt Spring Island; 3 Bank of

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AUCE/SORWUC JOINT COMMITTEE

At the April 76 SORWUC Membership Meeting this motion was passed - "That we write AUCE suggesting that AUCE and SORWUC each establish committees to meet together to discuss ways that the two unions can cooperate and to make recommendations on the subject to our respective memberships."

At the June 76 Convention of AUCE this motion was passed - "That AUCE Provincial Executive establish a joint committee with SORWUC to organize unorganized workers and that this committee report to future conventions."

Such a joint committee has been formed and this newsletter - Union Women Speak - is a publication of this committee. (Costs are being jointly shared.) This newsletter at the present time has two purposes - 1) to aid in the organization of unorganized workers and 2) to inform AUCE and SORWUC members of the activity of this joint committee.

This issue will focus on bank employees as this is the area that is presently organizing.

Members of this committee are -
AUCE - Nancy Wiggs, Anne Moody, Melody Rudd,
Susanne Lester
SORWUC - Ulryke Weissegerber, Sharon
Boudier, Barb Ross, Pat Barter

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Commerce - 1 in Ocean Park, Ganges and Port Hardy; 3 Bank of Nova Scotia - 1 in Haney, SFU and Vancouver Heights.

During the past few weeks several meetings have been held, resulting in the formation of the Bank Employees Organizing Committee, consisting of a By-Laws Committee, Communications Committee and Research Committee. Also at this meeting, the Executive Board was elected within Local #2 which now has 134 members. There is now a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Two Trustees and Two Representatives for the National Executive.

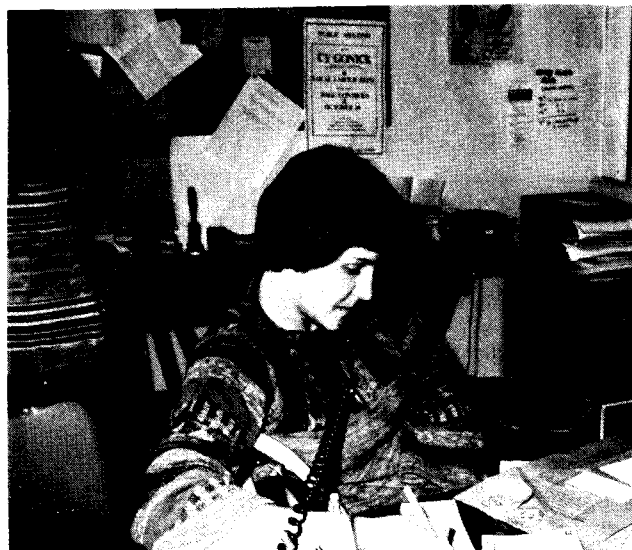
Never before have these women employees who have joined this Union felt the magnitude of fighting for such a cause as they are fighting for now.

As employee benefits vary throughout the different banks, and as Bank employees make some of the lowest wages in the work force, there will be various negotiations brought forth in the new contract. The Bank seems to have no intention of changing the present work situation until they are forced to. When these employees are unionized, the Bank will be required by law to negotiate with them. An important step has been taken; for Banks can very well afford more than they are giving as they are one of the largest profit making employers in the country. Some of the basic union benefits are such things as a dental plan, better sick leave with pay which is now not granted until after one year's service, better holidays and a proper grievance procedure. Also being taken into consideration are job postings, equal opportunity for promotion and upgrading, higher grade of office equipment and of course the biggest of all is wages. Wages and promotions that will recognize our skill and seniority.

These things may or may not be important to some, but to those who are affected, it is with unionization that employees can get together and negotiate a union contract with management. A contract that is felt to contain whatever is important to everyone's immediate and future working conditions.

Remember, it can be done. All that is needed is 35% or 4 or 5 people to get an organizing drive in your work place. Have these people sign up and join the Union and then apply for certification.

Anyone interested can contact SORWUC
1114 - 207 West Hastings, Vancouver



Dodie Zerr, newly elected President of SORWUC Local #2 - United Bank Workers

Employee Benefits

NON-UNION VERSUS UNION

Susanne Lester
AUCE Local #1

On the investigation of the benefits available to employees who are unorganized and those who are organized, it is clear that workers must be organized to gain worthwhile benefits from the employer. The following is a comparison of some of the benefits of bank workers and those of the Association of University and College Employees Local #1 at UBC.

Vacations

Non-union (bank workers)

1-3 yrs. service - 11 days in summer or
3 weeks in winter
3-10 yrs. service - 3 weeks in summer or
4 weeks in winter
10-25 yrs. service - 4 weeks
25 yrs. or more - 5 weeks

Union (AUCE Local #1)

1-4 yrs. - 3 weeks
5-7 yrs. - 4 weeks
8-13 yrs. - 5 weeks
13 yrs. or more - one additional day for
each year of service to a maximum of 5 days.

Paid Holidays

Non-union - 8 days
Union - 11 days

Leave Without Pay

Non-union - no provision

Union - employees may apply for leave without pay (no time limit). The employer must make every effort to comply with a request. Refusal must be given in writing with reasons stated. On return to work the employee is returned to her job with no loss of seniority.

Maternity Leave

Non-union
after 1 years service - 18 weeks without pay.

Union
A full time employee will receive the benefits of the Maternities Provision of the Unemployment Insurance Act (15 weeks). On return to work the employee will receive the difference of the benefits received and her monthly salary. Upon request the employee shall be granted a further leave of 3 months without pay subject to further extension.

Compassionate Leave

Non-Union
no provision

Union
3 days with pay, leave may be extended a further 3 days on request.

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Daycare

Non-Union
no provision

Union

The University agrees to do all that is reasonably possible to assist the union in securing suitable daycare facilities for employees.

Employer Contribution to Medical & Dental Plan

Non-Union
no provision

Union

medical & dental plan available, the employer pays 50% of the monthly contribution for employees and dependants.

Modified or Flexible Work Week

Non-Union
no provision

Union

employees in each department shall decide which form of work week they work, e.g. 4 day work week, 4 days one week and 5 days the next - provided they work 70 hours in a two week period.

Part-time Benefits

Non-Union
no provisions

Union

All benefits are pro-rated for part-time employees.

Promotion

Non-Union
no provision

Union

Promotions shall be based on ability, qualifications and seniority.

Job Posting

Non-Union
no provision

Union

All vacancies shall be posted on bulletin boards for at least 5 working days. Vacancies shall be filled from within the bargaining unit, providing employees are available with the necessary ability and qualifications, before hiring new employees.

Union Democracy ??

Try SORWUC !!

Pat Barter
SORWUC Local #1

The Service, Office & Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC) is an independent union formed by working women to organize those occupations which employ mainly women and which have as yet been largely ignored by the traditional unions. Banking is just one of those occupations.

There is an argument being used against the present attempt by bank employees to organize themselves into our union. The argument goes like this: unions are undemocratic and anyway, bank workers have enough people telling them how to run their lives. I would like to answer those charges.

Union Democracy

As a member of SORWUC, I have come to appreciate the fact that my union (and all unions for that matter) are far more democratic than are the banks. Who ever heard of bank employees nominating and electing someone to be their manager, or director? Do bank employees have democratic officials who they think are abusing the privileges of their office??

The constitution of SORWUC contains several provisions which ensure that the union will never become a machine which rides over its members with no regard for their financial situation, or their interests. These provisions include:

- * direct election of all officials by referendum secret ballot (that means that every union member gets a ballot).
- * simple procedures that provide a method by which members can recall or discipline their elected officials and request special membership meetings.

- * no full-time paid union officials unless the membership, at an annual convention approves. Such approval would only be granted after proper notice had been given to all members and such a paid official would be elected by a referendum ballot of all members for a one year term of office. No paid official can ever receive a salary greater than the salary of the highest paid working member of the union.

- * control by the members of a unit or local over their own contract demands and negotiations.

- * provision for secret ballot votes before strikes can be called, and such strikes only to affect the members of the unit voting.

- * control over all the assets, financial and otherwise of the union. This includes regular financial and business reports on all aspects of the union, plus the right of any local to secede from the union and take all its dues, including its strike fund, with it when it so secedes.

As a member of SORWUC, I believe that these provisions protect myself and other union members from any chance that the union would tell us what to do.

Bargaining

The members of our local union have complete control over their own contract. This means that we decide what to put in our contracts, and how to bargain. Because we decide collectively on our contract items, we are sure that what we are asking is reasonable and possible. We have no paid bureaucrats telling us what we can and can't do or ask for. All SORWUC members conduct their own negotiations, and that means that we are the ones who negotiate with our employers, as well as deciding what we will negotiate for. We are also the ones who decide how far to pursue a contract item, and if, when and how a strike will be conducted. As we are working women, we well know that long strikes are expensive, so we are not going

to push for them.

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Bank Organizing

Freedom & Individuality

As a member of SORWUC I am convinced that joining a union and bargaining collectively with my co-workers increased the respect that we have for one another, and the respect that our employer has for us. Initially I was hesitant, but after thinking about it I realized that the only freedom I had before I joined the unions were "freedoms" that were allowed me. Like the freedom to work if I didn't complain about poor working conditions or a bad wage, freedom to work if I didn't refuse overtime too often, freedom to plea - often at a co-workers expense - for a raise or a promotion.

As an individual I can speak for myself, but as a union member I speak to my employer with the people with whom I work. We speak through the union, and we elect those who speak for us, and we direct them as to what they say. We control our union, it does NOT control us. I am no longer afraid that joining a union means loss of ones' individuality. In fact, I am convinced that a good union contract can foster the talents and capabilities of an individual - both on and off the job. On the job by providing opportunities for promotion based on a recognition of seniority and experience, and off the job because a good wage means more self respect and enough money to pursue hobbies and interests that would be otherwise not accessible.



Pat Barter and Ulryke Weissgerber-
2 members of SORWUC Local #1

PAST AND PRESENT

Melody Rudd
AUCE, Local #2

In 1959 three workers at the Kitimat branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia applied for certification. The Canadian Labour Board ruled - "While this application is rejected the Board deems it advisable to state that this decision must not be taken as indicating that the Board agrees with the Respondent's (the Bank's) contention that the appropriate bargaining unit must be a nation-wide unit of employees of the Bank. The present decision rests on and is applicable only to its own particular facts. The Board points to the facts that this is the first application with which it has had to deal, concerning bank employees, and that employees of Canadian banks have hitherto not been organized by trade unions for collective bargaining. The Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act applies to banks and their employees, and the Board will consider all applications concerning bank employees, with the purpose of giving effect to the intent of the Act. It may well be that units of some of the employees of a Bank, grouped together territorially or on some other basis, will prove to be appropriate, rather than a nation-wide unit."

Since then there has been no organizing until just a few weeks ago when 4 branches in Ontario and 12 branches in B.C. applied for union certification. In Ontario the 3 branches are in Simcoe, Port Dover and Jarvis and are applying through the Canadian Union of Bank Employees. CUBE was established in July and the President, Robert Stewart, is also president of the Canadian Chemical Workers Union, a recent break-away group from the International Chemical Workers Union.

In B.C. the branches are in Port Hardy, Gangees, Duncan, Langley, Haney, Cloverdale, Burnaby, and Vancouver and are applying through the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada. On September 29th the bank employees established Local 2 of SORWUC - the United Bank Workers Local.

The two unions are in touch with each other and hope to help each other in the battles ahead with the Labour Board and the Banks.

Leafletting Observed

Anne Moody
AUCE, Local #2

Look at that woman. It's only eight o'clock - two hours to opening time - but she sure is interested in that bank. She's been looking through the door - now she's peering through the windows, checking the parking lot, walking all around the building - and taking her time about it too. I wonder is she's planning a robbery? Maybe I should call the Police. Wait a minute - she's going away.

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She hasn't gone away. She crossed the street to sit at a bus stop, but three buses have gone by and she's still there - watching the bank like a hawk. Maybe she works there. That man in the three-piece suit with attache case looks like a bank manager - sure enough, he's opening the door. I'll bet she gets up and goes in the bank with him.

Well - I was half right. She got up and went across to the bank, but she made sure he was inside before she did it. Now she's standing there by the night deposit slot. She's taking some pamphlets out of her purse. What are they for? Is she selling something?

Or is she? She's handing out literature all right, but she doesn't just stand there, she rushes out to meet people, and talks to them. She's looking out for bank employees, that's what she's doing. See - when that car pulled into the parking lot she ran over to talk to people as they were getting out. She watches the bus stops too - if people seem to be heading toward the bank she tries to intercept them. Her magazines seem to be a hit too - some people ignore her - looking scared, or mad - but most people take one. Some even stop to talk to her.

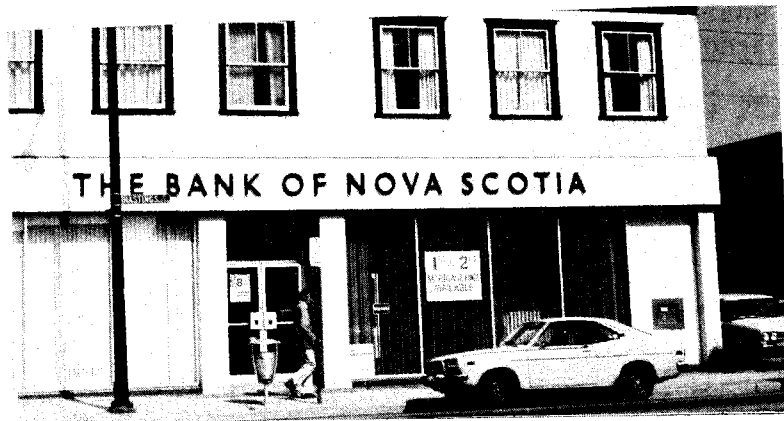
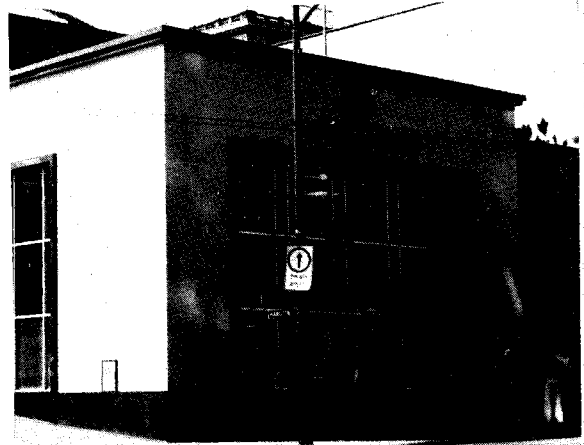
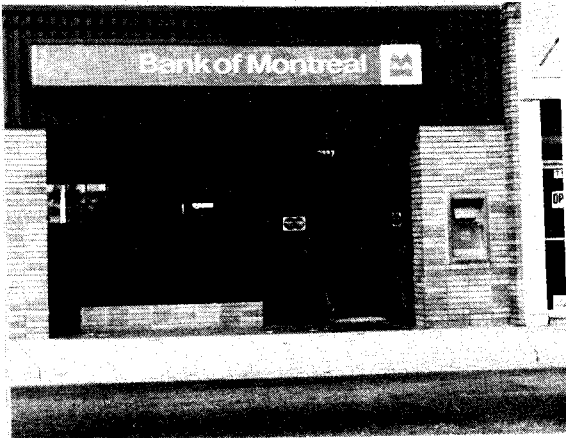




It's nine o'clock - everyone seems to be at work. I wonder what she does now? Hey! She's disappeared! There she is - getting on the bus. She's gone - and I still don't know what all that was about.

"All that" was leafletting - an important step in SORWUC's drive to unionize bank employees. This is the step where SORWUC needs help. Bank employees will do most of the organizing work, and SORWUC can help them with experienced people, legal advice, contract information and money. But nothing can happen unless bank employees know that SORWUC exists. Ads in the paper, or in hydro buses don't work - people are needed. AUCE and SORWUC workers on their days off, or those whose jobs start after nine o'clock, or anyone who believes in unions can help.

three banks that have applied for certification



For more information send this form to -
United Bank Workers, Local #2 of SORWUC
#1114 - 207 West Hastings, Vancouver, B.C.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Workplace _____

(all replies in strictest confidence)