

# Women's rights

# BULLETIN

JUNE 1988

Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee

## Julie Davis — YWCA Woman of Distinction

It's only the second time in eight years that a YWCA Woman of Distinction award has gone to a woman from the labour movement.

OFL executive vice-president Julie Davis was honoured at the May 11th gala event at the Metro Convention Centre. Each year, six women receive the "Aggie", a bronze statue named after

Agnes Blizard, who founded the YWCA.

Sister Davis shared her award with her sisters in the labour movement.

"This award is as much a recognition of their efforts as it is of mine," she said. "I have had the privilege and the opportunity to be the public spokesperson, but the truth is they have been the heart and soul of our achievement."

Sister Davis has been a trade unionist throughout her working life. She held several non-traditional jobs before taking a clerical position with CUPE in 1974. She moved on to be a service representative, then CUPE's first woman health care co-ordinator.

Sister Davis was elected in 1986 as a full time officer for the OFL.



From left to right: Margaret Atwood, Rose Sheinin, Meena Dhar, Mary Cornish, Julie Davis, Nancy Jackman, Mary Jackman, Jalynn Bennett.

## Activists call for legislation

The 375 women's conference delegates, representing a cross-section of both public and private sector unions, reaffirmed labour's commitment to affirmative action.

The delegates discussed a wide range of bargaining strategies needed to remove barriers to equality in the workplace. Though unions have won contract language in some areas, the

process of workplace by workplace negotiation is much too slow and does nothing for the two-thirds of workers who are unorganized.

It is clear that the Liberal government's voluntary programs are not working. Women, disabled, native and visible minorities need a strong proactive legislation to remove barriers to social and economic equality.

Conference participants vowed to step up pressure on the Peterson Government for mandatory affirmative action legislation.

In building labour's campaign for mandatory legislation, delegates are committed to working within their unions, reaching out to their sisters in the community and lobbying politicians.



## PAY EQUITY UPDATES

• **Appointments:** The following sisters have been appointed to the Pay Equity Commission: Janis Sarra, former OFL Human Rights Director as Vice-Chair of the Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal; Wendy Cuthbertson, former CAW Public Relations Director as the Director of Information and Education Services; Sue Genge from CUPE and Geri Sheedy from RWDSU as sidepersons of the Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal.

• **Study of workplaces with no male comparables:** The Pay Equity Commission has called for submissions on this issue. However, asking for public submissions without research or background information is only a "shot in the dark". The OFL and the Equal Pay Coalition have asked the Commission to take a more constructive approach by preparing recommendations for our response. The Federation has formed a committee of affiliates to work on this issue.

• **The first set of guidelines to the Act have been released:** #1 Introduction to Pay Equity and Answers to Some Common Questions about Pay Equity; #2 Definition of Employer; #3 Calculating the Number of Employees in the Private Sector; #4 Definition of Establishment. Copies can be obtained from the Pay Equity Commission, 150 Eglinton Avenue East, 5th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 1E8 — Ontario-wide (toll free) 1-800-387-8813 or 1-800-387-8887; Toronto 481-3314 or 481-3315.

• **Tips on Exclusions:** Under the Act, the onus is on the employer to show that a position should be excluded, or that the lower rate of compensation is justified, because it meets the tests outlined in the Exclusions Section. There are very important limitations on each exclusion and unions must use these limitations to ensure women are not improperly excluded.

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## Liberal "New Directions" going in the wrong direction

Contrary to promises made in its own white paper *New Directions*, the Ontario Government is planning to provide direct operating grants to commercial operators instead of expanding only non-profit care.

A just released study of 431 licensed non-profit and commercial childcare programs in Toronto shows the chances of finding high quality care are greater in a non-profit centre. Minister Sweeney said the lack of government funds may be the reason for the study findings.

At a recent press conference the

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) rejected Community and Social Services Minister John Sweeney's plan to start financing commercial childcare centres.

"We challenge Mr. Sweeney and the government to turn the *New Directions* policy in the right direction. Public dollars should not enhance commercial childcare," said OCBCC president Laurel Rothman. "Instead, precious public dollars should be directed toward high quality programs."

### CWC win affirmative action at Bell

The CWC has won contract language that will allow women to move out of job ghettos. For many years the union has been chipping away at barriers to equality that women faced.

Language in the 1988 agreement will build bridges between the Operator's bargaining unit (mostly female) and the Craft unit (mostly male). In a bargaining package under "Transfer-Seniority" and "Building Bridges", changes were made to the Craft seniority-transfer system to allow general exceptions to the seniority and provisions made to create two "equality moves" per Craft unit per year. This will enable operators to assume permanent Crafts jobs.

In addition, the CWC and Bell agreed to future affirmative action measures as pilot projects and an on-going Equality Committee.

### Childcare workers worst-paid

Canada's 16,700 daycare workers are the worst paid people in the country, according to Statistics Canada. Many of these workers have between two and four years of community college education and earned an average of \$8,900 a year in 1986.

### Steel woman wins discrimination fight

A Sudbury Steelworker has won a legal victory against Inco allowing her to choose where to work in the plant after considering possible health risks.

Sister Laurene Wiens filed a Human Rights complaint 12 years ago when Inco refused to promote her. The company policy said no women of child-bearing age would be allowed to work in a section of the nickel refinery. The company refusal was based on possible effects of the toxic nickel carbonyl gas on the health of a pregnant worker or her fetus.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission ruled that Inco was guilty of sex discrimination and the next job opening in the controversial area must go to Wiens.

### Save our small post offices

Canada's remaining 5,000 rural and small community post offices are in danger. As with many parts of our postal system these important jobs are under attack by the Tory Government.

Eighty-two percent of rural postmasters are women and for most, these jobs are the only means of steady family income. More than 200 offices have already been affected by Canada Post's plan to shut down, amalgamate or privatize the rural service over a 10 year period. This is a direct threat to both rural economy and way of life.

We must call on Prime Minister Mulroney to stop the closures.