

# PRIORITIES

Vol. I, No. 6

June, 1973

"Socialists have always been committed in principle to equality of the sexes; they have always opposed the notion that social roles determined by culture or economy should be treated as absolute. It is not therefore surprising that New Democrats are in sympathy with the movement towards women's liberation."

(B.C. New Democratic Party policy booklet, 1961-71)

A Publication of the N.D.P. Women's Committee

# PRIORITIES

Priorities is published monthly by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the B.C. New Democratic Party. Its intent is to provide a means of communication and discussion for NDP women in order to further the interests of the women's movement and of democratic socialism.

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"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The N.D.P. actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of women's liberation and commits an N.D.P. government to creating the legislation necessary to realizing these demands."

(From the B.C. NDP policy on Women's Rights)

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# FEDERAL CONVENTION CONT.

be dealt with directly by the convention organizers. It is hoped that the NDP has moved beyond the "good woman volunteer" stage here!

If you are going to be in Vancouver at convention time or know of any other woman who will be there as a delegate, visitor or interested helper, please contact us. We urgently need this help to make the federal convention memorable in progress for women and the Party.

Barbara Wilson  
NORTH VANCOUVER

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## FEDERAL CONVENTION

I wish to help:

during convention \_\_\_\_\_  
before convention \_\_\_\_\_

Dates available: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please also indicate mornings, afternoons or evenings).

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please clip and mail to:

Barbara Wilson  
69 Lonsdale  
North Vancouver, B.C.

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# DON'T SHOP AT SHOPPERS!!

23/

The history of the current strike at Shoppers' Drug Mart stores in the Lower Mainland goes back a long way.

In March, 1972, the Retail Clerks applied for certification of 32 Cunninghams Stores. Certification was granted, but the owners appealed it to the Supreme Court in July, 1972. This was done on the grounds that when the original union organizing took place the stores were Cunninghams but when application for certification was made they were Shoppers' Drug Mart. The appeal was upheld, the certification was lost, and simultaneously Shoppers' Drug Mart owners rushed through a franchise set-up for the whole chain. This enabled them to require the union to negotiate with each store separately.

For months, negotiations dragged on. There were many reasons why Shoppers' Drug Mart workers wanted a union -- heavy work loads, hours cut for no valid reason, no coffee breaks, lunch-hours on the run, having to fight for such rights as the 4-hour voting time for federal and provincial elections. Wages were poor, as low as \$ 2.05 for full-time employees and \$ 1.85 for part-time. (The latter were women of 17 and under and, therefore, not entitled to the ordinary minimum of \$ 2.00 per hour in spite of being fully trained and doing the full-time workers' jobs on their days off.) Head girls -- although they had the title of Merchandising Manager and bore responsibility for

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# DON'T SHOP AT SHOPPERS!

CONT.

running the stores, setting up displays, ordering for sales months in advance, scheduling Clerks' hours and in general making sure the stores ran smoothly -- were paid as low as \$ 2.65. Different rates were paid throughout the chain for identical positions. This applied even to Bookkeepers, who were more aware of the financial end of the business than many of the Managers who had little time to learn book-keeping.

Months of work resulted in the re-certification of only 9 stores. The Managers started rotating staff and Clerks were gradually being laid off and new ones hired to prevent the union from gaining supporters. Employees were intimidated in some cases, given small raises in others -- anything to keep the union out. The employers held that every single clause in the union's proposed contract was negotiable but refused to make any counter-offers. So finally, in early February, 1973, a strike vote was taken, and on February 23 9 workers at 9 of the Shoppers' Drug Mart stores went on strike for their first contract.

For over three months now we have walked the sidewalks, while the Union has tried to negotiate with Kofflers, the owners. They argue that each store is owned by its individual pharmacist, and the pharmacists in turn maintain that they are unable to negotiate. In the meantime, employees in the non-struck stores are being given raises to keep

them from joining the Union and also from joining us on the picket line. Scabs are being paid \$ 2.75 per hour to sit around and read books and serve the few customers who cross the picket lines. During the strike some Clerks have been intimidated into signing applications of de-certification after the store had been legally certified. In one case, an employee was fired for refusing to sign. Much to the dismay of the Manager, she was re-instated after her case was taken to court, and the de-certification application was rescinded.

And so it goes, with the people on the picket lines taking unbelievable abuse not only from the Managers, but the Store Detectives, scabs, and people on the street. "Why don't you get off your lazy butt and go to work?" "Why don't you go to school and get a better education and get a better job?" "You're a bunch of street walkers!" "You must be on welfare!" These are some of the nicer remarks that have been hurled our way. We have been cursed at, spat at, called Communists, shoved around by men, kicked by women, and even had our Canadian citizenship threatened. At one location a "security" guard brought a trained-guard dog -- which bit one of the picketers; and yet the Manager at this same location was able to get an injunction against the picketers to prohibit them from having more than 3 people on the line at any time.

Our picket line is mostly women. Some women are pharmacists (which dispels the idea that we are all uneducated). We try

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# SHOPPERS

(CONT'D)

thus to appeal to the many women who, unfortunately, cross our line. Women who are out of the working field, young women who have just entered the working world, and housewives -- please take time to listen to us and support our fight. Some women even seem to feel for some reason that although their husbands are union men, because they themselves don't work they are exempt from honouring picket lines and can freely shop in a store fighting for its first contract. Maybe some day some of these people will enter the field of labour and, through us, have better jobs, better wages, job security, seniority and better working conditions.

Many thanks to the many regular customers and other supporters who have stayed away for this lengthy time, and who have given us courage to keep fighting. Thanks to those who drop by to say "Keep it up", and "Lots of luck", and to those who drive by and toot their car horns and give the "V" sign.

(Name withheld by request)

WOULDN'T A CARTOON  
LOOK NICE HERE?  
WHY DON'T YOU DRAW  
ONE & SEND IT IN?

"CURIUSER AND 25/

## CURIUSER!" SAID ALICE

Sylva Gelber, Director of the Women's Bureau of the Federal Labour Department, accused the Canadian Association of Social Workers of being guilty of a "curious silence" on the issue of women within the profession. Speaking at the Association's convention in Vancouver on 6 June, Ms. Gelber said, "Most women in social work are clustered at the bottom of the profession, performing service functions...the big problem is that women are not at the policy-making level to formulate social work programs."

Ms. Gelber went on to explain that, although more than half of the members of the Association are women, and that a slightly higher percentage of women than men hold Master's degrees, only one-third of the women are employed in management or policy-making positions. She also said that salary differentials within the profession indicate "discriminatory practices" and that it is little wonder that the Association has not yet been heard from on the subject of the status of women. (Vancouver Province, 7 June 1973)

## ANOTHER PROVINCE HEARD FROM

In a brief presented to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Federation of University Women requested that the Act be amended to enable the Commission to take initial and positive action in dealing with women's rights. Jean Steer, Provincial Director of the CFOW, told the Commission's hearing that the federal government also should establish a commission with power to deal with women's rights. (Van. Province, 8 June 73)