



# UNION WOMAN

PUBLISHED BY ORGANIZED WORKING WOMEN (TORONTO AREA)

VOL 4 NO. 2



JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1981

## Women and Employment Conference

Feb. 20-22  
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## Women in forefront at OFL convention

*This article was written by Susan J. Ogurian. She attended the OFL convention as a delegate from Region 5 of the Ontario Public Services Employees Union.*

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Women were very evident at the 24th annual Ontario Federation of Labour Convention held in Toronto, Nov. 24-27, 1980. We spoke on many issues, not only those pertaining to so-called "women's" issues (which are truth be known, union issues), and did an excellent job.

There was a positive development at the convention with the endorsement of a resolution on Organized Working Women. Although there was a great deal of controversy resulting in a heated debate, the resolution was amended and passed calling on the OFL to "endorse the aims and objectives of Organized Working Women providing their policies and goals are consistent with the Federation's objectives and policies".

It is hoped that the aim of all union organizations is to work towards similar policies and goals. After all, one of the issues passed by the convention called for the "embarking on a well-rounded campaign around problems and issues that are critical to the needs and best interests of the working people". A concept that OWW has always followed.

An important policy paper on day care was also passed. The result of intensive work of many women over the years, it was the first major day care policy ever passed by the OFL. The paper calls for a campaign to achieve the Federation's goal of a system of universal, comprehensive day care.

During the convention the OFL Women's Committee held a forum on affirmative action (getting women into non-traditional jobs). This was a forum for

women and we heard many of the delegates speak. Delegates, not involved in struggles such as the one being carried on at Stelco, were appalled at the conditions women breaking into new territory had to work under. Apparently management did not feel that women would be working there long enough to warrant having proper facilities established for them.

This proved to be a very interesting forum. After the panel came the question and answer period. It was then that the rank and file members spoke on their struggles within their organizations. They were not going to settle for a pat on the head and a thank you for their participation. They wanted to let the delegates know just what form their struggle had taken.

On the convention floor there was a great deal of visible support by the women delegates for one another. Those who were inexperienced or a little reluctant to go to the microphone were encouraged to get up and speak. There was always someone willing to go up with them giving them the confidence they needed.

It was also a very lively convention, where shouting sometimes accompanied resolutions that the delegates felt were particularly urgent. But even then it was sometimes the case where the calm, softly spoken speeches were most intently listened to.

Overall this was a convention where the rank and file got up and spoke out. A convention where women took action, as in the case of Brother George and the Constitutional Express (a train of 800 Native Indians travelling from Vancouver to Ottawa in order to let their views be known to the federal government.) It was the women who got up and took up a collection for them.

More on OFL page 2

## HOSPITAL WORKERS FIGHT CONTINUES



PHOTO M. PHILLIPS

Ontario's 14,000 hospital workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees were forced back to work Feb. 2 after bravely challenging the legality of right to strike laws in this province. Queen's Park and the Ontario Hospital Association used every means at their disposal to intimidate the strikers, including injunctions, threatening to jail strike leaders and firings. This battle may have been lost but the hospital workers will find this strike very useful in the battles that lie ahead with the Tory government and the OHA.

## Getting that first contract

By SUSAN EDGAR

For union members negotiating their first contract, it is an exciting proposition to finally be able to put down on paper the things that could only be wished for in the past. There is finally an avenue available to vent the frustrations that have built up over the years.

The first contract is probably the most important yet most difficult to negotiate. The employers are not used to seriously listening to the collective voice of their employees and are not going to give in too easily to workers' requests. The freedom of paying low wages for high productivity, dismissals without recourse, and in general doing whatever management pleases is not going to be given up without a fight.

Through the various procedures, bargaining demands are set, approved by the membership and formulated into a package. Generally union members put forward their demands and elect a negotiating committee at a membership meeting.

At the bargaining table an exchange of packages will take place. Management and the union will each have specific proposals

that they wish to see written into the collective agreement. An example of an employer's proposal would be a very strong management rights clause. The union's demands will likely reflect the reasons union representation was initially sought. There is other language required by law that will likely be incorporated into the proposals of both.

Collective agreements from similar occupations will be used by the bargaining team to develop arguments and proof that the goals cited in the union package are not unreasonable and should be easily attainable.

A set of complex legislation governs the bargaining process. Time delays, the stages a union must proceed through before strike action may be taken, news blackouts, and the intricacies of contract language can be confusing and frustrating for the union members.

In many instances the new members' only contact with the unions in the past has been through the media, so a very contorted image likely exists. Misunderstanding of the processes involved can weaken an otherwise stable membership. It is im-

perative that the lines of communication be kept wide open and working. A weak link will destroy the chain.

It is unfortunate that many first contract negotiations require a strike before a contract can be a reality. Unfair labour practice charges are becoming the norm as employers frequently refuse to bargain in good faith as they attempt to bust the union.

A strike is a very real fear of any union member, but especially those newly organized. Low wages do not leave any extra for nest-egg building and strike pay, when available, is often not enough.

The employer, aware of this fear, often kindles the fire with rumours and threats in an attempt to get employees disgruntled with the union in the hope that decertification proceedings will be started.

These storms can be weathered and a first contract can be won with the determined efforts of a strong, active union membership.

Susan Edgar is a national representative with the Communications Workers of Canada.

## OFL endorses OWW

The following resolution was overwhelming passed by the delegates at the 1980 Ontario Federation of Labour Convention.

WHEREAS women in increasing numbers are joining the trade union movement, and

WHEREAS ORGANIZED WORKING WOMEN is a rank and file membership organization which since its foundation has encouraged women to more fully participate in their respective unions, personifying the slogan "A Woman's Place is in Her Union", and

WHEREAS more women unionists are coming to ORGANIZED WORKING WOMEN to seek solutions to common problems so that they may learn how to effectively defend their rights,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ontario Federation of Labour endorse the aims and objectives of Organized Working Women providing their policies and goals are consistent with the Federation's objectives and policies.

OFL Convention 1980



# Double jeopardy on the job

## Immigrant women and employment

By JOAN OSBORNE

It's rough to be stuck in a pink collar ghetto. It's tougher to be trapped in a work ghetto for immigrant women.

Historically, Canadian employers exploited women. They exploited immigrants. The newly-arrived woman worker is in double jeopardy. She usually finds a low-pay, low-status job in a factory or in the garment industry or as a cleaner. No English is needed in these ghettos. It may be a life sentence.

At the Cross Cultural Communications Center in Toronto, I listened to a tape illustrated with slides. I followed the workaday misadventures of May, Maria and Sonia. This trio (from Hong Kong, Portugal and West Indies) suffer overwork, underpay, unjust firing, injury on the job. Then they have fearful difficulty navigating the bureaucratic mazes of the Workmen's Compensation Board and the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

Each turns for help to an ethnic community centre where she learns that her problems are common to all workers — especially women, particularly immigrant women. The three become friends. They realize the economic situation is to blame and that unions can help. A slide at the end projects the message:

"Joining a union of one's choice is the way to make use of workers' rights under the Labour Laws of Ontario".

If she lacks English, an immigrant woman has difficulty understanding her rights or participating in union affairs. If she works in an immigrant ghetto it's hard to pick up English.

Some unions have arranged for English-as-a-Second-Language classes with emphasis on practical vocabulary for use at the work place. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers ran after-work classes on the job site at two shops. At one where employees were predominantly Chinese, classes were successful, and cross-cultural friendships formed.

At the second shop the Portuguese and Italian women expressed great interest but attendance was poor because household duties were given after-work priority.

Social background can make immigrant women easy targets for super-exploitation. In a climate of unemployment, underemployment and a largely unorganized workforce facing persistent inflation, the labour movement must somehow cope with mutual resentment and the tendency to find scapegoats.

Ties have formed between

labour activists and ethnic community workers. These ties can be multiplied and strengthened. Immigrant women can enjoy the consciousness-raising process which Canadian women have been exposed to since the mid-sixties. This leads to a sense of solidarity as women and as workers.

The last few years have seen organized immigrant women fighting exploitation on the picket line, facing stubborn employers, strikebreakers and police. When these sisters win, we all win.

Joan Osborne is a member of the Toronto Local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.



— PHOTO ROBINSON

Women, many of them immigrants put up a strong battle for their rights during the Lancia Bravo strike in March 1979. Photo reprinted courtesy of the Globe and Mail.

## Women working at Stelco

By DEBBIE FIELD

The Steel Co. of Canada (Stelco) had practiced a discriminatory no-woman hiring policy between 1961 and 1980, until a successful campaign, Women Back Into Stelco, forced them to start hiring women in the Hamilton plant.

The campaign was initiated by Steelworkers Local 1005, representing the 13,000 workers at Stelco, and a group of women who wanted to work in the plant. It involved human rights commission complaints against the company by five women, and by the local; substantial union and public support; press statements, and a demonstration. It culminated in a successful rally of over 400 on International Women's Day 1980. Two weeks later, all five who layed the complaints, and 30 other women, were working at Stelco.

We estimate that 10% of those hired by Stelco in the last year are women — about 125. This is a good first step, and was one of the demands we raised since 10% of the applicants were women. Women are still, however, only 1% of the total work force. I am often the only woman on my shift for weeks when the other four women in my department are on different shifts.

Things are going well for women in the plant — most are enjoying themselves and proving that they can handle the work and survive in what is still a predominantly male world. The response of the men has been generally positive, and as women become a permanent feature of life in the plant, the initial testing we were posed with is disappearing. There are some problems such as inadequate washroom facilities — overcrowded change houses and many women having to share the male washroom with only an added partition around the urinals. The inadequate washroom facilities reflect the general backwardness of facilities in the plant — some departments are still using chains to hang up their clothes instead of lockers. It also reflects the attitude of Stelco towards women working in the plant. They are waiting to see if all the women quit before they invest money in building permanent facilities.

There is some sexual harassment. Most of it comes from the foremen: insulting comments; more difficult testing of women's

job performance than of men's; an overly friendly and uninvited arm around a woman's shoulder. Some of it comes from male co-workers: sexist graffiti, language, and songs; nude pictures of women hung up in the lunchroom. I now realize that much of what I saw as sexual harassment existed before the women were hired, but now that women are in the plant, certain things must change.

A women's committee was formed inside the local in October 1980. Its function is to ensure that problems that arise from women working in the plant will be dealt with quickly through union channels. The committee is presently appointed by the President of the local, and consists of four women and three men. Many have questions about an appointed women's committee, and see the present structure as interim until a more democratic one can be worked out. We had a very positive first general women's committee meeting in December, open to everyone in the local, where the problem of washrooms was discussed and strategies for getting better facilities developed.

To women interested in getting jobs where women are not hired, I recommend that you contact the union (if there is one) and launch a joint campaign with the local, since employers argue that they don't hire women because men don't want to work with them. By having union support, and extensive support among the men (and

this can be organized even if there is no local), you can counter this argument. A public campaign, with a campaign committee made up of women who want the jobs and others who want to support women's efforts to get them, is very important. The Human Rights Commission will often advise you to be 'good' and not talk to the press. Our experience proved the opposite — the more active we were publicly, the quicker we got results from Stelco. Finally, once you are in the plant, get active in the union and help to form a women's committee.

In current times of rising unemployment, women getting jobs at Stelco and in other industrial plants, is a victory. The pay is relatively higher (I make \$8.50/hour) and there are the benefits and job security of a unionized plant. It is not, however, the solution to all women's problems like the need for 24 hour childcare. Nor is it a substitute for the crucial need for the organization of women in white collar and light industry jobs — where the majority of women work. Women into industry is but one step amongst many needed to ensure that women do not take the brunt of these difficult political and economic times we are living through.

Debbie Field works in the Coke Ovens at Stelco in Hamilton. She is the chairperson of Local 1005 Women's Committee.

## For more information

A videotape, Working Women's Rights which focuses particularly on immigrant working women is available for a rental fee of \$10.00 from the Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 1991 Dufferin St., Toronto. Also available for use with immigrant women is a tape recording and illustrating slides which tells the story of immigrant workers and their problems and leads up to the role of the union. For further information, call 653-2223.

For information re assistance in working with immigrant women call the Centre for Women Working with Immigrant Women at 922-1256.

Information about services in particular languages can be obtained from the Community Information Centre of Metropolitan Toronto 863-0505.

Also, the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Centre for Labour Studies at Humber College is offering a one day seminar on March 7 entitled Work, Racism and Labour. The seminar is designed to encourage workers and trade unionists to examine their daily work experiences in order to understand the roots and forms of racism, and to identify some possible solutions for dealing with racism wherever it is found, in the workplace, in union activities, in the home and community.

The seminar will be held at OISE, 252 Bloor Street. For more information contact the Centre for Labour Studies, 675-3111, Ext. 467, 544, 414.

## Labour Studies Courses

The Centre for Labour Studies, Humber College began its Winter 1981 program at the end of January. The following courses are still being offered for this semester.

| Course                                | Starting date |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Labour History I                      | Feb. 19       |
| Pensions Program                      | Feb. 21       |
| Labour Leadership                     | Feb. 21       |
| Your Health and Safety                | Feb. 23       |
| Labour Economics                      | Feb. 24       |
| Arbitration Program                   | Feb. 28       |
| Effective Communications in the Union | March 2       |
| Working Class Literature              | March 3       |
| Work Processes and their Consequences | March 4       |
| Instructional Techniques              | March 7       |

For more information contact: HUMBER COLLEGE, P.O. Box 1900, Rexdale, Ontario M9W 5L7, 675-3111 ext. 467

## Resolutions passed at OFL

Some of the issues discussed and passed by the convention were:

- a policy paper on daycare
- demand for legislation supporting the principle of equal pay for work of equal value
- assisting women in gaining access into job training and non-traditional jobs
- women to have equal opportunity at all levels of union activity
- demand that legislation be enacted to provide for paid educational leave
- the establishment of a 32-hour work week with 40 hours of pay
- public ownership of energy
- legislative changes to provide for full political rights for public employees
- the repealing of The Hospital Labour Disputes Act and The Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act (CECBA) to protect social service employees
- demand that the government establish land banks and sell serviced lots at cost, take over the issuing of mortgage monies at low rates to enable citizens to build and own a house, to stimulate house construction, and to eliminate employment
- and support the direct involvement of our Native Brothers and Sisters in the Constitutional discussions — demand that their rights be an integral part of the Canadian Constitution



# Tories kill Bill 157

By JOAN OSBORNE

Bill Davis and his Conservatives have done it again. Another attempt to improve life for the working woman was simply set aside. On Nov. 13, 1980 a group of women watched from the visitors' gallery as Bill 157, a proposed Act Respecting Economic Equality for Women in Ontario, introduced by the New Democratic Party, went the way of all such proposed legislation — right down the drain!

This time the Conservatives didn't bother going through the motions, they rejected it outright at the start.

The Bill provided for:

- Affirmative action to get women into better-paying jobs;
- A skills-training program to facilitate entry into non-traditional occupations;
- Provision for universally accessible quality daycare;
- Establishment of equal pay for work of equal value and enforcement;
- Protection from sexual harassment in the workplace.

Bill 157 was introduced as part of a program of "Policies for Equality" adopted by the NDP at its convention last June. Women should let Premier Davis and their MPP know how they feel about the Tory's action.

Unions and organizations such as the Equal Pay Coalition and Organized Working Women will continue to press for this much needed legislation.

## Canada lags behind

*The following is part of an editorial by Mildred Istona which appeared in the January, 1981 issue of Chatelaine Magazine. It is reprinted with her permission.*

There was devastating news for Canadian working women recently. According to a 19-nation survey by the Organization For Economic Co-operation And Development (OECD), not only does Canada pay women, relative to men, less than any other industrial country — 50% of average male earnings — we are also the only country where women actually lost ground to men between 1968 and 1977 . . .

First on the list of 19 industrial nations is Sweden, where women earn 87% of what men earn; the percentages are almost comparable — over 80% in France, Denmark, Australia and the Netherlands; in the U.K., women earn just over 70% of men's average wages; and in the U.S., the ratio is about 65% . . .

OECD countries are agreed that "the issue is no longer whether to improve employment opportunities for women but how," . . .

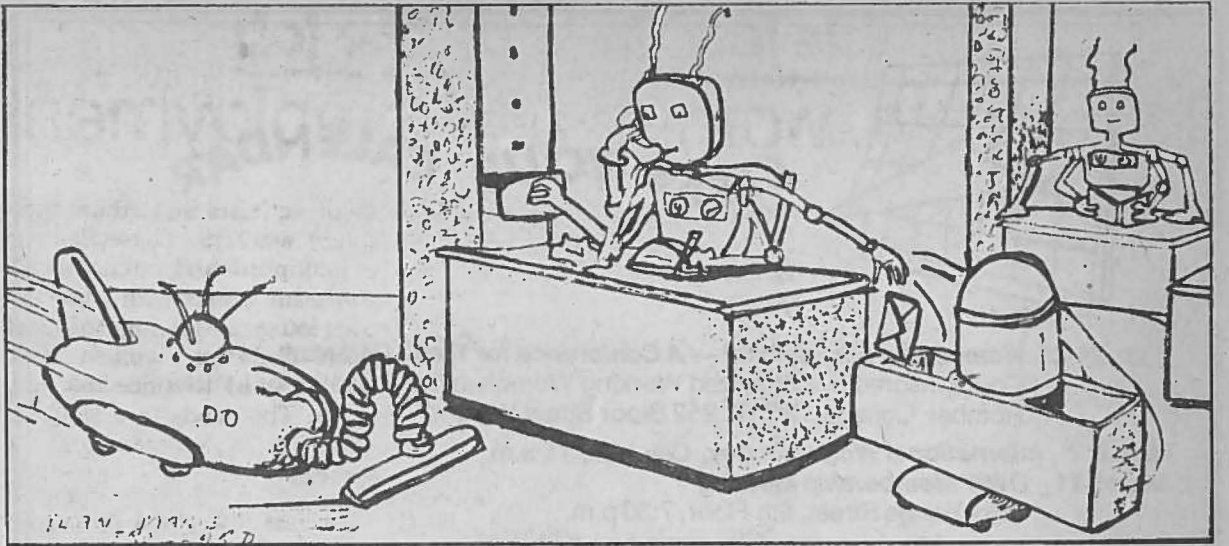
Sweden, at least, seems to be making a stab at it. Under an ordinance governing public employees, each agency undertakes an annual review of employees' distribution by sex and, in the cases of marked imbalance, tries to reestablish balance within one year. Training programs and changes in job content are emphasized.

Furthermore, the Wage Solidarity policy of Swedish trade unions has virtually eliminated wage differentials between women . . .

To accommodate the new norm of working parents, governments and employers must devise an underlying social-support system, including flexi-time and daycare.

And finally, we women ourselves must stop being so passive. We must insist that women's rights are not a peripheral issue but a central issue in Canadian politics.

Thanks, Mildred. *Union Woman* agrees.



## Traditional 'female' jobs in the world of computers

By BARBARA NEYEDLY

Before women have the opportunity to climb out of the clerical/secretarial job ghetto where close to 80% now work, up to 40% of such jobs may disappear in the leading edge of the computer revolution now about to change office work to the same degree that automaking was changed by the assembly line.

Typing, editing, filing, mailing and accounting are examples of repetitive, routine work which is most easily taken over by microprocessors created by the tiny electronic "chip". "The first target (of the Information Revolution) is the office, that last, great bastion of post-industrial, labour intensive employment," says Jon Stewart in *Computer Shock*.

Citibank of New York City has pioneered office automation in its 6,000 offices, and has succeeded in upping productivity by 50% while reducing staff by 40%, according to *Fortune* magazine.

Employers of white collar workers in government and the private sector are eager to adopt new measure for cutting back on staff. Public workers are always popular whipping boys and are thought to be fat cats feeding at the public trough anyway. This image is reinforced by the actual growth of the public service and service sector of the economy to 50% of the national product. Research also shows that, though the productivity of industry has grown by 90% in the last decade, in the service sector it was a mere 4% due to outdated but expensive work methods.

Put this together with now incredible cheapness of computers, and the classic incentive to automate office work is in place.

However, no serious research on the impact of new technology on employment is now being done in North America. As Fred

Tabachnick, Public Relations Director of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Ottawa sees it, the labour movement is also "hamstrung by existing legislation. We don't want to be seen as opposing progress, as when firemen were kept on trains even after the need for them had disappeared," he said. "But job displacement is really difficult. We can't get job guarantees or job ownership unless we get new legislation widening the scope of collective bargaining."

The Retail Clerk's International Union's Walt Davis is quoted in *Computer Shock* as saying, "the best we can do is to write clauses into contracts that no one will lose jobs because of automation. Then let attrition take care of it." The Catch-22 of this position is, as Jon Stewart says, that "sooner or later of course, attrition also buries the union."

CUPE Local 79 President Jeff Rose was more optimistic: "ten years ago automation was going to put us all out of work, but it hasn't happened yet. Support staff has increased at City Hall since the introduction of word processors".

Although technological change is presently not negotiable in the Public Service Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Alliance of Canada is currently putting together a new policy which they intend to negotiate for their bargaining units in the federal government, according to Bonnie Mewdell, Public Relations Director for PSAC. Major safeguards would include protection against layoff, the right to retraining during technological change, amendments to grievance procedures to allow arbitration to play a greater role in determining the effects of technological changes,

and a broader definition of technological change itself. Vulnerable areas now phasing in computers include the National Library cataloguing and editorial units, and the External Affairs Department.

The introduction of word processors, video display terminals, data processors, and computers is also proceeding quickly throughout the Ontario Public Service. The Ontario Public Service Employee's Union, alerted to the dangers both of job loss and health hazards represented by the new equipment, is acting quickly in an effort to protect its members.

In the current round of wage/salary negotiations for OPSEU office and clerical services units, key demands include: no salary reductions or layoff due to technological change, and the setting up of a joint labour/management committee to co-manage all phases of introducing new equipment and technological changes. These demands are outside union rights under the Crown Employee's Collective Bargaining Act, so OPSEU is poised to make an issue of them through all available means.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers have been dealing with technological change for a number of years. They maintain that any changes which are implemented to improve the work process must also improve the working conditions of their members, through a shorter work week, earlier retirement, etc. They have also fought for some control over the introduction of the changes.

*Barbara Neyedly is president of Local 532 Ontario Public Service Employees Union.*

## Raffle winners

OWW's policy of solidarity with our brothers was tangibly expressed when three men won the raffle prizes at the Solidarity Celebration Benefit, Dec. 6.

Eric Smith won first prize of a hand-crafted curio cabinet. Second prize of a GE AM-FM tape deck radio was won by Al MacNeil and Alan Tate won third prize of a hand-knitted sweater and cap.

Congratulations to brothers Smith, MacNeil and Tate.

## In memoriam

*Union Woman* notes with sadness, the sudden death last autumn of Sister Ruth Goldthorpe. Sister Goldthorpe was an active Steelworker and a central figure in the Fotomat strike. She was an OWW member and contributor to *Union Woman*.

## Join OWW

## Conference on Women and Employment

O.I.S.E., 252 Bloor Street West, February 20, 21 and 22

**Keynote speakers:**

**Friday DR. DOROTHY E. SMITH, Professor at O.I.S.E., U of T**  
**Saturday GRACE HARTMAN, National President CUPE**

**Friday, Feb. 20:** Registration, Greetings, speaker Dr. Dorothy E. Smith, 7:00-10:30 Social hour.

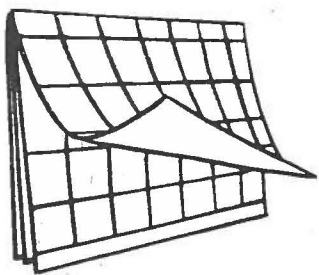
**Saturday, Feb. 21:** Registration continues, speaker Grace Hartman, 8:00-5:45 Five workshops featuring: EQUAL PAY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND GOVERNMENT ASSISTANT PROGRAMS, WOMEN & RETIREMENT, TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORKPLACE, WOMEN AND NON-TRADITIONAL WORK. Social hour.

**Sunday, Feb. 22:** Registration continues, five workshops featuring: 8:45-1:30 RE-ENTRY AND RE-TRAINING, TOWARD FULL EMPLOYMENT, WOMAN AS WORKERS AND MOTHERS, AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE. Plenary session.

Participation is limited to 150. Register NOW. OWW members: \$15.00, Non-members \$20.00. Phone: Centre for Labour Studies 675-3111, Ext. 467, 544, 414.

**Sponsored by Organized Working Women and the Centre for Labour Studies, Humber College.**





## CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR

- Feb. 20-22 Women and Employment — A Conference for Trade Unionists**  
Co-sponsored by Organized Working Women and the Centre for Labour Studies,  
Humber College, O.I.S.E. 252 Bloor Street West
- March 7 International Women's Day**, City Hall, 11 a.m.
- March 11 OWW Membership Meeting**  
1901 Yonge Street, 8th Floor, 7:30 p.m.
- March 28 OWW Occupational Health and Safety Workshop**  
All day — a.m. — The hazards of office work  
— p.m. — Bill 70 — how it works  
252 Bloor St. West, Room N401

## CRITIC'S CORNER

# Getting Organized: a lot to learn from it

**GETTING ORGANIZED: BUILDING A UNION**, by Mary Cornish and Laurell Ritchie. Canadian Women's Educational Press. Toronto: 1980. Paper \$7.95.

"The coffee machine is jammed again. What this place needs is a union!" And they all negotiated happily ever after.

We all know it doesn't happen quite that way. Getting organized is a difficult and time consuming process which demands the fulfillment of specific legal requirements and the fighting off of the employer's union-busting tactics.

How do unorganized workers find out what their options are when they are thinking of organizing? How can they find out which union can best represent their interests? What role should unorganized workers expect to play

in the organizing process? What role should they expect the union to play?

This information is not to be found in our school text-books, nor are we likely to hear it on "Cross-Country Check-up" or see it on "Canada AM". So it isn't surprising that only slightly more than one third of Canadian workers are organized and that many organizing drives are defeated.

A typical drive might begin with the phone ringing in the union office. An appointment is made. What happens next depends on the union. Too often it's a case of prospective members being asked to supply paid union organizers with a list of the names and addresses of those in the plant or office, and worker involvement consists of signing a membership card. Rather than prospective members receiving the information they need to actively

## GETTING ORGANIZED



participate in the campaign, the "real work" is left to paid union staff.

**Getting Organized: Building a Union** assumes from its opening pages that the often legally complicated process of union organizing can be demystified, and that workers can be given the necessary information to assist them in carrying their campaign to a successful conclusion. It combines a clear critique of the practices of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and the labour legislation the Board is in charge of implementing. There is a strong emphasis on the need for workers who are organizing themselves to play key roles in the decision-making process throughout the campaign and during negotiations. This sense of a collective process runs throughout the book along with a correspondingly strong commitment to rank and file democracy.

As organizers we've seen what happens when workers are not active participants in the organizing process: the certificate may be won, but as one labour lawyer we know has said "The only thing you can use it for is wallpaper." Strong unions are built. They don't just happen. **Getting Organized** provides the information that can help build a solid foundation. We hope that union organizers as well as workers who want to organize themselves will read this book. We all have a lot to learn from it.

Pat Murphy and Rona Moreau are organizers with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

## Fund raising update

In October OWW launched its membership and fund raising drive, appealing for financial support from its members and friends. You recall that we called for membership renewals; new sustaining memberships (by contributing \$30 or more); and new sustaining friends (by contributing \$30 or more) from male and female non-union supporters of OWW. If you responded — thanks very much! Perhaps you forgot to send yours in. We urge you to consider becoming one of these financial supporters at this time to help fund this worthy organization.

All 1980 members of OWW will have received a letter early in January advising that at the 1980 Annual Meeting, the constitution was changed to set the annual membership fee at \$15, payable January 1, 1981.

### LOCAL UNION APPEAL

As reported in the last issue of *Union Woman*, OWW has received the wide support of prominent unionists by way of listing their names as financial endorsers on the fund raising appeal letter to be sent to union locals. Brother Wally Majesky, president of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, is the chairperson. The middle of January the letters listing the financial endorsers will be mailed to the locals. Please look for this letter so it may be dealt with at your next local membership meeting. If by chance your local doesn't receive the "special" OWW appeal letter, please contact the OWW office. We will send it to both you and your local Secretary.

### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

OWW received a project grant of \$5,000 from the Secretary of State for its October 1980 Skills Workshop and the February 1981 "Women and Employment" Conference. OWW is appreciative of this generous support of its projects.

Currently we are short of our financial goal of \$20,000. We are confident that in the time remaining you will be participating in order to assure a successful campaign and that you and your sisters at work will join OWW and become active in our projects.

OWW welcomes your active, moral and financial support to carry out the program set by its membership at its 1980 Annual Meeting. Thank you for your continuing support.

— Joyce Rosenthal, OWW Treasurer

## 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.*

## Percentage increases 'a turn of the screw'

By PHYLLIS WOOLLEY

Does not the price of a loaf of bread increase equally for all? Why then do we settle for grossly unequal increases in wages as expressed in percentage increases?

In order to be fair and equitable to all workers, wage increases must be expressed in an across-the-board dollar increase. Our union negotiators must be made aware of this disparity and set to work on a wage increase system which will set the injustices to right.

It is well established that the majority of Ontario women participate in the labour force, that they work in female job ghettos, and that they are paid less than males who work in the same occupations. Consider the following Statistics Canada figures: 51.5% of Ontario women work full time in the labour force (1978); 65.4% of persons working in clerical and service occupations are women (1978); and, the average wage of the women working in clerical and service jobs is 58.4% less than the average wage paid to males working in those occupations. (1976).

We have heard these facts and figures many times and we, as women unionists are working within our unions to improve the pay scales in the lower paid occupations and to change the job evaluations and classifications to more realistically reflect the value of the work we do. We are making gains in these areas but there is another front in our battle against these injustices which we have not adequately explored, namely, the percentage increase.

The rate of overall price increases for 1981 is expected to be 11% and this is the figure usually used as a basis for cost of living allowance (COLA) percentage wage increases in collective bargaining agreement negotiations. However, this 11% figure relates only to the percentage increase in the cost of goods we need for our survival, it in no way reflects the necessary dollar increase in our wages which would be required to cover the increase in our actual costs. For example, an 11% COLA applied to a \$10,000 wage results in an increase of \$1,100, but the same COLA applied to a \$15,000 wage results in an increase of \$1,650, a difference of \$550.

One of the objectives of contract negotiations is to negotiate and maintain a level of wages high enough to enable workers to provide for the basic needs of themselves and their families, which will enable them to buy a fair share of the products and services which they produce. With percentage increases, we in the lower income groups are not gaining in our fight to be able to purchase our fair share of necessities, in fact we are actually losing ground.

A second objective of contract negotiations is "to improve wages, hours and conditions of employment, and to make sure that working people receive a fair share of the wealth they help to produce." Percentage increases, as shown in the foregoing figures, reproduce and widen the gap between wage categories, making the wage share of the lower income categories even smaller.

Make your voice heard on this issue in your union, and when contract negotiations time comes around, demand dollars, not (per)-cents.

Phyllis Woolley is Secretary of OPSEU Local 525, Community Legal Clinic local.

## Join OWW!



Membership in OWW is open to all women who are members of a bona fide collective bargaining unit or a bona fide organizing committee of a union. Membership is \$15.00 per year.

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