



# **Affirmative ACTION**

**Putting a stop to  
sex discrimination:  
an outline for locals**



There's so much to be done in combatting sex-discrimination in the work-place. And the most potent weapon that working men and women have in fighting discrimination is collective bargaining.

CUPE members across Canada have used collective bargaining to negotiate equal pay for equal work, new job opportunities for women, improved promotional systems, an end to discrimination in pensions and group life insurance plans, improvements in maternity leaves, provisions for day care facilities and more.

But there's still so much to be done. And while collective bargaining can be a very effective tool against discrimination, it has to be supplemented by continuous enforcement programs.

And that's where CUPE's Affirmative Action program comes in. You'll find it outlined in this pamphlet.

It can work, if you work at it. Remember how much has to be done.



## The need for action

As a human right, all workers deserve equal employment opportunity. That's a principle endorsed by both public and private sector employees. Yet, federal government statistics show that women are not always paid equal wages for equal work. They earn an average annual income thousands of dollars below that of men. And they do not rise through normal advancement systems to positions of responsibility, authority, or power.

Typical corporate structures have a disproportionate number of female employees in lower paying classifications, and are top heavy with male employees in higher paying positions.

Clearly our ideas of equal employment opportunity need to be re-evaluated and supplemented by enforcement programs which will guarantee equal employment opportunities to all working women.

More women join the work force for longer periods of time than ever before in this century. Their involvement in the work force is reflective of two factors: economic necessity—many women no longer work for “pin money”, but rather, for a living—and the expanding role of women as complete and important human beings in all areas of human endeavour.

Women's rights are an extension and integral part of human rights, and historical precedents in human rights have traditionally been set by unionized employers and their employee's unions, and especially by public

employers. Together these representative organizations have established fundamental employment standards which have contributed greatly to the high standard of living now enjoyed by most Canadians. In the area of equal employment opportunity for women, it once again falls upon public employers and public employee unions to establish a standard. If women as a part of the total work force are to be guaranteed equal employment opportunity, they must also be guaranteed equal opportunity in training, promotion and career advancement.

## Why an Affirmative Action program?

Affirmative action policies and programs are based on strategies to ensure the removal of unnecessary barriers which restrict employment and promotional opportunities for women, and which correct traditional sexual imbalances in the work force.

Affirmative action is oriented toward results rather than procedures, and implies that schedules and goals will be established and realized. Without using quota systems or rigid forms of reverse discrimination, affirmative action programs are designed to ensure that unrelated job qualifications are eliminated in both written and oral evaluations, and appropriate career ladders are built to create avenues of upward mobility.

Affirmative action programs also provide measures to increase career opportunities, and allow women to demonstrate their individual abilities and to

rise to a more equitable and justified standing in the employer's administration.

Women whose knowledge and skills qualify them for positions of increased responsibility will be encouraged to advance in the system. Training and upgrading courses will be developed to prepare women for greater and expanded roles. Where present recruitment techniques have failed to achieve results, outreach and search programs will be developed. These programs will identify potentially qualified women among the general public.

An affirmative action program is an on-going and permanent function. Once established goals are achieved, monitoring devices continue to evaluate, adjust, and upgrade all components of the program.

Affirmative action is not just a restatement of equal opportunity, but rather, an effective enforcement of that principle.

## **The Employer and Affirmative Action**

The basic objective of a well designed affirmative action program is to create an employment situation which serves all interest groups. A program based on merit principles guarantees the employer that only well qualified female candidates will move into supervisory, middle management, and senior levels. Further, an affirmative action program based on support training and fair qualifying standards guarantees women equal

opportunity in career advancement and improved standards of living.

Implementation of an affirmative action program can also benefit the employer in numerous ways. It is expensive to waste human capabilities. Increased efficiency through proper utilisation of female human resources will result in a very direct saving to the employer in time and money. As a benefit of structured career ladders, revised job descriptions and reorganization, certain departments may be streamlined, and anticipated expansions may be avoided. In direct response to improved employment opportunities, turnover rates will decrease significantly, consequently time and money spent in training new employees will result in additional savings. A final objective of an affirmative action program is to design a system which can be adopted by the employer's existing structure and staff without substantial commitment of additional or on-going expense.

Perhaps the most elemental and important factor necessary to a successful affirmative action program is the total involvement and support of both management and union. Affirmative action is a joint endeavor with shared benefits for female employees and their employer.



# Affirmative Action: A three-phase program



## Phase 1 Initiating the program

At the outset, executive level policy statements and administrative directives from the employer and the local union of Canadian Union of Public Employees are issued, indicating the parties' commitment to the program:

- Statement of Purpose and Intent by the Parties.
- Setting up a Joint Committee responsible for devising and implementing the program initially, providing regular monitoring and updating thereafter.
- Assigning responsibility and accountability.
- Acquainting employees and management personnel with the purpose of the program.



## Phase 2 Data collection, analysis and assessment

Before an affirmative action program is designed, a careful evaluation must be conducted to identify inequities in the status of male and female employees, and to illuminate specific problem areas in the system. Such an evaluation would give consideration to the following points of information:

- Analysis of present profile of employees by sex.
- Assessment of personnel policies and practices, past and present.
- Analysis of Collective Agreements.
- Analysis of Employee Benefit plans.
- Analysis of surrounding labour market.
- Assessment of future work force requirements.
- Report on findings, indicating problem areas, suggesting remedies.



## **Phase 3 Implementation: setting targets, devising methods, solving problems**

This Phase of the program depends on the findings of Phase II. Crucial to the elimination of artificial barriers to advancement for women employees is the revision of formal personnel procedures. Progressive integration of women into the full spectrum of classifications will result from supportive Personnel Policies. Of key importance in guaranteeing equal opportunity to all employees is the establishment of non-discriminatory rules and regulations, and the design of equitable methods of qualification evaluation.

Any or all of the following actions may be required:

- Revising Job Evaluation procedures, re-classifying jobs, providing new job descriptions.
- Devising new career ladders and promotional pathways.
- On-the-job training.

- Other forms of training.
- Revision of employer recruitment, hiring, testing and promotional practices.
- Equalization of Welfare Plans.
- Revision of Collective Agreement provisions.
- Instruction of employees and management personnel regarding the remedial program and its implementation.
- Other remedial actions, as indicated by the Report.

In implementing desired objectives, approximate time references should be established for short range, intermediate and long term goals. Various methods can be used to monitor results and distinguish between desired and actual achievements. Of particular importance is the establishment of an on-going review committee, representative of all interest groups, to evaluate goals and achievements on a periodic basis.

**There's so much  
to be done**





Published by the Education Department of the Canadian Union of Public Employees

