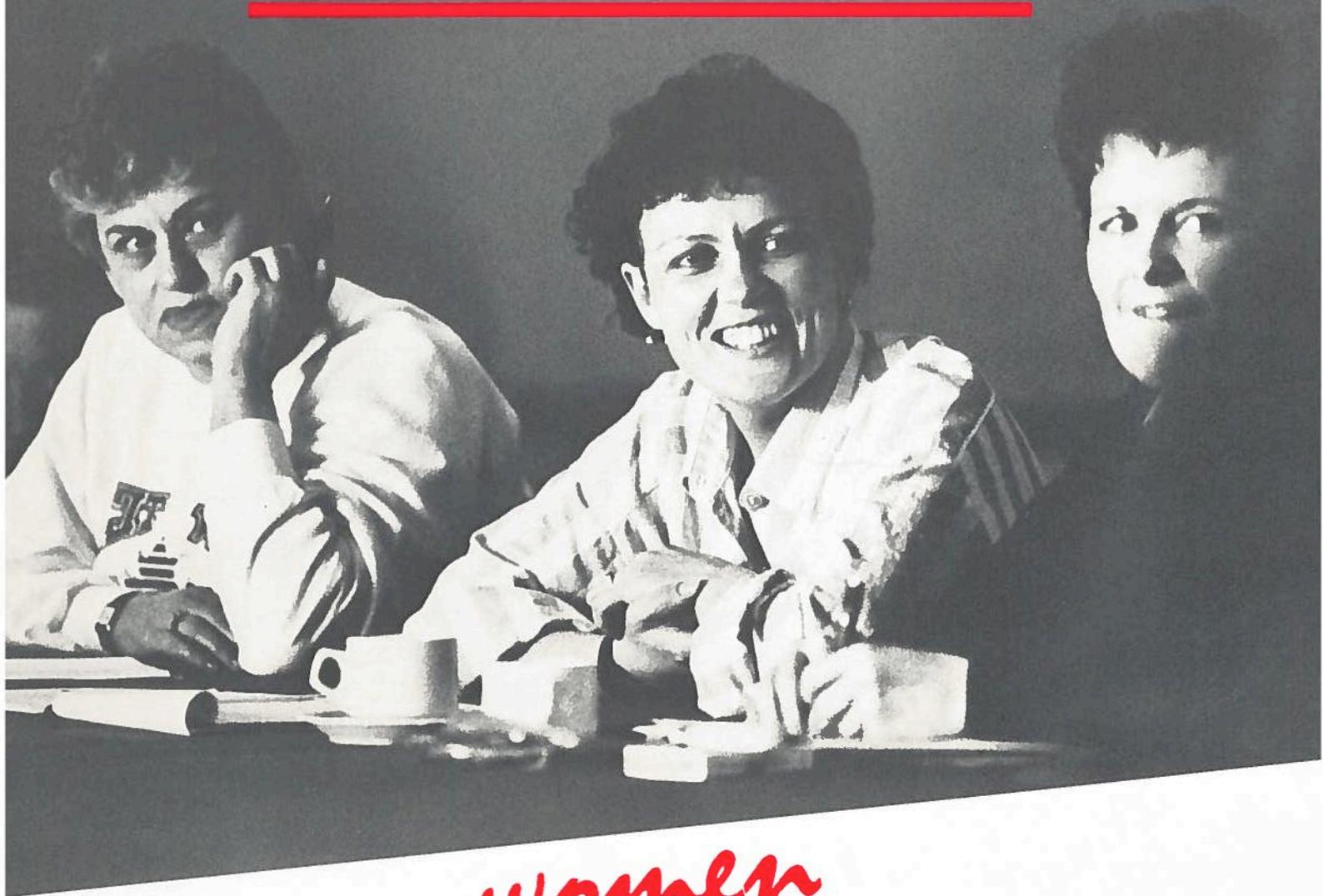


A Women's Committee can make
your Union work for you.



women
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women

CAW  TCA
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Women BUILDING·UNION·BUILDING Women



Unions have been instrumental in bringing about changes in wages, working conditions, fringe benefits, job security and human rights for workers. If women workers are to be equal partners in the workforce, they must work with and through their unions.

Local union women's committees are guaranteed by the CAW's constitution. The objectives of such committees include ensuring that women receive equal pay for work of equal value and that they have equal opportunities in the workplace, in their union and in the larger community.

How does a CAW Women's Committee function?

CAW women's committees are guaranteed under Article 42 of the union's constitution. As with all standing committees, the women's committee can be appointed by the president of the local union or elected according to the bylaws of your local union. The president is automatically a member of your committee.

It's important to stress to the other members of your local union that the women's committee is not a

separate bargaining committee for women. Rather it is a committee that works closely with other committees of the local union to advance the programmes and policies of the CAW about women. It discusses the problems of women workers in the plant and office and makes recommendations to the local union executive board how to solve them.

Participation in all union activities is the first step towards influencing union decisions about women's rights. Your women's committee can be an important source of unity in your local union if it and its members participate in all union activities.

What can our Committee do to help Women Workers?

Encourage more women to participate in union activities. Seek out and encourage women to run for elected positions in your local. Set up special sessions to listen to the problems faced by women in your workplace.

Study the collective agreement to see if there are any clauses which have a discriminatory impact. Ask women workers what clauses they would like to see added to the next contract.

Propose an affirmative action programme to end discrimination in hiring and promotions, and open doors to non-traditional occupations to women.

Examine your wage structure and/or classification system to see if it is based on equal pay for work of equal value. Discuss your findings with your committee and prepare recommendations to your executive or bargaining committee.

Co-operate with the health and safety committee to study your workplace for health and safety hazards for women. Carry out research into the health problems of women employees to see if there is a pattern which could indicate a hidden health hazard.

Encourage women workers to speak out about sexual harassment on the job. Through the local,

request the employer to issue a memorandum to supervisory staff condemning sexual harassment. Work for protection against sexual coercion in the next contract.

Examine the fringe benefits in your contract to see if they discriminate against women, and recommend to the local ways to equalize benefits in the next contract.

Discuss maternity/parental leave provisions to see if they adequately protect the income, seniority and well-being of parents.

Conduct a study into childcare arrangements made by the working parents in your workplace. Could these parents be better served if the union worked for on-site childcare, 24 hour childcare services for shift workers, or financial subsidies for childcare away from the workplace.

Study the position of part-time women workers and their wages and fringe benefits.

Support attempts of other women in other workplaces or occupations to organize, and support workers striking or picketing over issues of special concern to women.

How to make your Committee work

Establish a regular monthly meeting time and place. Notices should be mailed at least one week before each meeting. Have a prepared agenda.

Set up subcommittees to perform the work of the committee: education, bargaining issues, special programmes, publicity, fund-raising, liaison (with NDP and other women's groups) are only some examples.

Have educationals to acquaint committee members with the policies to the CAW relative to women: CAW constitutional resolutions, CAW Council resolutions, the union's bargaining programme. Your local union contracts are important too. In each case, contact your local union.

Invite chairpersons of the local union's other standing committees to become honorary members of your committee. In this way, you can help ensure co-operation between the work of your committee and the other programmes of the local union.

Arrange educationals for women union members. These can revolve around issues: women's bargaining issues, CAW policy concerning women, legislation affecting women, older women and pensions; or they can revolve around developing skills: effective speaking, parliamentary procedure, assertiveness training. You can also invite the chairperson of the bargaining committee to come and explain their contract to your members.

What the Union has bargained for Women Workers

Thanks to CAW women working arm in arm with the union's top leadership and local union leadership, we've been able to negotiate important gains for women in our contracts.



Discrimination. A no-discrimination clause, forbidding employers to deny any worker equal treatment because of sex, is now a standard feature of CAW contracts. It is also CAW policy to eliminate sex-biased language from contracts.

Sexual harassment. The union has negotiated clauses in collective agreements making the provision of a sexual-harassment free workplace a company responsibility so that no worker can be exposed to sexual harassment without recourse to the grievance procedure. (Sexual harassment grievances are conducted confidentially.)

Maternity. In some contracts the CAW has negotiated funds to "top up" UIC maternity benefits. It has bargained language guaranteeing a woman her job on her return to work; full accumulation of pension and vacation credits while on maternity leave; clauses allowing women more

leave than the 17 weeks allowed under the UIC; leaves for adoptive parents.

Childcare. The CAW has bargained childcare funds at American Motors and childcare pilot projects at the Big Three automakers.

Affirmative action. The CAW has negotiated affirmative action programmes to pressure companies to hire more women, to put more women into better-paying jobs, and to accept more women into apprenticeships for the skilled trades.

Equal pay. CAW contracts already guarantee equal pay for equal work but negotiators are also trying to close the gap by negotiating equal pay for work of equal value.

Health and safety. The union has negotiated VDT protection for pregnant women, plus health and safety training programmes that include hazards to women workers.

These gains are not in every contract, but they are a good start. By working with your union you can help achieve even more for women workers.



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