

Bargain for your rights!

This issue of Union Woman looks at efforts of unions to win contract clauses of particular importance to women.

Articles cover our right to seniority during maternity leave, the advantages of flat rate wage increases, and a successful fight for equal pay.

Coffee, tea — or else!

By LAUMA AVENS

Coffee, cream and sugar
Tea with lemon
Coffee, black and a do-nut

If you work as a secretary, you have probably heard those phrases often enough. A secretary has to fetch coffee for her boss, has to make sure that he remembers his wife's birthday or wedding anniversary, and you may even be expected to buy a gift for the occasion. Our jobs may also include such tasks as balancing cheque books and making sure that not only our bills are paid (if we can afford it) but that HIS also are paid on time. As secretaries, we are *expected* to do work of a personal nature for the bosses or face disciplinary action.

The York University Staff Association, a certified union, comprised largely of women in the office and clerical field has decided to challenge this long standing myth about the duties of a secretary. After 3 years of repeated attempts to incorporate protective language concerning this issue, the union, this year won the right to grieve "if an employee is required to perform any duties of a personal nature, not connected with the approved operations of the University". This clause provides YUSA with the opportunity to fight this aspect of exploitation of women; it is the union's position that a secretary is not paid to look after the personal needs of a (usually male) boss, but to fulfill the duties as outlined in a job description.

Despite the fact that discussions in negotiations revolved around the clear-cut examples of personal work mentioned above, YUSA is already testing the clause, fighting a grievance for an employee who was required to bring coffee for her boss. The University Administration is claiming that any orders given by management are by definition "approved operations of the University". YUSA is pursuing the case to arbitration.

This test case by YUSA can have significant implications for the many working women, who are standing up and fighting for their rights and dignities as workers.

Seniority during maternity leave

By TINA CARTWRIGHT

The present labour legislation with regard to maternity leave is totally inadequate. Women do not accumulate seniority while on maternity leave under the present legislation. They are in effect being penalized for taking the necessary time off work for bearing children.

The government is lagging behind the trade union movement in guaranteeing women's right to pregnancy leave without penalty.

The Employment Standards Act states that "the employer must reinstate [a woman] to the same job at the same wages with seniority and benefits accrued as at the date of leaving. If her original job is not available she will be assured of reinstatement to a comparable job". The wording of the act is nebulous: what does "available" mean? The interpretation is up to the employer.

Some unions have fought for seniority rights during pregnancy leave and have gained better protection for their women workers.

Evelyn Armstrong, National Representative with the United Electrical Workers, stated that in the thirteen plants of General Electric (in which 30 to 40% of the workers are women), their agreements cover seniority rights during maternity leave. Mothers are covered during the seventeen week leave guaranteed by law, but if they have good medical reasons for staying off longer, they can take up to one year — and still accumulate seniority.

If, for example, a man and woman start a job on the same day and after two years the woman takes maternity leave and is off one year, she still will have the same seniority he does — three years. Without the collective agreement, she would have lost one year's seniority.

There is a real need for unions to take up the question and to fight for changes in their contracts and also to fight for changes in the present inadequate legislation.



UNION WOMAN

PUBLISHED BY ORGANIZED WORKING WOMEN (TORONTO AREA)

VOL. 2, NO. 3



JANUARY 1979

Flat rate versus %

By BONNIE ALTER

Women workers have traditionally been caught at the bottom of the wage scale. Employers like to keep it that way by giving percentage increases rather than flat rate.

The "flat rate" increase and the "percentage across the board" increase are the two most common ways of distributing negotiated salary increases. The majority of wage increases are distributed by the percentage method whereby each member receives a (negotiated) percentage increase of their existing salary: the higher the person's salary the greater the increase. The flat-rate across the board method means that every bargaining unit member receives a equal portion of the negotiated salary increase, regardless of the present wage level.

The principle behind the flat-rate increase is important: it is a way of raising salaries at the low end of the wage scale and a way of decreasing great disparities in wage levels between the highest and lowest paid workers.

Take the example of a worker making \$20,000 a year and worker making \$10,000 a year and the effect of a 10% wage increase: under the percentage increase method, the higher paid worker would get \$2,000 and the lower paid 1,000 and there is a \$11,000 wage differential. However under the flat-rate system, both workers would get \$1,500 and there would only be a \$10,000 differential.

Since the net cost for the employer is the same, flat-rate increases should not be a problem for management but they argue that bringing up the salaries of the lower paid workers throws these workers out of competition with the market.

There are, however, many instances of locals that have successfully negotiated the flat-rate increase. Many of these successes are in the industrial and manufacturing sectors. The United Electrical Workers at General Electric have negotiated a flat-

rate increase for the past 2 years. The Labourer's International has negotiated a province-wide flat-rate for the 25,000 workers in this union who are employed mainly in general construction in the industrial and commercial sector. Several unions in the Buildings Trade have also won this kind of settlement. Several locals in the Canadian Textiles and Chemicals Union (C.T.C.U.) have won the flat-rate. In one particular local, the lowest paid group in the lowest wage category also got an upward adjustment. One of the issues in the Puretex strike right now is the flat-rate increase.

The public sector and social services have not been so lucky in their fight. The Jewish Family and Child Service, CUPE 265, a small local, won the flat-rate increase in 1976 on their first contract with strong support from the membership which had a wide salary range. Unfortunately in later contracts it was lost because the membership no longer supported it and management feared that the lower salaries were becoming too high. The Y.W.C.A. comprised mainly of women (FOCAS Local 75) won it on their first contract using a complex formula whereby the lowest paid workers got the highest increases. Management refused in their second contract because they wanted to maintain the wage hierarchy.

Compromises and combinations have been attempted and won by some locals. Library Workers (CUPE 1996) in 1977 won a combination of both methods. Y.U.S.A. (York University Staff Association) has won a choice of whichever is higher with a minimum flat-rate at bottom wage levels.

The AIB guidelines formulas prevented flat-rate increases and institutionalized the percentage increase. With the end of the AIB there should be renewed pressure by women unionists to establish this important principle once more.

Bonnie Alter is a member of CUPE Local 79



"We are not Sophia Loren — We are proud workers"

By LAUREL RITCHIE

For more than two months, the 220 workers at Puretex Knitting, Toronto, who are members of the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union, have been on strike for decent pay and working conditions, including the removal of closed circuit cameras from their workplace. This is their first strike.

Two hundred of those workers are women with the majority of them being of foreign-born origin.

Most of the women earn between \$3.50 and \$3.75 an hour for sewing machine, pressing and other operations. They are demanding a 40¢ an hour across-the-board increase in Year 1 and a 40¢ an hour across-the-board increase in Year 2 of a two-year contract.

Other strike issues include improvements to welfare benefits, a better grievance procedure and stronger seniority rights for protection against layoffs and retraining of seniority workers into other skills.

The issue of the spy cameras at Puretex should be of serious concern to all trade unionists.

The Company President, Gary

Satok, and his supervisors monitor the women all day long from 2 sets of nine TV screens. One of the cameras is beamed on the entrance to the women's washroom. The cameras are used for timing the women at work and in the washroom. One of the songs the women have written to entertain themselves on the picketline includes the lines "We are not Sophia Loren; we are proud workers".

When the women went on strike they knew it would be a long fight but they also know it is a necessary one. They are leading a fight against low wages and unfair treatment which, for too long, have been the lot of women workers.

You can help. Let department stores such as Marks and Spencers, Eaton's and The Bay know what you think of the inhuman treatment of women workers at Puretex who make men's sweaters and shirts carrying the brand names of "St. Michael", "Four Wheel Drive", "Jaguar" "St. Julien" and "Seaforth".

Laurel Ritchie is on staff with the Canadian Textile & Chemical Union.

UNION WOMAN

Production this issue:
Bonnie Alter, Barbara Cameron,
Tina Cartwright, Holly Kirkconnell,
Marg Moores, Marg Smith

Union Woman is published once every two months by Organized Working Women. The Editorial Board of the newspaper is the Executive Council of OWW.

Union Woman is free to members of OWW and is available for distribution to union locals on request.

Letters to the editor, opinion pieces and news stories should be sent to:
**Union Woman, 15 Gervais Dr., Suite 301,
Don Mills, Ont. 447-7462.**

What OWW can do for you . . .

OWW acts as a resource and information centre for women in the labour movement. Our organization provides speakers and films for educational. And we give assistance to the organizing efforts of our sisters in their unions. This we do as a regular part of our ongoing activities along with educational conferences, government lobbying and support and solidarity work.

Here are some of the kinds of questions we answer every day. "Do you know if those unions with a higher percentage of female members have a better bargaining record for their women members?" This was asked by a sister from CALEA (Canadian Air Lines Employees Association). A feminist and ex-union member wanted to know if unions have improved health and safety standards for women workers. She wanted to know in what way and if there were examples. A union organizer, writing an organizing leaflet, asked OWW to provide statistics which compared the economic position of unionized and non-unionized women in specific job categories. The steelworkers wanted an Italian-speaking woman trade unionist to talk on the rights of women workers to a course they were offering for their Italian women members. A library worker wanted, for her upcoming negotiations, an example of the best maternity leave clause negotiated. And some newly unionized women wanted a model contract.

Although they would probably deny it, we have also received referrals from the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour and the Employment Standards Branch. These women workers were complaining about sex discrimination and were blocked by the bureaucratic maze. We clarified the legis-

lation for them and helped them file their complaints.

OWW answers speaking requests. We go out to women's groups, caucuses and committees to help in the process of framing bargaining demands. We have assisted our sisters in the local unions to prepare briefs for presentation to their negotiating committees. We have talked about the strategy needed to ensure that women's demands are treated as high priority items at the bargaining table.

We also speak to local unions on educational themes — especially to impress on trade unionists the responsibility of the union movement to take leadership in the fight of women for economic equality.

If you need any of this kind of information or assistance please contact us and we will do our best. Sometimes we can't help. Our resources are limited. But insofar as we are able to provide information on all aspects of work and work-related questions. We especially try to be as helpful as we can on bargaining issues because there is so little information available from other sources and because bargaining for equality is an essential part of the fight for women's rights.

When we can't answer a question or provide assistance directly we try to find other sources of information. Recently we were completely stumped when a representative from the Wives Supporting the Strike committee in Sudbury asked if we knew where they could get a donation of enough beans to serve 20,000 people! They are organizing a "Beans for the Workers — Gravy for the Bosses" supper. Does anybody know where we can get beans?

OWW kicks off fund drive

By WENDY CUTHBERTSON

There's no sign that the federal government will be easing up on its austerity or "restraint" programme which is hitting community groups, particularly women's groups, so hard. To the realistic observer, one of the casualties could be the federal Secretary of State money that has been subsidizing OWW to the extent of some \$25,000 a year since 1977.

The Secretary of State money has allowed OWW to maintain a very high level of service to its members, to trade union women in general — indeed to the entire trade union movement. A full-time staff person, a regularly published newspaper, phone and mailing facilities have meant that OWW has been able to provide speakers, counselling and advisory services, organizational impetus behind events like the Fleck picket action, the women's health and safety conference and the Inco benefit, not to mention the research and documentation of women's role in the labour movement.

Fortunately its successful record has earned OWW a highly respected profile within the trade union movement, which will be a considerable asset when OWW fund raisers pass the hat around tradeunion officials and local unions.

Of course, the funding drive directed at the trade unions will be supplemented by a stepped-up membership drive and by a benefit for OWW members and supporters.

However, it's probably safe to say that OWW will have to count on the unions for the bulk of its funding. Already the Ontario Federation of Labour has been approached for a substantial donation. Major affiliates like the UAW, Steel and CUPE will be approached in addition to unions with heavy female memberships like OPSEIU. These efforts will be followed up by a third-tier campaign directed towards local unions. It is hoped that women's committees within local unions will assist here.

What can you do? Write a cheque. Renew your OWW membership. Recruit a couple of new members. And talk about OWW, especially within your local union, to pave the way for the fund-raisers' "pitch".

With some effort, we can keep OWW front and centre — where it belongs.

Wendy Cuthbertson is the Vice-President of OWW. She is a member of the Newspaper Guild and on the staff of the UAW.

Daycare at the OFL

A member of CUPE Local 79, Cathy Skinner was a delegate to the 1978 OFL Convention. Here is her account of the fight for the day care resolution at that convention.

By CATHARINE SKINNER

1978 was a very productive year for women at the OFL Convention. It was the first year that there was a position paper on women's issues adopted and it was also the year that we secured the possibility of having day care provided during OFL conventions, conferences and other functions. The paper was prepared by the OFL Women's Committee.

The need for day care at trade union functions is obvious. More and more women and men with childcare responsibilities will be able to participate and the trade union movement can't help but benefit from increased participation of those members.

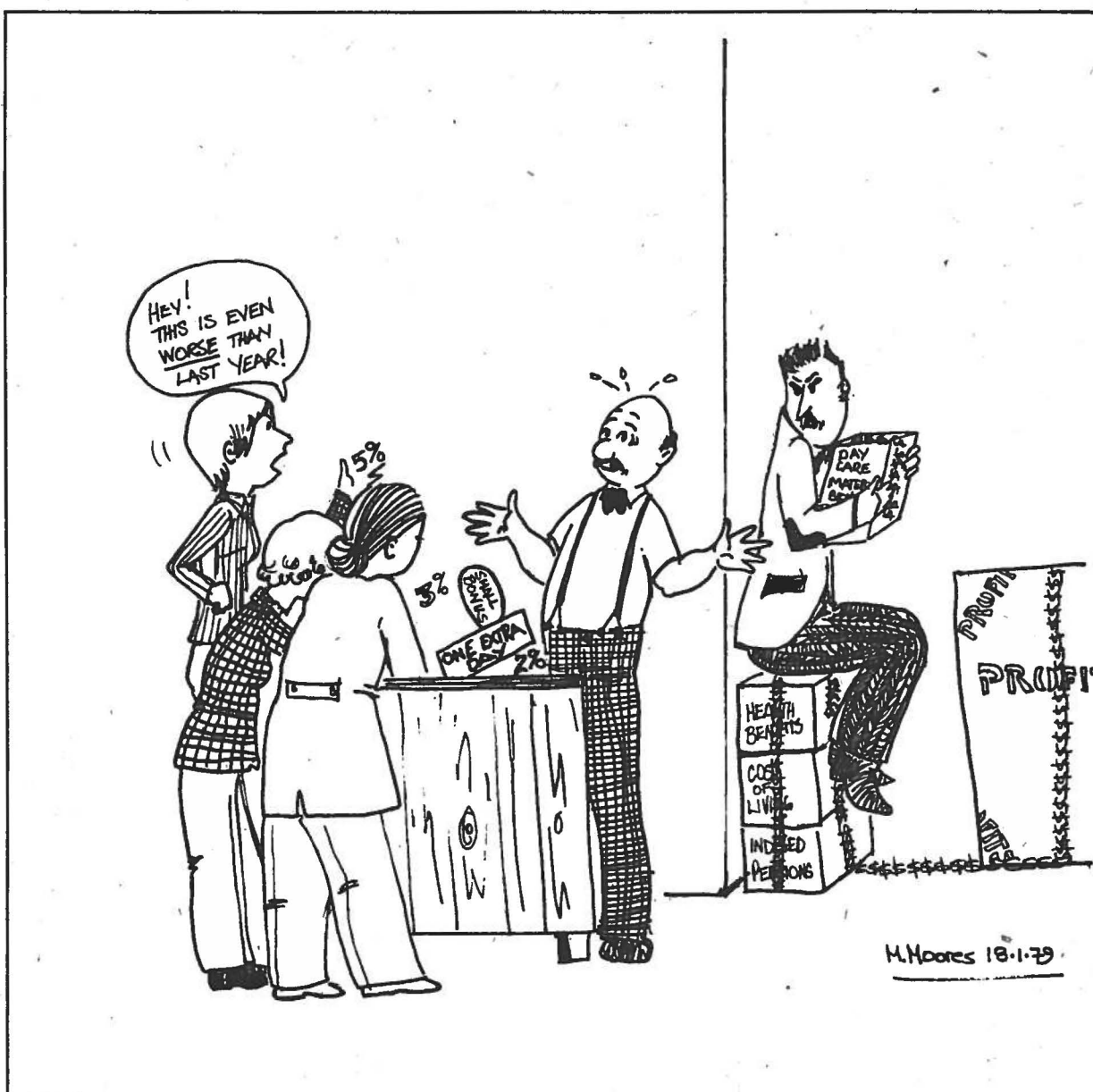
A resolution submitted to the convention called for the OFL to provide child care at all OFL conventions, conferences and functions. As you may know, the Resolutions Committee has the power to amend resolutions before they are presented to the floor. We were chagrined to find that the Resolutions Committee

had amended the day care resolution by proposing that a feasibility study be conducted and the results be presented back to the 1979 convention. This would mean yet another year without day care facilities!

With the assistance of OWW, a number of women and men organized to take to the floor on this issue. Our strategy at first was to try to have the amended form referred back to the Resolutions Committee and to attempt to get the original resolution on the floor.

We had learned at the OFL 1977 convention that organization and strategy were essential and we created a corps of delegates dedicated to the cause. We were all geared up with a floor strategy and were ready to battle for our issue. Then we decided in caucus that an attempt to lobby the Resolutions Committee should be tried. This was done with some success. The Resolutions Committee agreed to change the amendment to say that a feasibility study would be done in time to provide day care for the 1979 convention. We agreed to this compromise and spoke to support it on the floor. The resolution was passed with considerable solidar-

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Commentary

Commentary is a forum for debate and discussion on issues of interest to trade union women. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Organized Working Women.

Our needs are not frills

By FRANCES SCOVIL

When workers go to the bargaining table this year, they will be facing managements that will not only be unwilling to give them very much but will also be making an attempt to take away already-won rights from the contracts. With serious government cutbacks and high unemployment, unions will avoid the frills and demand those clauses that they consider important.

But who decides what are frills? All too often in the many male-dominated unions, contract clauses that apply specifically to women are considered unnecessary. The notion that women are only working for "pin-money" is unfortunately still strong, despite the fact that in a recent study it was found that 80% of families with two wages earn, in total, incomes at or below the average family income. Add on to that all the women who are single or are single parents and it becomes evident that most women really need that money. Yet women workers continue to receive the lowest wages and are often at the lowest level of seniority when it comes to layoffs. This is due largely to the amount of time they take for the very necessary work of having and raising children.

Equal pay for work of equal value, daycare subsidies and other benefits related to pregnancy and child rearing cannot therefore be classified as frills. For women these issues are vital. Without equal pay our pay cheques become smaller and smaller. Women with families end up spending more time at their second job, housekeeping, as they hunt for the best bargains in food and clothing.

One of the biggest stigmas women workers have had to deal with is the fact that we get pregnant.

Procreation of the human race is very important social labour and it is a lot of work. But all too often it is treated as an inconvenience by our employers and even by our union brothers. For women to stay in the workforce, full compensation for the seventeen weeks pregnancy leave, with no loss of seniority, day-care subsidies and time off for when our children are sick are basic demands. If we get pushed back into the home, it means great hardship for many families and welfare for single mothers.

These demands have been won in some unions. CUPE 2189, which is composed of Metro Toronto YWCA workers is negotiating for a daycare subsidy of \$20.00 per month for every child under nine for both male and female workers. The U of T library workers in CUPE 1230 now have seniority rights for women on pregnancy leave. Women must argue for these clauses. We have the right and the need to work and we must make work as accessible as possible.

Workers did not cause the economic crisis that this country is in. We should not be made to pay for it through loss of wages, union rights and our jobs. As government and industry continue their attack on us through cutbacks and hard-line bargaining, it is all the more important for workers to continue to fight for what we need and not for what we think they will let us have. Women workers in particular must resist the pressure coming from all sides to deny us our rights as workers and to push us back into the home.

Frances Scovil is chief steward in CUPE Local 1230, composed of library workers at the University of Toronto.

Union wins equal pay

By BARBARA CAMERON

"The existing equal pay legislation was absolutely no help", C.S. Jackson, National President of the United Electrical Workers, told *Union Woman* in an account of his union's six year fight for equal pay for women workers at the Hamilton plant of Westinghouse.

The experience of U.E. points out the inadequacies of the Ontario government's approach to equal pay for women workers.

Westinghouse was paying women workers fifty cents less per hour than men for work rated the same in the company's own job evaluation scheme. The union took this blatant example of sexual discrimination to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. It was told that nothing could be done.

Even though Westinghouse admitted that the jobs of women workers were equal in value to jobs performed by men, the company's refusal to pay equal wages was within the law. Under the existing legislation the jobs performed by men and women must be "the same or substantially the same" before an employer is required to pay the same wages.

Despite the defeat at the Human Rights Commission the union continued to press for equal pay through the collective bargaining process. Two years ago Westinghouse agreed to decrease the differential between male and

female workers by a half. In this year's round of contract negotiations the union finally won equal pay for these women workers at Westinghouse.

The company has met the union's demand for the elimination of the differential between male and female wages after six years of pressure. But Jackson is quick to point out that Westinghouse has not yet conceded the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

"In the Cambridge plant", says Jackson, "Westinghouse is trying to knock the rates for women workers down. Management argues that the competitive position of the company is hurt by paying higher than market wages to women workers".

The present legislation does not prevent companies from dividing work categories by sex and paying women less. "Before the legislation the companies used to have a male schedule and a female schedule. Now employers just call them schedule 1 and schedule 2", according to Jackson.

When the equal pay legislation was first introduced in Ontario, General Electric went through the motions of reviewing its wage rates. Out of 5,000 women workers, only 50 or 60 got an increase!

According to Jackson, the union's task would be easier with effective legislation guaranteeing women workers equal pay for work of equal value. But the U.E. experience shows that through persistent pressure a union can win equal pay for work of equal value through contract negotiations.

INCO benefit raises \$14,000



By MARY ELLEN MARUS

"It's our strike too" was the message loud and clear from the wives of the Inco strikers and working women of Sudbury.

A solidarity benefit in Toronto, Dec. 8 attracted a crowd of 500 and over \$14,000 was raised for the Christmas strike fund. Our sisters from Sudbury were thrilled with the support they received and glad to have the opportunity of making a link with working women outside of Sudbury.

The benefit began with a toe-tapping performance by Stringband followed by speeches from the Sudbury women. Linda Obansawin, a leader of the Wives Supporting the Strike Committee explained that wives got involved in the strike support work "so that the company can't use us against our own husbands. We

should be part of it; it's our company too." Cathy Duhaime, an Inco striker, talked about the previous lay-offs which wiped out almost all of the 300 women workers because of their low seniority. The old story — women are last hired and first fired.

Each of the speeches received standing ovations as an indication of the feeling of support and solidarity at the benefit. A poem was read by Bea Stephenson written by her daughter Sharon who died several months ago. Sharon grew up in Sudbury — her poem "Slag" is a moving indictment of Inco's rape of the land.

Many union representatives and individuals lined up at the mike to give greetings of solidarity and pledge financial support amid cheers and hand-clapping.

Women from Red Light Theatre sang songs in cabaret style from their play "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl" and the evening ended with Beverly Glen Copeland singing some beautifully original songs about fighting together for a better world.

The benefit, sponsored by OWW, the International Women's Day Committee, OFL, ONDP Women's Committee and Local 6500, was followed by a successful party.

Being able to meet with and support the wives supporting the strike and some of the Inco strikers lifted the spirits of many of us here in Toronto. And our sisters in Sudbury are better able to carry on the struggle supported by our good wishes and solidarity.

Health conference a big success

By JEAN DIRKSEN

Jean Dirksen, a member of CUPE Local 1966, was one of the many participants at the Conference on "Women's Work, Women's Health" in December. These are her impressions of the Conference.

The "Women's Work, Women's Health" Conference, sponsored by OWW and the Humber College Centre for Labour Studies, was a highly successful experience for the many participants who represented a broad spectrum of the labour force.

The Conference was exceptionally well-organized and dealt with the effects of workplace hazards on women workers, con-

trolling workplace hazards, and making health and safety committees work to the employees' advantage. Each of the topics was dealt with initially in a plenary session, with guest speakers Jean Stellman, author of *Women's Work, Women's Health and Work is Dangerous to Your Health*, Sharon Mintz, a medical student, and Carolyn Bell, an American occupational health expert.

Following upon the plenary session, participants broke into workshops for the different occupational groups represented: health care; office and clerical; social service; industrial; textile; and libraries. The workshops were very productive. With the assistance of highly informed, enthusiastic resource people and group leaders, we worked collectively to identify problems and to plan strategies for their solution.

As trade unionists, we realize the need to act collectively, to organize ourselves. Clearly, a starting point is to set up health and safety committees in our local unions, which can research hazards, educate the membership, and lead collective action to redesign workplaces and working conditions. Several initiatives along these lines have already been taken in local unions since the Conference.

As women workers, we need to develop a militant movement across occupational sectors to continue the fight for a safe workplace. OWW should be the leading body in the struggle. The "Women's Work, Women's Health" Conference was a landmark which, if followed up, will have provided a base for future collective activism.

OWW Members Meet

February 8
& March 8
7:30

1901 Yonge St.
9th Floor

February 8
& March 8
7:30

CRITIC'S CORNER

"... so we created our own"

By MAUREEN REILLY

Rosie the Riveter is just one of the unsung heroines whose song was finally heard in the Solar Stage production of "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl".

The Solar Stage brings a new idea to Toronto: a theatrical production designed to meet the needs of those who work in the downtown core and can take in the show on their lunch hour.

"Working Girl" is the brainchild of Francine Volker and Judith Orban who were intrigued by the idea of creating a show for this specific audience. "Here we can talk to women about what they do and reach them during their working hours." Judith and Francine, together with the musical expertise of Iris Paabl, have put together a history in song of

day-to-day lives. Great areas of work remain undocumented. We can find no songs about nurses or banktellers, for instance."

The professional collaboration of Francine and Judith goes back a number of years as they struggle to survive in the highly competitive theatre world. Government cutbacks are affecting the arts. "With less available funding, theatres opt for shows which require fewer actors. Since most plays are about men, jobs for actresses become increasingly difficult to find. So we created our own."

Working conditions for people in acting are poor at best. The average income is between five and six thousand dollars a year — well below the poverty line. Theatre contracts specify a six-



women at work from the turn of the century to the present.

While theatre goers munch on lunch, these three women go to work on the tiny stage with the help of a piano, a few props and a series of old black and white slides on the overhead screen. The material is all authentic renditions of folk and popular songs and musicals characterizing working women: the Red Cross girl of World War I, the ten-cents-a dance girl of the Depression, today's school teacher, faced with the double burdens of work and unaided housework at home.

"We like to disarm people with our approach, with something that has scope for many moods and attitudes. But it is a battle to find materials about people's

day.week. Due to the absence of a real union, most actors have to resort to doing commercials to subsidize their theatre incomes.

But for the time being, Pears Cabaret will protect these working girls. Those of you who were not part of the overflow crowd at the December Solar Stage production have a second chance to see the show. An expanded version of "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl" opens for an indefinite run at Pears Cabaret on January 24. This theatre is located at 138 Pears Avenue, and is open Tuesdays through Saturdays. Phone 961-4698 for reservations. The show is also available to unions and other organizations for special performances.

Maureen Reilly is a steward in CUPE local 1281.

Day care

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The important thing about the feasibility study is that the OFL is setting a precedent for all other trade union functions. This information gained can be used by all of us in our own unions and

locals to gain day care facilities.

The OFL conference on women will be held in the spring. Day care will be provided there as part of the feasibility study so let's use the facility and encourage women with children to attend.

You & the law

Taking stock

By DEIRDRE GALLAGHER

If women are to gain economic equality in the work force we will have to fight for it with the employers. The history of the labour movement shows that militant struggles at the work place have led the way in improving wages and conditions. The right to unionize, the shorter work week, minimum wages, pensions, health care and health and safety standards were all first won as a result of struggles with the employers. These gains, won through union contracts, were eventually enshrined in law for all workers.

Women workers are beginning to show that they are ready to take on this fight. Women are organizing into unions at an increasing rate. In the last year women have gone on strike for equal pay for work of equal value, and for the right to have a union. They have broken the wage ceilings in some areas in the public sector and they have won improvements in maternity leave and against discriminatory practices. The Bank Note workers in Ottawa, the women at Fleck, York University, at Puretex and in the libraries have all demonstrated an unprecedented and inspiring determination to win equality.

As important as these struggles have been, there are serious weaknesses in the approach of the labour movement in fighting discrimination against working women. Resolutions, policy papers and government lobbying are useful insofar as they perform an education function and establish the principle of equality. But they are not enough. A coordinated bargaining strategy must be developed. The fight

for women's equality on the job must become the cause of the whole labour movement.

Some unions have begun to negotiate in a concerted way on these issues. CUPE, for example, was the first national union to document the discrimination against women within its own ranks and to provide resources for local unions for bargaining. CUPE's manual on Affirmative Action and its model contract are useful tools for the locals. Some CUPE locals have won equal pay for work of equal value and improved maternity leave clauses.

In the industrial area, the UAW is developing a program for increasing women's participation in the union. And they are bargaining more consistently against discrimination. The UAW has won maternity leave in some areas of Quebec in support of the principle that men and women should be able to share in the care of their children. The local union at the Ford Motor plant has pushed the company to hire women workers and have negotiated a maternity leave provision in recognition of the rights of women workers. Women members of the UAW have begun to use their seniority to "bump" into jobs previously held only by men. It is the bread and butter issues which are the real test of a union's commitment to equality.

One of the most important ongoing impediments to advancing women's rights through the collective bargaining process is the underrepresentation of women on negotiating committees. Unions do present demands of concern to their women members, but these items are often treated as throwaways.

They are not priority items. The only way to alter this situation is for women to become a stronger force in their unions, to organize, to present their demands to their bargaining teams and to get women elected to ensure that they are adequately represented. There needs to be active women's committees and education programs to counter sexism in our own ranks.

Women trade unionists are organizing, as is shown by the increasing number of women's committees. The existence and growing strength of OWW is another indication of the rising power of women. Women's presence is being felt as a positive force for change which the union movement is responding to.

The CLC has undertaken a study on bargaining for equal pay for work of equal value. It is designed to be a practical document to assist affiliates in developing a bargaining strategy in this area. The OFL in sponsoring a women's conference in April called "Bargaining for Equality". The workshops will examine all the areas of discrimination against women on the job. The conference will also discuss how to work within our unions to advance women's position in them.

Women in the labour movement recognize that the struggle for equality is a practical necessity. Economic equality is the cornerstone of women's freedom. In organizing through our unions to fight the employers we are giving concrete expression to the ideas and inspiration of the women's liberation movement.

Deirdre Gallagher is OWW Co-ordinator and a member of OPEIU 343.

Puretex strike benefit night

Sunday Jan. 28

7:30 p.m.

St. Paul's Church
121 Avenue Road

film: "Maria" plus
live sequel

\$5.00

Join OWW!



Membership in OWW is open to all women in the Toronto area who are members of bona fide collective bargaining units or a bona fide organizing committee of a union. Membership is \$10.00 per year.

To join OWW, send in this application form with proof of union membership to the OWW office, address below.

Name

Address

..... Telephone

Union Local

Organized Working Women,
15 Gervais Drive, Suite 301,
Don Mills, Ont. M3C 1YB.