



UNION WOMAN

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**Women's
Day
solidarity
March 8**

Equal pay can't wait!

By LAURELL RITCHIE

Should equal pay wait for economic recovery? That's certainly what Russell Ramsay, Ontario's Minister of Labour would have us believe. Not that he or his Tory predecessors were more supportive in better times, mind you.

But it seems too that some of us are occasionally convinced that we can put a freeze on equal pay at its present stage of development and wait out the Depression.

But time has not stopped. To ask if we can wait is really the wrong question. An economic depression is not a state of suspension or a temporary aberration in our economic system.

It is part of this system and it is being used *right now* by those who have power in our society to direct money in the economy towards profits and away from wages, including wages aimed at narrowing the pay gap between male and female workers. A recent issue of a garment trade magazine openly encourages manufacturers and retailers to think of the recession as "The Cloud with a Silver Lining".

Corporations are very busy trying to rewrite the agenda for the future and one of their priorities is to put a stop to the momentum of women's gains in legislation and collective bargaining in the 1970s. That involves wage controls that don't allow an exemption for equal pay adjustments and encourage percentage increases in wage settlements. It includes an attack on collective bargaining and the right to strike.

As far as business is concerned, women's inequality should be put in a deep freeze. If they succeed, there will be no pleading to "go back and pick up where we left off before things went badly". We would have to start again, perhaps with the basics — like col-

lective bargaining and the right to strike.

An historical footnote. Following women's dramatic wartime move into the labour force and political changes in some European countries, the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was fully debated and adopted at a United Nations International Labour Organization convention.

It was always intended as something very different from the older "equal pay for equal work". But then what happened for the next 20 years? Very little. Governments distorted the idea and resurrected the more limited (and less "dangerous", i.e. less costly) version.

For the principled women in the labour movement who continued fighting for "equal value" in those Dark Ages, the legislative and collective bargaining gains of the 1970s must have felt like a new dawning.

For those of us who only began our fight for equal pay in that decade, well, we didn't know what difficult times were. Now they are here again. Although these hard times are different, the challenge is still the same — to keep on fighting even when our opponents argue that justice is a luxury that cannot be afforded.

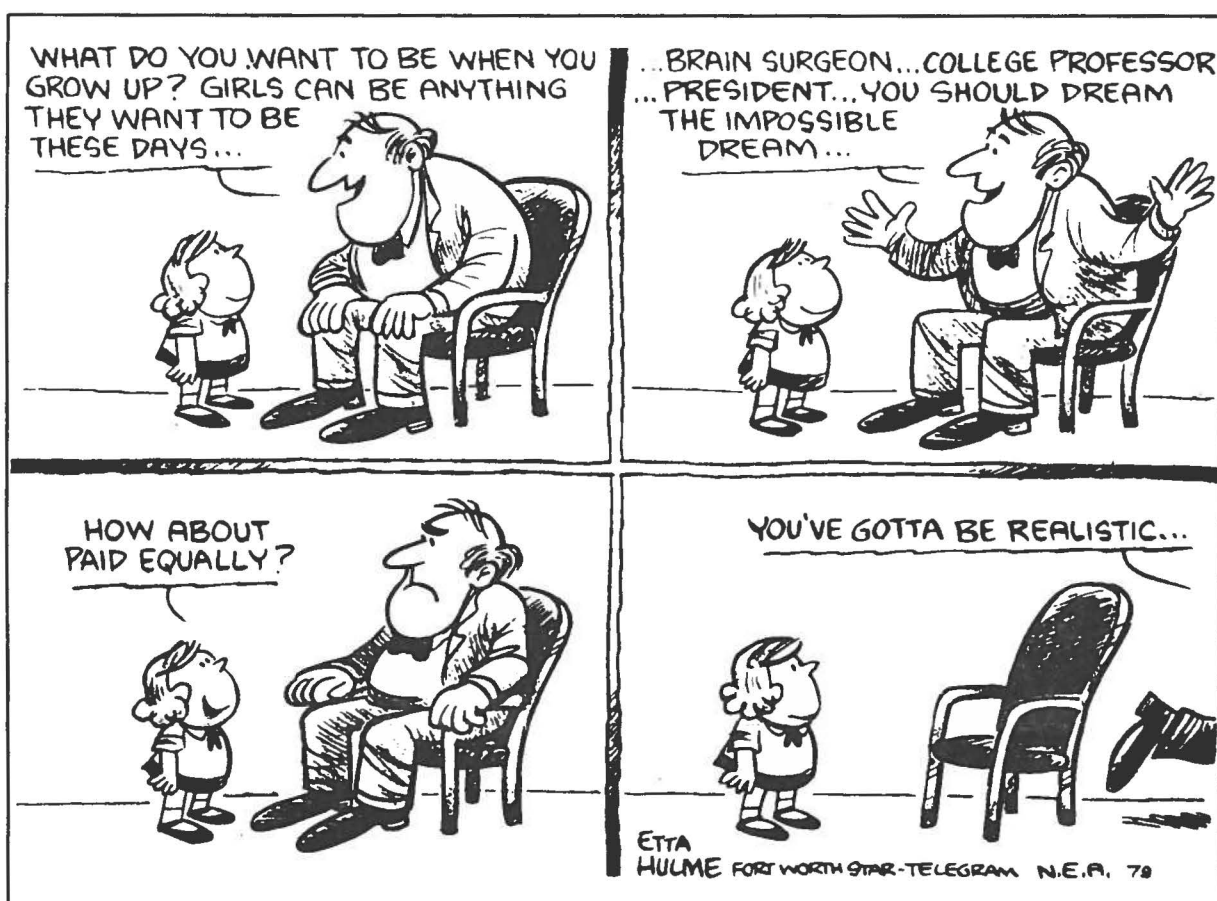
Mini-Skools gets replaced

The strike by members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) has forced the Alabama based Mini-Skools to close its Hamilton location. With a grant of \$10,000 from the union, a worker-controlled day care centre will replace it. The strike continues at Mini-Skools' other two locations in Mississauga and Scarborough.

The main issue in the strike is wages. Teachers in these centres are earning \$4.08 and room supervisors (many of them graduates of a 2-year community college early education program) get \$4.43.

Mini-Skools is the Canadian division of the U.S. corporation Kinder-Care. Kinder-Care runs a chain of 700 profit-making centres in the U.S. and Canada.

The Canadian labour movement has shown them Deep South labour tactics won't work here.



In the Great Depression, governments claimed there was no money but found it for the American "New Deal" and in Canada, to launch a wartime industry. Today governments have

found billions for corporate bail-outs. The issue is one of priorities.

We have some obvious priorities now. The fight for equal pay for work of equal value is very much bound up with the fight for jobs. Corporations and government are willing to create massive unemployment to restore corporate "profitability", seeking to sap our bargaining power with threats of more unemployment. Consequently, we have a stake in the call for a new industrial and employment strategy and for a shorter work week with no loss in weekly salary.

Massive technological changes underway can either mean fewer jobs and "deskilling" with even lower wages in many of the female job ghettos, or it can mean a shorter work week for all, with the benefits of greater productivity going to the people who do the work.

This year we will also have a chance to rally around a daughter bill to Bill 3, Ted Bounsall's 1979 attempt to introduce equal value legislation to Ontario. This time Marion Bryden (NDP) will be presenting the bill.

And in collective bargaining, we can keep pushing, pushing, pushing.

As the Catholic Bishops have reminded people in their Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis: "... the first priority must be given to the real victims of the current recession, namely — the unemployed, the welfare poor, the working poor, pensioners, Native peoples, women, young people, and small farmers, fishermen, some factory workers and some small business men and women.

"This option calls for economic policies which realize that the needs of the poor have priority over the wants of the rich; that the rights of workers are more important than the maximization of profits; that the participation of marginalized groups has precedence over the preservation of a system which excludes them."

We must rekindle our awareness that we are entitled to equality and justice, depression or no depression.

Laurell Ritchie is an organizer with the Canadian Textile & Chemical Union and a member of the Steering Committee for the Equal Pay Coalition.



**Equal Pay for Work
of Equal Value**

**OWW Annual
Conference**

February 25-27

252 Bloor West



CWC members in Saskatoon on the picket line for a first contract. Details in Update.

Reproductive hazards at work

Gambling with the future

By PEGGY NASH

"Granting civil rights to chemicals may very well deny them to human beings."

Ontario Federation of Labour
Brief on Workplace Carcinogens

Workplace chemicals and physical agents are considered innocent until proven guilty. That is, they are assumed to be non-toxic until proven otherwise.

How are workplace chemicals proven to be toxic? Scientists, employers and legislators almost always require "human data" in order to condemn a chemical. Even when laboratory pretesting is conducted, it is only after significant health effects are evident in workers that the use of toxic substances or physical agents is in any way controlled.

Out of the tens of thousands of chemicals currently used in Ontario workplaces, we now have exposure guidelines for about 600. With the possible exception of ionizing radiation, these guidelines were not designed to protect against damage to our reproductive systems or our offspring.

This practice of using workers as guinea pigs is coupled with a lack of research and scientific data about the reproductive effects of our working conditions.

The results are disturbing:

- In 1979, men working with

ethinyl estradiol, a synthetic estrogen, at a pharmaceutical plant in Windsor, reported breast growth and impotence, while female workers reported infertility.

- Female anesthetists and operating room nurses in the U.S. and Britain have been found to have significantly higher rates of spontaneous abortions and of bearing children with physical abnormalities, cancer and liver and kidney disease.

- A 1961 study showed the pesticides dibromochloropropane (DBCP) to cause sterility in rats. Men working with DBCP at a California chemical plant were not told of a potential hazard and in 1977, it was discovered that many of them were sterile.

- In 1975, General Motors in Oshawa announced that no women would be allowed to continue to work in its lead storage battery division because of the effects of lead on the fetus. Rather than be transferred to a lower paying job, one woman had herself sterilized.

Clearly, there is a need to pre-test all workplace chemicals and physical agents so that standards can be set to protect all workers. In the absence of such stringent standards, some employers are "protecting" women out of certain non-traditional jobs.

For example, Ontario Hydro banned the hiring of women of child-bearing capacity in nuclear plants as operators, mechanical maintenance personnel and control technicians.

No similar ban has been imposed on women in the health care sector who work with radiation, anesthetic cases, ethylene oxide, bacteria and other potential reproductive hazards.

Being forced to choose between a job and the right to reproduce is unacceptable. All chemical and physical agents must be considered guilty until proven innocent, and standards should ensure the maximum protection for all workers.

Peggy Nash works at the OFL Occupational Health and Safety Training Centre.



Further Resources

Men, Women and the Fertility Gamble, a report on reproductive hazards at work written for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women by Nancy Miller Chenier is an excellent up-to-date resource. For a copy, contact:

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
66 Slater Street, 18th Floor
Box 1541, Station B
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5R5
613-992-4975

Gambling With the Future, a 15 minute slide/tape production of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Occupational Health & Safety Training Centre on Occupational Reproductive Hazards. Also available is a 40-page booklet on this subject. Contact:

Ontario Federation of Labour
Occupational Health & Safety Training Centre
15 Gervais Drive, Suite 703
Don Mills, Ontario
M3C 1Y8
416-441-1939

Union Woman
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New
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UPDATE

Typographical union takes on Thomson



Solidarity picket for workers at the Thomson-owned Welland Evening Tribune. The WTU local is on strike for its first contract.

Forty employees at the Welland Evening Tribune have taken on the Thomson newspaper chain in a fight for their first contract.

The Welland Typographical Union which signed up 90% of the employees has been locked out since Thanksgiving. The publisher had been using the editorial department for business purposes. There was also sexual discrimination. One example cited was a man and woman who did the same job with the man making \$230 a week, while the woman received only \$209.

Several charges have been laid against two workers, as the paper is being published by scabs including management from other Thomson newspapers.

The union is contacting subscribers to cancel the Tribune and is approaching its advertisers with proof of the paper's declining readership. The WTU is also publishing its own by-weekly paper, the Welland Guardian Express.

Communication workers locked out in Saskatoon

Base Communications, a small answering service in Saskatoon locked out its workers, Dec. 20. In a fight for its first contract, the local of the Communication Workers of Canada faced the firings of its two key organizers, cuts in working hours and pay and threats by management to close the operation.

After three meetings with management it became obvious to the union that Base was stalling for time in order to train scabs to take union jobs. The local responded with a 100% strike vote.

Using the scabs, Base has managed to keep operating, but morale on the picket line is high, as other CWC locals and the local Labor Council lends its support.

The CWC is also interested in organizing telephone operators in Ontario.

6,000 charged under Quebec's Bill 111

A total of 6,000 Montreal trade unionists have been charged to date under Bill 111 — the vicious back-to-work law designed to break the strike by 71,000 Quebec teachers, members of the CEQ.

Trials begin March 7. Workers face fines of between \$500 and \$10,000 and unions between \$10,000 and \$50,000.

The CEQ has begun a three-week truce with the government but has warned it will take strike action again if negotiations don't resume by March 14.

Getting what you want at the bargaining table



Veteran trade unionist Bill Walsh leads a mock bargaining session at the OWW Collective Bargaining Workshop held January 15. Over 30 people attended the day-long event, held to give participants the skills and strategies necessary for unionists to be successful at the bargaining table.

UNION WOMAN

Union Woman is published four times a year 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.

Women big losers in PQ wage attack

By PAT ARMSTRONG

While workers in other provinces battle wage controls, some 300,000 Quebec state employees — just over half of them women — are struggling against government-imposed decrees which will cut wages by up to 19.45% for three months, increase work loads, cause massive layoffs, reduce workers' control on the job, eliminate collective bargaining and remove the right to strike.

Indeed, the Quebec Government had 80,000 pages of decrees at the ready as part of Bill 105 when that piece of legislation was rammed through the National Assembly in a couple of days last December, before the old contract had even expired. As early as last summer, when the unions were in the initial stages of formal negotiations, "the Quebec Police Force quietly visited Quebec hospitals and public service institutions, collecting the names and home addresses of union executive members," according to Nick Auf Der Mar in his Montreal *Gazette* column.

Such preparations suggest that the Government intends to carry out its threats of fines, arrests and decertifications, and that it never planned to negotiate.

Until this latest development, Quebec's women workers had made some important gains. The Common Front, which unites the province's three main labour centrals — the Quebec Federation of Labour (QFL or FTQ, part of the CLC), the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU or

CSN), and the Centrale de l'Enseignement du Québec (CEQ) — has fought for, and won, twenty weeks paid maternity leave, and a common wage scale for teachers at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels.

By demanding greater increases for those at the bottom of the wage scale, it has also reduced the wage differential between the highest and lowest paid Common Front workers to about 3 to 1. And at least some part-time workers got a better deal, receiving wages and benefits on a pro-rata basis. Given that women are disproportionately found in the lowest paid jobs, in part-time employment, and teaching at the elementary school level, these changes have meant significant absolute and relative gains in women's wages.

In addition, hard-won job security clauses, including some that made tenure possible for part-time teachers, extended protection to many women near the bottom of the hiring and seniority lists.

But only 46.2% of Quebec women, compared to 55.7% of those in Ontario, are in the labour force, and their unemployment rate of 14.4% is higher than that for Quebec men and much higher than the rate for Ontario women. Furthermore, less than one-third of the Quebec women with paid jobs have any union protection, and most of the unionized women work directly or indirectly for the state. Thus, only a small minority

of Quebec women have benefitted directly from these victories.

Now, women's best jobs, best wages, most protected employment, and even their unionization, are under brutal attack. The only concession the Levesque government was willing to make in the "negotiations" was a reduction in the pay cuts to the lowest paid workers.

Initially greeted as an important gain for women, celebrations were halted when it was announced that the wages of part-time workers would be calculated as if they were employed full-time. The policy was justified by the Government on the grounds that most part-time workers are women who "choose" part-time employment. No mention here of the hiring policies designed precisely to prevent workers from obtaining full-time status.

For example, more than half the nurses in Quebec hold part-time jobs. All are having their pay cut by the maximum amount. Like the teachers and most other Common Front members, they will not get back to their 1982 salary levels until 1985. That's in current dollars, or in other words without any adjustment for inflation.

Levesque's last-minute "offers", intended to avert a general strike by the 200,000-odd members of the Common Front, include a job creation program for the private sector, but no substantial changes in the decrees.

The hospital staffs have been warned that work disruption will not be tolerated; the teachers that they will be left out on the street to rot. Offers by the unions to accept a wage freeze in return for the status quo on job security and working conditions have been rejected by the Government as being out of the question.

Few of the jobs that are supposed to be created in the private sector will go to women. Many, if not most, of the jobs lost in the state sector will be women's jobs. The majority of those with reduced pay checks are female.

Some improvements have in the past been won in women's wages, job security and working conditions, but only after long union struggles. The new legislation and the Government's stated policy not only wipe out many of these victories but also threaten the very future of collective bargaining. With a lot to lose, women in Quebec are fighting back, as part of the Common Front.

Pat Armstrong is a member of FNEEQ-CSN and teaches at Vanier College in Montreal.

Future office workers get new courses

By GAIL POSEN

In June 1980, the Toronto Board of Education approved half-time release for two teachers of secretarial subjects in the secondary schools in order to write new secretarial/clerical curriculum units to supplement existing curriculum.

Eleven units have been completed in draft form at this time. These units are: Female Labour Force Statistics and Their Implications; Health and Safety in the Workplace; Office Automation and Job Advancement; Affirmative Action, Equal Pay and Job Evaluation; Office Automation and Skills; Office Automation and Work Organization; Sexual Harassment on the Job; Employees and Labour Legislation; Assertiveness Training; Day Care; and Women and Unions.

Why are these new units thought to be both necessary and relevant to secretarial courses in Toronto high schools? For which students are they designed? Since the majority of secretarial students are young women, what are the implications of the new technology for them? In what way will young men be affected?

The answers to these questions are incorporated in the rationale for the units and, of course, in the material contained in the units themselves. An awareness of the status of women and men in business and in society generally and the potential effects of technology on the future of young people are two crucial issues which are addressed in the new secretarial curriculum.

Secretarial students should be well informed and fully aware of the challenges women face in the work force. The new curriculum attempts to provide students with some solutions so that they will be better prepared to survive the stresses and rapid labour force changes which are expected during the next decade.

Rapidly changing office technology in the form of automated systems will have a profound effect on secretarial/clerical work in the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently secretarial curriculum must undergo significant changes as well. Materials used in the past are lacking in many areas.

How can we teach typing and shorthand and business communications divorced from the need for secretaries to establish a more dignified wage and image? Can we teach the latest office trends, microelectronics and word processing, without teaching the human issues and abuses of computers and the new work organization of the office which is now required by management because of automation?

Unless policy makers move to head off current trends, up to one million Canadian women could be unemployed by 1990. Women represent over 90% of tellers, telephone operators, and clerk-typists. Automation is reducing, or is threatening to reduce, employment by between 30 and 40% in these occupations.

Paralleling this trend, computer-based technology is

upgrading, and possibly increasing, the more professional information work where few women are represented, e.g., analyzing, interpreting, making decisions, etc.

The third trend is that the skills difference between the two occupation levels is widening, and could soon become unbridgeable except through extraordinary and undoubtedly costly measures in the form of job retraining and education.

Women will need training programs (ideally, provided in the workplace for those already working) to gain the necessary computer skills and an understanding of basic computer concepts. As well, occupational bridging, affirmative action agreements, equal pay for work of equal value legislation, and other occupational mobility strategies are needed to place women in the occupations where the work is becoming more demanding and complex because of the computer tools being made available, but where employment is also growing.

Career counselling in the schools will have to take a good, hard look at these new trends and business curriculum should also be looking at readjusting courses and programs so that our students will be eligible for jobs that are in demand.

Since 82% of clerical workers are women, secretarial curricula should now be looking at how changing technological conditions in the workplace may very well deskill and downgrade the office worker. The educational system needs to respond to this situation by making changes in the curriculum which will facilitate understanding the technological and human implications in this automated process. This means that along with the typing and literacy skills already in the present curriculum, secretarial students should be prepared with the life skills necessary to survive in a technological society in the process of rapid change.

Gail Posen is Advisor — Affirmative Action for the Toronto Board of Education and a member of the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation.

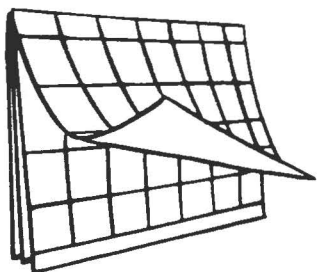
Centre for Labour Studies Winter 1983

Course	Start Date
Work, Racism and Labour	Feb. 9
Technological Change	Feb. 14
Women in Labour History	Feb. 16
Your Health and Safety	Feb. 21
Trade Union Organizing	Feb. 21
Labour Law for Unionists	Feb. 24
Workers' Compensation	Feb. 28
Labour Leadership	March 1
Collective Bargaining II	March 3
Labour History II	March 9
Instructional Techniques	March 12
Arbitration II	March 26

Courses are held at various union halls across the city.

For additional details, contact the Centre for Labour Studies, Humber College at 675-3111 Extensions 414, 544 or 467.





CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR

February 25-27

OWW Annual Conference
Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value
OISE, 252 Bloor Street West

March 5

International Women's Day Celebrations

April 14

OWW Membership Meeting
1901 Yonge Street, 8th floor, 7:30 p.m.

May 14

OWW Annual Meeting
1901 Yonge Street, 8th floor
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Nothing new in Ottawa's green paper on pensions

By CATHI CARR

On December 9, 1982 Welfare Minister Monique Begin and Finance Minister Marc Lalonde tabled the long-awaited proposed legislation on pension reform in the form of a green paper entitled "Better Pensions for Canadians".

The green paper doesn't say anything new, instead it invites public comment on ten specific reforms for private pension plans and seven for the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans.

Included in the proposals for reform of private pension plans are:

- 1) Protection from inflation;
- 2) Full vesting after two years with the employer paying for at least 50% of the vested benefit;
- 3) Introduction of a Registered Pension Account which is similar to the traditional RRSP, except that employers would be able to make contributions to the employee's RPA and that the ac-

count is basically locked in until retirement;

4) Portability — an employee could transfer his/her accumulated pension to an RPA, leave accumulated credits in former employer's plan for a deferred pension, or transfer his/her own contributions to an RPA leaving remainder with the former employer for deferred pension at the former employer's option;

5) Spouse Protection — employer-sponsored plans are to split credits on marriage dissolution, provide the post-retirement survivor with benefits of at least 60% of the employee's pension, provide the pre-retirement survivor with benefits equal to the value of the accrued pension, and require continuation of survivor benefits on remarriage;

6) Removal of sex discrimination in money purchase plans — in effect this suggests the use of unisex actuarial tables.

Among the proposed changes

to the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans which would be of particular interest to women are:

- 1) Women who temporarily leave their jobs to raise children should not lose pension benefits. (All provinces except Ontario have agreed to this reform);
- 2) Pension credits to be split between spouses on marriage breakdown;
- 3) Survivor benefits will remain intact upon remarriage.

The green paper must now be referred to a House of Commons committee for a year-long study. Before almost any of the proposals can take effect, negotiations must be held with the provinces.

"We must move cautiously, slow but sure", said Lalonde when commenting on the proposed reforms. Meanwhile, the YWCA estimates that there are 420,000 elderly women living in poverty in Canada.

Federal Old Age Security (OAS) now pays \$239.73 per month to all Canadians aged 65 and older. Those with no other retirement income also qualify for the maximum of the means-tested Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) of \$247.89 per month, for a total of \$489.62 when combined with Old Age Security. However, the National Council of Welfare has defined the poverty line as \$8,970 per year — or \$747.50 per month — for a single person living in a large city.

Although the basic pension is indexed based on quarterly inflation statistics, the government has imposed a limit on increases to 6% and 5% over the next two years.

The immediate problem of pensioners living in poverty should be solved by an increase in benefits paid under the universal Old Age Security to bring all pensioners above the poverty line.

The federal government says the weak economy prevents it from introducing major pension reforms at this time.

Cathi Carr is a member of the Ontario Nurse's Association Staff Union, and an OWW Executive Council member.

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.

Protest nuclear war dangers

The hopes of millions of people on this planet were demonstrated at the June 12 Anti-Nuclear Rally in New York City's Central Park. Hundreds of Canadians took part in that historic demonstration while millions around the world took part in similar demonstrations.

Since those demonstrations, women in many countries continue the struggle against nuclear catastrophe by taking part in peace marches and rallies and by setting up camps and schools of peace.

England has eight such peace camps. The peace camp at the Royal Air Force Base at Greenham Commons in Berkshire England was established in September 1981 following the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's decision in December 1979 to place 96 cruise missiles at Greenham Base. The camp has gained particular notice in the press since it is an all-woman non-violent protest. They have been joined by women from Japan, Sweden, France and Germany.

On New Year's Day 1983, 44 women, determined and sympathetic to the cause of focusing Britain's opposition to the U.S. Cruise missiles being placed in Europe, got into the compound, joined hands and circled the silo bunkers while singing anti-nuclear songs. The women were arrested and charged with trespassing. They are determined to continue the anti-Cruise missile feeling and make it an election issue in Britain. They want to reverse the decision to have these 96 missiles placed in silos at Greenham Commons by December 1983 or as early as April 1983.

In Canada, the minority report of the six members of the House of Commons Committee on Defense and External Affairs, calls for no testing of Cruise missiles. The Canadian ambassador to the U.S. has stated that Canada is not a powerful nation, and there is little we can do. Mr. Pelletier must be proven wrong.

Millions who participated in actions in 1982 are determined to increase the pressures in 1983 for disarmament and the seeking of peaceful solutions to the world's problems.

The United Nations Decade of Women has three interrelated goals: Equality, Development and Peace. Peace and disarmament are proclaimed in the program for the second half of the United Nations Decade of Women.

Women realize peace and disarmament are essential for social progress and for improving the position of women in society.

Women are aware of the fate of our planet and the destiny of humanity.

March 8th is International Women's Day. A call for all women must be to protest against the menace of a world-wide nuclear war.

Irene Kuusela is on the executive of CUPE 79 and is on the Executive Council of OWW.



June 12, 1982 ... over one million people marched on the United Nations to petition the world's governments to put an end to the arms race.

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.

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

Name

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Union Local

Organized Working Women,
15 Gervais Drive, Suite 301,
Don Mills Ont. M3C 1Y8.

If you are not eligible to join OWW, you are invited to subscribe to UNION WOMAN at \$10.00 per year.