

# *Working Women Timeline*

## **1970**

### January

- The Working Women's Workshop (WWW) is formed as part of Vancouver Women's Caucus

### February

- The Pedestal centre spread is dedicated to a discussion about the need to organize women workers
- Bouk Elzinga, a Licensed Practical Nurse at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) and a member of the WWW runs for the executive of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) on an equal pay platform

### March

- Leaflet Equal Pay for Equal Work is printed and distributed

### April

- WWW members print and distribute a leaflet about issues faced by part-time and temporary workers; the leaflet is distributed at Office Overload and Office Assistance, two temporary employment agencies
- Tilden Rent A Car workers, members of Office & Technical Employees union (OTEU), go on strike for a first contract citing discrimination in wages and job advancement; WWW members join Tilden workers on the picket line
- The following resolution is passed at a union meeting of the Vancouver General Hospital unit of Hospital Employees Union (HEU): "That this local formally declares its adherence to the concept of equality of treatment of the sexes in the matter of wages and other items relating to income and working conditions; that this principle be incorporated as a clause in the Constitution of the Union."

### May

- Eight women workers at the CH Hosken warehouse, members of Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union (RWDSU), go on strike for a first contract; their main demands are job security and wage parity with other Cunningham Drugs workers who are unionized

### September

- WWW initiates the Cunningham Drugstore boycott campaign in support of the Hosken strikers (Hosken is a subsidiary of Cunningham Drugs); WWW members leaflet and picket Cunningham Drugstores in Vancouver
- Ten VGH workers appear before the Human Rights Commission on the issue of equal pay; the Commission rules in favour of the women workers and the hospital responds by changing the job classifications of the men and women involved in order to circumvent the ruling

November

- WWW leaflets the BC Federation of Labour offices demanding support for the Cunningham's boycott

December

- The post office announces hiring for the Christmas season; WWW members leaflet the post office protesting discriminatory hiring practices and wages

## **1971**

May

- One year anniversary of the Hosken's strike; Cunningham boycott activities continue

June – July

- Sandringham Private Hospital workers in Victoria, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), go on strike for a first contract; WWW members join them on the picket line and leaflet in support of the strike

September

- Smitty's Pancake House workers, members of Hotel & Restaurant Employees Union (HREU) apply for union certification; Elizabeth Gowland, a member of WWW works at Smitty's, and her co-worker Jackie Ainsworth becomes active in the Working Women's Association (WWA)

October

- The founding convention of the Working Women's Association (WWA) is held; the initial intent is to form a new union, however, we determine we are not ready and instead we form the Working Women's Association which we plan to eventually turn into a union
- Library and clerical workers at the University of B.C. commence a union drive with the Office & Technical Employees Union (OTEU); Lori Whitehead, a clerical worker at UBC and a WWW member is active in the drive

## **1972**

January –December

- Thousands of leaflets are distributed in downtown Vancouver on various subjects of concern to women workers: Women on the Frontier, Unemployment Insurance and How to Get Your Money, Equal Pay for Equal Work, Is Your Paycheque a Secret, Fight for Daycare, Working in Department Stores, We Have a Right to Unionize, the Labour Relations Board Unfair, Why a New Union

January

- Medieval Inn restaurant workers are fired en masse in order to hire new staff at lower wages; old staff join HREU; WWA members leaflet and picket the restaurant

Feb/ March

- Pizza Patio restaurant workers commence a union drive with HREU; Melody Rudd, a WWA member works there and is fired for her union activity

April

- WWA members leaflet the B.C. Labour Relations Board protesting their decisions regarding Smitty's and Medieval Inn unfair labour practice complaints (the leaflet is titled LRB Unfair!)

May

- A pamphlet Women's Work is printed and distributed

July

- A pamphlet Working In Hospitals is printed and sold at the HEU convention for 25 cents

July-August

- WWA members and library and clerical workers at UBC meet and write a constitution and bylaws for a new, independent, and democratic union, the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE) for university and college employees in B.C.

August

- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and OTEU union drives at UBC fail
- WWA presents a slideshow at the main library on the history of working women in B.C.
- WWA holds their first meeting in their new office on Kingsway

September

- A lunch hour meeting is held at the downtown public library to discuss department store workers issues
- A series of seminars about unions is held at Fishermen's Hall every Saturday for four weeks
- Library and clerical workers at UBC hold the founding convention of AUCE and commence another union drive at UBC
- WWA members write a constitution and bylaws for an independent, feminist union, the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC)

October

- WWA members hold the founding convention of SORWUC
- Smitty's Pancake House workers, tired of day to day management pressure and discouraged by the lousy union contract negotiated by HREU (the wage increase is barely enough to cover their new union dues) decide to quit the union; Smitty's is decertified

**1973**

January

- Wardair flight attendants go on strike demanding parity with other airline flight

attendants; WWA members join them on the picket line at the Vancouver airport and leaflet in support of the strike

February

- Denny's dayshift workers at the Broadway and Birch restaurant go on strike even though they have not joined a union; Jackie Ainsworth, a member of the WWA and SORWUC, works the graveyard shift at the restaurant and soon a majority of staff from all three shifts are on strike

February – April

- WWA/SORWUC members picket and leaflet in support of Denny's strikers
- AUCE union drive at UBC fails

Summer

- WWA members believe that it is important to continue have a working women's organization along with the new union, SORWUC. Unlike SORWUC, the WWA can be a women's only organization and a women's group can undertake activities that a union cannot. However, there aren't enough women and resources to ensure the survival of both the WWA and SORWUC; the WWA disbands and activities and leaflets are now done in the name of SORWUC

July

- SORWUC's first certification at the law office of Bolton, Rush and McGrady

September

- AUCE is formed for the second time and commences yet another union drive; Jean Rands and Jackie Ainsworth, members of WWA and SORWUC, work at UBC and are active in the drive; SORWUC members provide considerable support during the union drive leafletting the campus and staffing the union office

December

- AUCE applies for union certification for 1,100 library and clerical workers at UBC

**1974**

April

- AUCE is certified at UBC

September

- AUCE signs a first union contract at UBC after a 90% strike vote