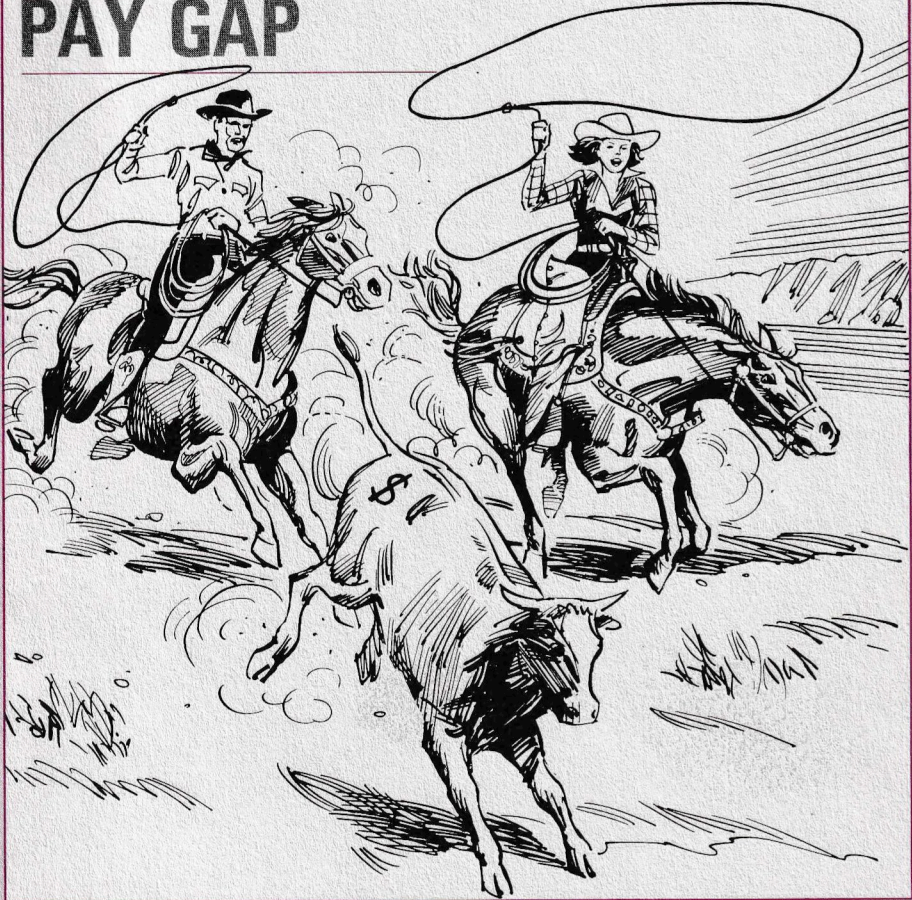


HEADING 'EM OFF AT THE PAY GAP



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For the last couple of years, CUPE locals across Canada have been talking about equal pay for work of equal value. Now, we're trying to implement it.

Some of us are right in the middle of fighting the battles that need to be fought. Many of us want to know how to go about fighting the battles that remain.

In the next few pages, you'll read about CUPE men and women who have been struggling to win pay equity (a shorter term for equal pay for work of equal value) in their workplaces. They work for Boards of Education in Ontario. But the things they're fighting against — and fighting for — are the same things you're probably thinking about, whether you live in the Maritimes, the Prairies, Quebec or British Columbia.

What tactics should you be using to make pay equity a reality in your local? Here's what some of your brothers and sisters have been doing:

- Local 994 at the City of York

Board of Education used the potent combination of a strike and a public relations campaign to reduce the wage gap between cleaners (mostly women) and caretakers (mostly men).

- In Renfrew County, Local 1247 took the initiative and drew up real job descriptions, based on the actual work that men and women cleaners were doing, to prove to management that it was practising discrimination by paying women less.

- At Local 1344 in Hamilton, a stubborn board of education has been resisting CUPE members' attempts to achieve pay equity. But little by little, contract after contract, the local has made gains that chip away at the wage gap.

- Secretaries at the Bruce County Board of Education, members of Local 2712, embarked on a strike to win pay equity with non-clerical maintenance staff at the Board. Support from other trade unionists and high morale during the strike eventually won them more pay.

The issue of equal pay for work of equal value is not always easy to understand. There are new words being tossed around, words

like increment steps, affirmative action and wage gap. What do they mean to you and your local?

CUPE's Equal Opportunities office was created to make equal pay for work of equal value a reality. But we aren't doing our jobs if you and the other members of your local don't know what we're talking about. That's why this booklet lets CUPE members speak for themselves about what they've been doing to bring about pay equity in their locals.

You'll see in the next few pages how these locals have focussed on the *difference* between what men and women are paid. They have tried to reduce that *wage gap* through the collective bargaining process. When you've read about their successes, this booklet will provide you with some helpful hints about making pay equity a reality in your local. We hope you'll be inspired by these stories. After all, the people you're reading about are your CUPE brothers and sisters — and they've succeeded in Heading 'Em Off at the Pay Gap!

"MATRONS" NO MORE!



In the bitter cold of February 1985, for the first time in its 20 year history, the men and women at CUPE Local 994 at the City of York Board of Education went on strike. The purpose of the strike was to gain greater equality for seven women who were classified as “matrons” and were being paid about \$2,500 a year less than men doing substantially the same work.

Management said the pay discrimination between the “matrons” who earned \$9.18 an hour and male caretaker/cleaners getting \$10.52 an hour was justified because the “matrons” didn’t do heavy work such as shovelling snow.

“Hell, for that kind of money, who wouldn’t shovel snow?” said one matron. “I do it all the time at home for free!”

WINNING PUBLIC OPINION

With the help of CUPE’s public relations department, Local 994 conducted a major public relations campaign. Leaflets were sent to *every* household in the City of York. “The women do the same work as male caretakers,” the leaflet said, “the only difference is pay.”

Everyone in the local as well as students and the general public were urged to telephone their Board of Education Trustees and demand fairness for women. The Women’s Issues Committee of the Ontario Division worked closely with Local 994 and gave the campaign an organized base of support right across Metro Toronto.

Because the local did such a good job of getting the truth out, public opinion was a useful way of pressuring management. Senior management admitted after the strike that the publicity campaign was unbeatable because the public saw the board as “behind the times” and “old-fashioned.”

THE NEW CONTRACT

The new contract classified the women as cleaners and raised their pay from \$9.18 to \$10.03 an hour, an increase of more than nine per cent.

The men were reclassified as cleaner-caretakers and their wages were increased from \$10.52 an hour to \$11.07 an hour — an increase of more than five per cent.

So, everyone’s wages went up

and the pay gap was closed by a third.

The new contract has also had another positive effect: women are now applying for caretaker-cleaner openings which were once for men only. As Mamie Lyle, a matron for almost 20 years puts it, "Before this contract, if you started as a matron, you ended up as a matron. The contract opened the doors for the women!"

A NEW SENSE OF UNITY

More than anything else, it was the strength of the united membership that won the strike. Most of the local's membership is men and they showed strong solidarity with their sisters.

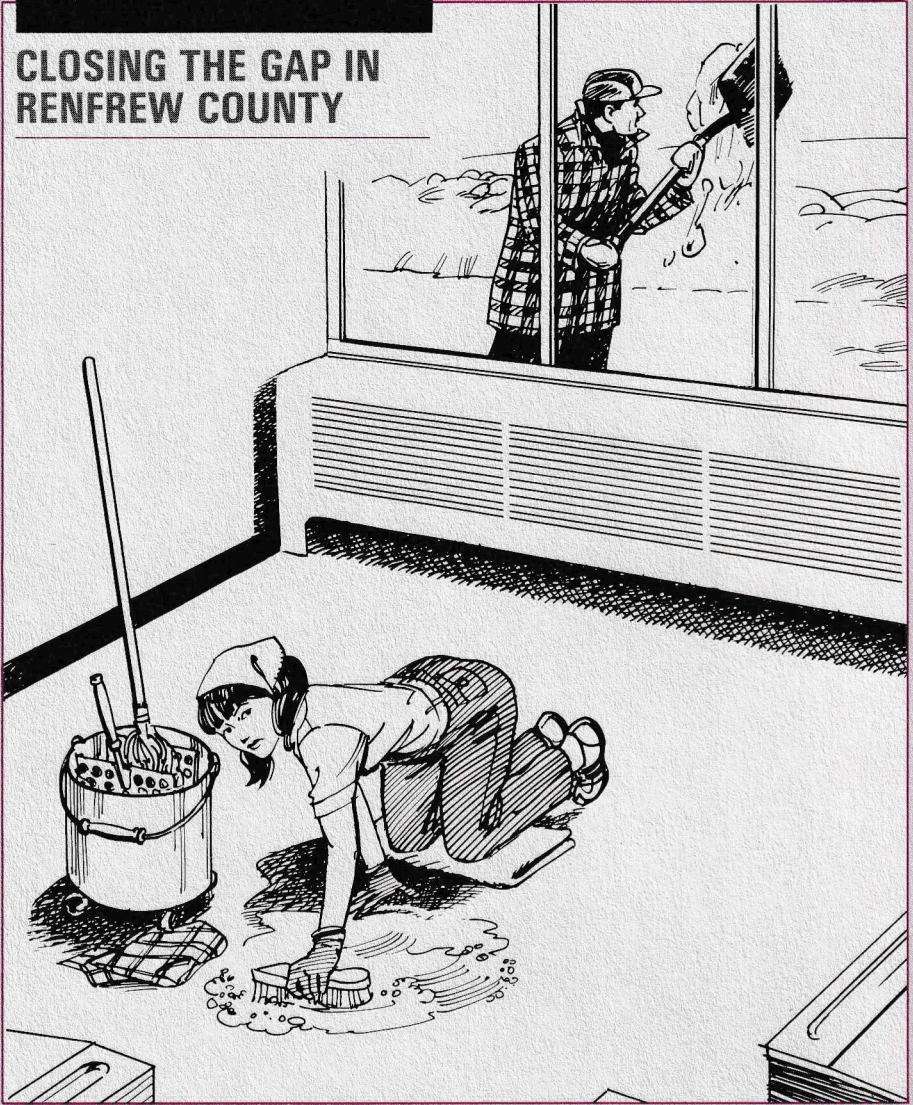
"It's hard to believe," says Don Paton, president of Local 994. "Over 200 men were on the street over this issue. These men stood with the women and they held for two weeks. I told them I was very proud of them."

IN MEMORIAM

Don Paton, a tireless fighter for women's right to equal pay for work of equal value, died of a heart attack at the wheel of his van in January 1987. He was 42.

The Coordinating Committee for CUPE school board locals in Ontario as well as members of Local 994 wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to Don for his spirited commitment to issues affecting women within the union. He will be sadly missed.

CLOSING THE GAP IN RENFREW COUNTY



It's a common story: the cleaners, most of them women, were making \$1.15 an hour less than the custodians, most of whom were men. Yet, the two groups were doing substantially the same work and both belonged to CUPE Local 1247 at the Renfrew County Board of Education.

When the local went into negotiations in 1986, for the first time the big issue was "equal pay for work of equal value".

It was one of the men on the mostly male bargaining team who raised the issue. And the support for fighting for equal pay was there, explains Local 1247's president, Kevin Waito, because "the custodians knew that a lot of the hard work was done by the cleaners. The women had the dirtiest areas to clean."

GETTING THE REAL JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Local 1247 knew if it was going to close the wage gap, it would have to prove to management that the work done by the cleaners (mostly women) and the custodians (mostly men) was of equal value.

So, Brother Waito sent a

letter to every steward asking them to ask the workers to report back exactly what they did on the job. What the union found out, according to CUPE national representative, Liz Rideout, who helped work out the final agreement, was that "the cleaners were doing most of the work the custodians were doing. There was very little difference *in practice*."

Now, the union knew, before going into negotiations, what the differences were between management's job descriptions and the work the members were *actually* doing.

RELUCTANT PIONEERS

"Wouldn't you like to be pioneers in the field of pay equity?" the bargaining committee asked management.

"No thanks," came the reply.

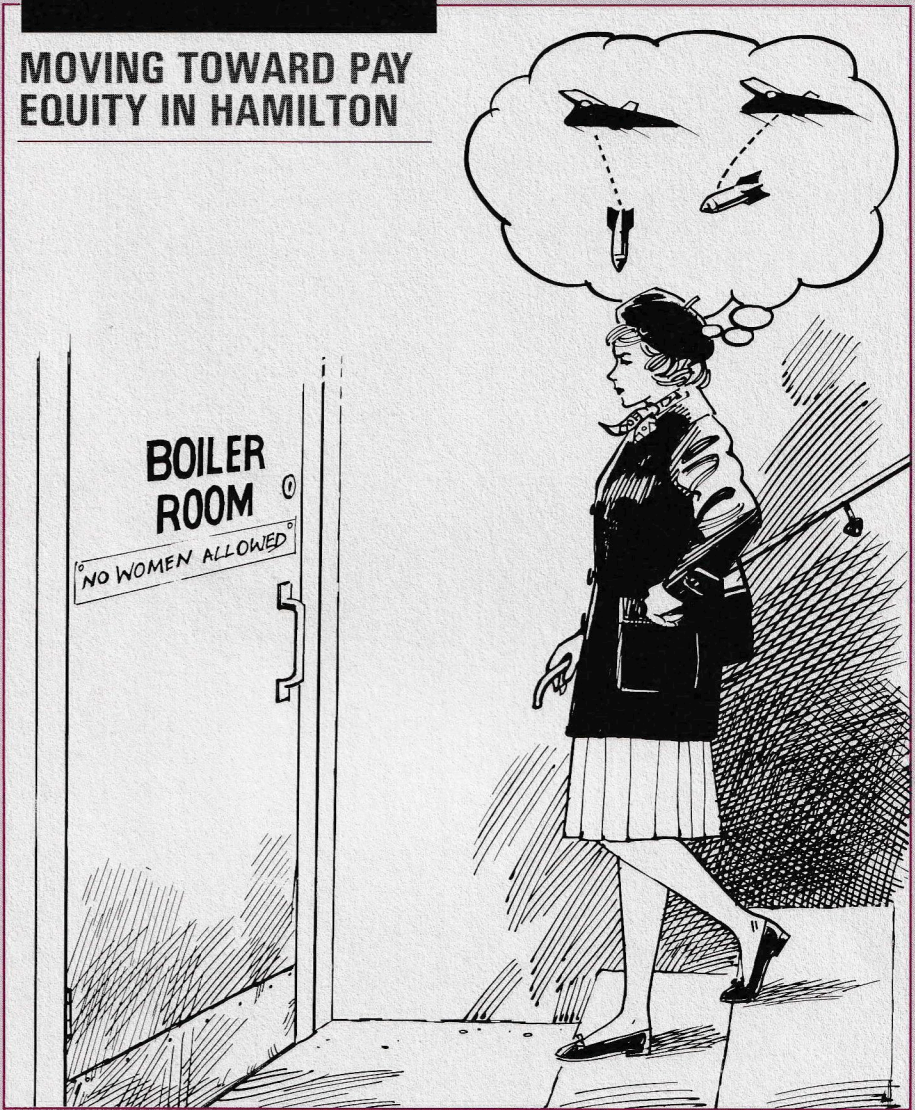
But the CUPE bargaining committee refused to budge on the issue of equal pay for work of equal value. Their determination resulted in management being forced to give the women an extra increase over and above the normal wage increase which was negotiated for all workers.

THE NEW CONTRACT

Both the custodians and the cleaners got their wage increases — and then the cleaners got an “add-on” to reduce the wage gap from \$1.15 an hour to 71 cents an hour. Full pay equity it’s not but it’s a giant step in the right direction!

Over the next two years, the pay for custodians (mostly men) will go from \$8.75 an hour to \$9.48 an hour. The cleaners’ wages will rise from \$7.40 an hour to \$8.77 an hour.

**MOVING TOWARD PAY
EQUITY IN HAMILTON**



CUPE Local 1344 at the Hamilton Board of Education is walking a long road to pay equity. Faced with an obstinate management which has consistently refused to agree to pay equity, the local has been trying to reduce the wage gap from contract to contract.

The first step, in 1981 when the local "hit the bricks", was to merge two separate units — one representing cleaners and the other representing caretakers. This was achieved.

Another issue in the 1981 strike was the pension plan. The men in the caretaker unit had had a pension plan for *15 years!* The strike won the women a pension plan.

MAKING SOME "RELATIVE" GAINS

In 1985, the *difference* between what the highest-paid female worker and the lowest-paid male worker earns was reduced from \$2.12 an hour to \$2.07 an hour. In July 1987, the gap will be closed by a further 20 cents an hour.

This is a positive step but a small one, says Gerry McDonnell, an executive member of Local 1344 who worked hard on the pay

equity issue. "I consider it ridiculous that the wage gap is still that huge for jobs that are essentially similar."

SMOKESCREENS...

In an attempt to slow down the drive toward pay equity, management has set up affirmative action committees. Partially funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the committee said its mandate was to work toward equal pay for work of equal value and that to achieve this, it would hire an affirmative action officer. But the whole thing is a smokescreen.

"To this day, over a year later, they're still *talking* about hiring an affirmative action coordinator," says McDonnell. "The committee's real job is to perpetuate the very status quo they would have the public believe they are changing."

...AND DIRTY TRICKS

Before Local 1344 started fighting for pay equity, the female cleaners couldn't even apply for other job postings, such as openings for caretakers. Now that the union has won this right, management has artificially inflated the job

qualifications.

A year ago when Denise Evans applied for a job as an assistant caretaker, management decided an aptitude test was necessary. Supposedly, the test would show whether an applicant was mechanically inclined.

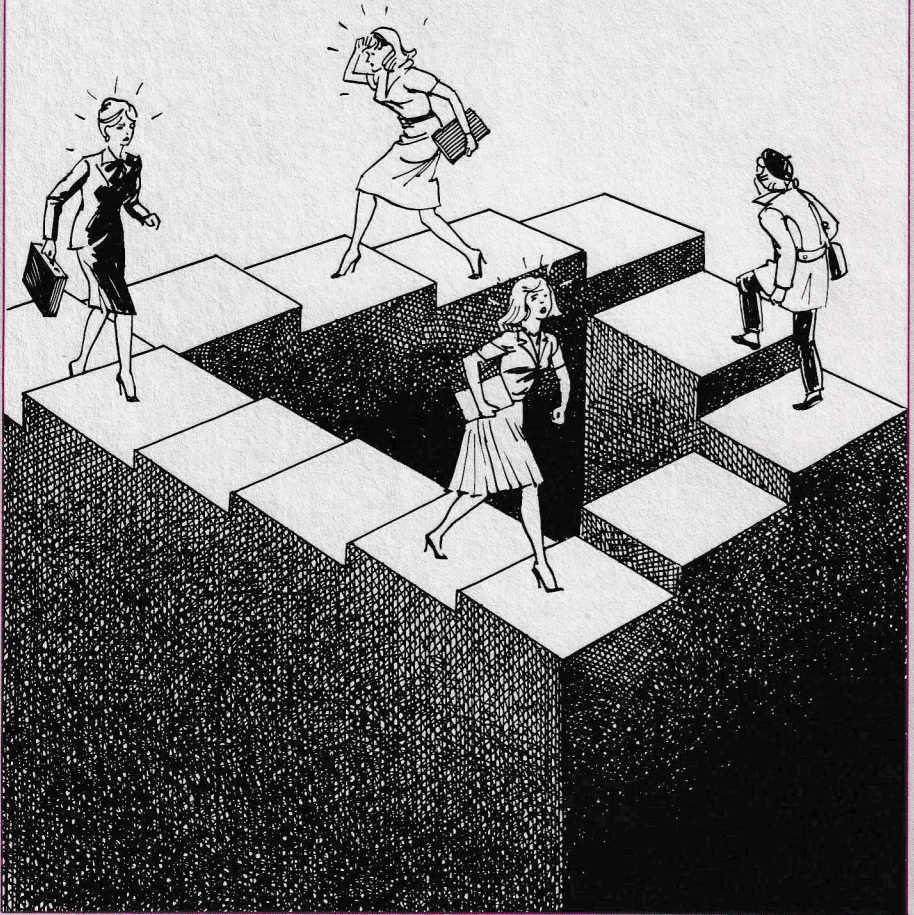
Denise took the test and management said she failed by three points; they then used that “failure” to refuse her the job. So, she grieved.

It turned out the questions on the test were, as Denise said, “stupid”. There were questions like: “When a bomb falls out of a plane, does it fall straight or at an angle?”

Denise felt like answering, “Who cares? You’re there to take care of a boiler and clean a school. You’re not there to fight a war!” She’s sure that management was just using the test to “scare the women away.”

Denise won her grievance and she’s now working as an assistant caretaker — at a rate that gives her another \$100 every two weeks in take-home pay. That means a lot to her family: “My husband got laid off,” she explains, “and without that extra \$100, we’d be in a lot deeper water.”

LEADING THE WAY IN BRUCE COUNTY



On May 8, 1985, 46 secretaries who work for the Bruce County Board of Education went on strike. Members of CUPE Local 2712, they wanted equal pay with male caretakers and a reduction in the pay “increments” the employer makes them go through before they achieve what is supposed to be the “real” wage for their jobs.

“In male dominated units such as municipal works departments, parks boards and school custodians, employees are usually on a flat rate of pay,” says Beryl Coté, the CUPE representative for Local 2712. “So men get to the job rate immediately. However, in female dominated bargaining units it can take from three to seven apprenticeship years to reach the job rate, even though the employees are qualified at the start.

“Not only do they pay women poorly, but they make them wait to get the regular job rate!”

PROVING THEIR POINT

When the members of Local 2712 went into negotiations, they had statistics to show that management was paying secretaries in Bruce County schools 16 per cent less

than custodial staff and 28 per cent less than other non-clerical staff.

For the secretaries, making the comparison with custodial staff was far more difficult than making comparisons between cleaners and caretakers, because the jobs are so different.

But these are the kinds of comparisons that must be made if women who do work that has been traditionally done by women are going to make wage gains.

In any case, management said it would pay the secretaries what they wanted to pay them. It was another case of management refusing to be pioneers in pay equity.

WINNING THE PUBLIC'S HEART

The secretaries decided to use the mass media to get their message across. They sent letters to all the newspapers in Bruce County. One striker even wrote a weekly column for several local newspapers.

The strikers made a special point of countering rumours that they were already being paid big salaries. “We had single parents making \$10,306 as their gross annual income,” says Coté. “The highest paid person in the bargain-

ing unit at that time made only \$14,887 for 12 months' work."

GOOD TIMES AND UNITY

Each Friday during the strike, the workers picketed in front of a different school in the county and each Friday, they made a party out of it. "Either there was a barbeque or the home economics class made lunch for everyone on the picket line," Côté recalls.

More than \$10,000 was donated by other CUPE locals, by Canadian Auto Workers from nearby Port Elgin and by teachers and their union.

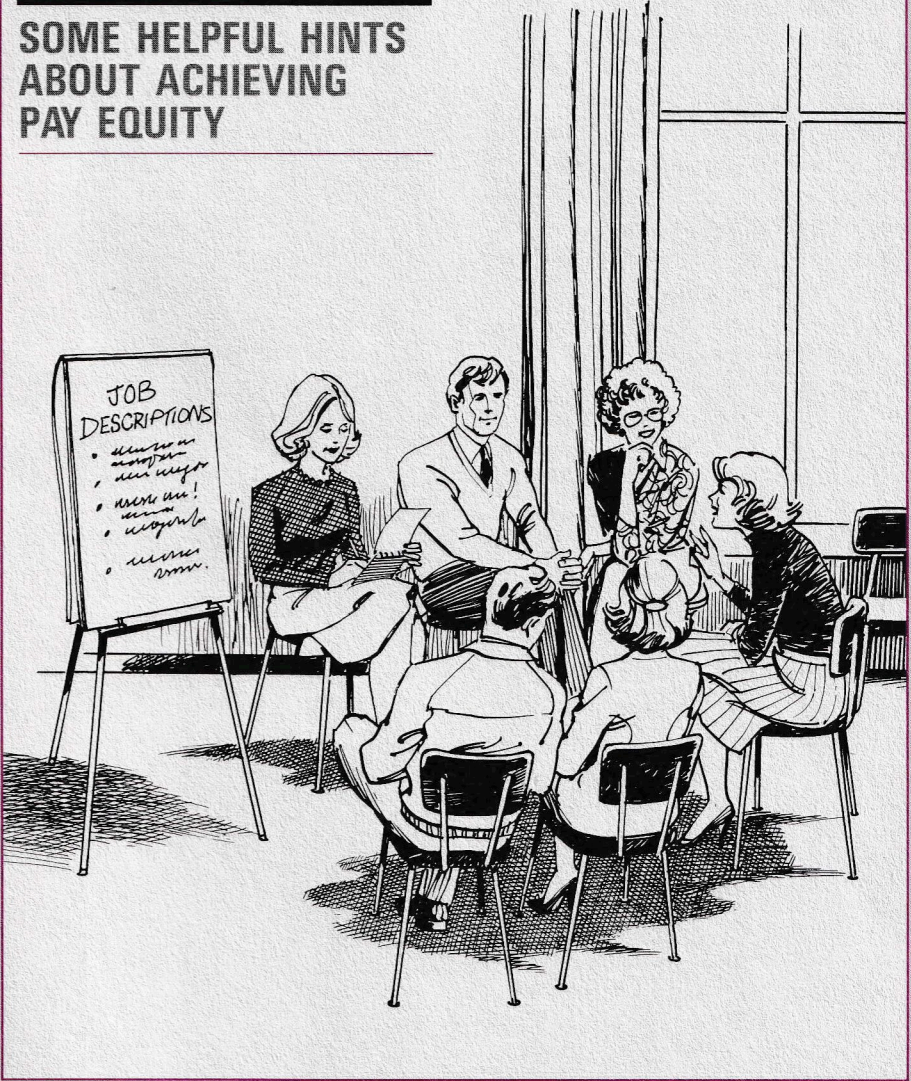
Throughout the strike, morale was very high. At least once a week, there were membership meetings and on the picket lines, they learned and sang union songs.

THE NEW CONTRACT

The tactics and arguments used by Local 2712 were effective. The pay gap between the caretakers' maximum rate and the secretaries' was closed by more than five per cent — almost \$200 a year.

The local didn't succeed in getting rid of the pay increments. But, as Côté says, this strike was only the first round. "You've got to plant those seeds in the negotiations. You're not going to win all of them the first time. But pay equity is going to be on the bargaining table every year."

SOME HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT ACHIEVING PAY EQUITY



- Don't wait for legislation. Use the collective bargaining process to make gains *now* rather than waiting for political fighting over pay equity in Legislatures across the country to end. This isn't to say CUPE locals shouldn't be involved in lobbying for pay equity laws. It's just that until provincial laws or regulations are passed, a lot can be done to make pay equity a reality in your local.

- Use real job descriptions. Don't believe that because management says the job descriptions show — or prove — that women cleaners are doing “lighter” work than male caretakers, that it's true. The only reason those job descriptions exist is so management can justify paying women “lighter” wages.

Before you go into negotiations, find out what the members are doing on the job. Most members are very happy to answer questions about *exactly* what they do — never mind what their job description says. After you do this kind of survey, you'll have some solid facts to back up your local's claim that women are being paid less because they're women, not because the work they're doing is worth less than the work men

are doing.

- Make the right pay comparisons. In trying to close the pay gap during contract negotiations, it's important to compare wages beyond one bargaining unit or local area. It's often very useful to look at wage rates throughout a region or across your province.

Another thing to remember during negotiations: if we are to make accurate comparisons between pay rates, all pay categories must be calculated in hourly equivalents. It's the only way to ensure that comparisons will work. Sometimes employers will use the tactic of describing wages on a monthly or yearly basis to give us the illusion that we're special because of the way we're paid. Some people think salaried workers have more prestige. But that feeling of prestige can be costly. And we can't eat prestige.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The stories in this booklet have been adapted from a brief called *Heading 'Em Off at the Pay Gap* by Don Wells, formerly of the CUPE research department. A companion piece by the same author is called *10 Ways to Make Pay Equity Gains*. Both are available from the research department at national office.

You might also want to look at *A Co-ordinated National Strategy for CUPE members on Pay Equity/Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value*. This strategy document was adopted by the CUPE National Executive Board in September 1986 and is available from Equal Opportunities.

The May-June 1985 issue of CUPE's *The Facts* focusses on women's issues. It may help you gain a better understanding of equal pay for work of equal value.

Finally, the conference kit which was issued in conjunction with the CUPE National Women's Conference held Nov. 29-Dec. 2 in Montreal is available to locals who request it from the Equal Opportunities office. It contains excellent background papers on pay equity.

This booklet was prepared by CUPE's Equal Opportunities office with assistance from the Public Relations department.

CUPE
21 Florence Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0W6
(613) 237-1590



Canadian Union of Public Employees

