

UNIONS WORK FOR WOMEN

CONSIDER THE FACTS:

International Women's Day is celebrated worldwide on March 8 and research by the CLC women's bureau indicates trade union women in Canada are moving from strength to strength.

Women are joining unions eight times faster than men. The reasons are clearly both economic and social. Unions provide the opportunity for women to work together to achieve dignity and respect in the workplace and in society.

By providing this opportunity to develop their collective strength, unions have evolved in positive ways, making women's concerns bargaining issues, tackling racism, sexism and homophobia, as well as making links with the community and with advocacy groups such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

Women can be proud of the part they play in the movement. More and more women are gaining leadership positions at all levels and are helping create effective and more progressive unions.

Thanks to the influx of women into unions, the movement has taken on pay and employment equity, choice, sexual harassment and health and safety issues with increased commitment in recent years.



WOMEN'S BUREAU

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THE BIG PICTURE

Research shows union membership in Canada is increasing despite the recession. Thirty-seven per cent of male workers and 28% of female workers were unionized by 1989.

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

- Women were 44% of the workforce by 1990: a 66.3% increase since 1975
- 86% of all part-time workers are women
- 60% of all mothers with children under three were in the labour force by 1990.
- 85.3% of single-parent families were headed by women in 1989
- 56.4% of women in the workforce in 1990 were segregated into the same three categories as in 1901: clerical, sales and service



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THE NON-UNION SHOP: NO PLACE FOR WOMEN

A workplace without a union is a workplace completely under the control of the employer. Typically, such workplaces offer low or minimum wages, little or no pension benefits, no protection against harassment, no training, and no job security.

OTHER PROBLEMS IN NON-UNION SHOPS:

- Health and safety? Workers must trust the employer.
- Childcare and family care? Good luck.
- Full-time jobs so women can support their kids? Employers often say women only want part-time work so they can "balance work and family responsibilities".
- Sick leave is often unpaid



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THE PAY PACKAGE

Here are some facts and figures about wages and benefits for unionized workers.

WAGES

- . 47% higher than non-union workers
- . for women, 60% higher than for non-union women
- . for women in farming, forestry and fishing, 89% higher than non-union women in those sectors
- . in the service sector, union women do 81% better
- . unionized part-time workers earn 67% more than non-union ones
- . among non-union workers, men earn 43% more than women: for union workers, that gap has been narrowed to 18%
- . unions have been actively and successfully pursuing equal pay negotiations

BENEFITS

- . a shorter work week with paid overtime
- . paid sick leave
- . more paid holidays
- . childcare subsidies and work place childcare
- . job security
- . workplace health and safety committees
- . more protection against hazards and workplace violence



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FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY

Unions have been fighting long and hard for employees to be treated equally in the workplace. Gains include:

- contract protection against racial, sexual and personal harassment
- anti-discrimination clauses
- union education and mobilization against discrimination and harassment
- benefits negotiated for same-sex spouses by some unions
- equal pay for work of equal value
- affirmative action/employment equity policies and bargaining

GETTING AHEAD

Unions have negotiated opportunities for workers to learn and advance, such as:

- training and re-training, particularly with the advent of technological change
- language training
- workplace literacy programs
- education



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