

Service Office and Retail Workers Union:

Local 2 United Bank Workers (1972-1978)

Local 4 Bank and Finance Workers (1981-1986)

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THE RECORDS ARE RESTRICTED

TO SEPTEMBER 1, 1992

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Introduction

Overview: This fonds contains the records of the Service, Office and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC) for the United Bank Workers, Local 2 (1972-78), and the Bank and Finance Workers, Local 4 (1981-86). The records contain correspondence, contracts and agreements, reports, financial records, and a research collection of printed material

Provenance: This material was donated by SORWUC; they have been the sole owners and creators of the material.

Extent: 8.8 m.

Research Potential: This material contains a variety of information on the functioning of a uniquely women-controlled and operated feminist union, that largely fought for the rights of women in the service industries.

Restrictions on Access: The material is closed until September 1, 1992. Access can be given upon written permission of Jean Rands or Jackie Ainsworth, 2639 Trinity St., Vancouver B.C. Literary rights to the material are retained by the union.

Agency History

The Service, Office and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC) was founded in October of 1972 in British Columbia. It was an unaffiliated, feminist, member-controlled union that sought to organize workers in the service industries traditionally ignored by unions, such as restaurant and office workers. The constitution stated their aims as being: to bargain collectively on behalf of members; to improve working conditions; and to help provide job security. The constitution itself was "designed to allow and encourage maximum worker participation and decentralization of control over decision-making and negotiations, by limiting the salary and terms of office of leaders, and requiring referendum votes on major union decisions."¹ By 1976, SORWUC had organized four day care centres, five social service units, one legal office, one student office, and a tuxedo rental store.

The organizing activities relating to banks began in 1975 when the union made an unsuccessful attempt to organize the employees at the data centers of two Vancouver banks. SORWUC realized that if they were going to be successful, they had to rely on leadership within the banks themselves. In 1976, while leafletting in downtown Vancouver, they were encouraged by the support that they received from bank workers. Thus, the union began organizing banks, and created a new section within the union known as the Local 2, the

¹ Charlesbois, Monique, "Bank Unions in Canada: The Mouse that Roared," 1980: 63.

United Bank Workers (UBW). The union was run on a volunteer basis, and a group of about 20 members provided the leadership core of the UBW. Some members had previous union experience, some were involved in the women's movement, some in left-wing politics, and others were bank employees. The union survived mostly on donations from other unions, individuals and women's groups. SORWUC operated on a small budget, and was in a deficit position most of the time. The UBW had strong support from other unions and feminists in the province.

Banks were targeted as an area that needed to be organized. Bank workers were mostly women, and they were notoriously overworked, underpaid, and poorly treated. While the union considered low wages as the major problem, they also cited "lack of promotion opportunities, protection from arbitrary treatment by management, overcrowded and understaffed branches, favouritism, problems with male management trainees and a general lack of respect from management, as major irritants."²

The first bank that they applied for certification was the Victoria Square Branch of the Bank of Commerce. The application was turned down by the Canadian Labour Relations Board (CLRB) in August 1976, though, on the basis of insufficient support. But the UBW submitted twenty more applications to the CLRB, and a year later in 1977, the CLRB made a landmark decision that ruled that a branch could be an effective bargaining unit. The Port McNeill branch of the Bank of Commerce was the first bank to be certified by SORWUC.

² Lowe, Graham S., Bank Unionization in Canada: A Preliminary Analysis, 1980: 34.

From 1976, over a period of two years, the union signed up a total of 733 members. Membership peaked in August 1977, when SORWUC had 422 members in good standing. But in October of 1977, the banks announced a wage freeze, which seriously impeded SORWUC's negotiations with the banks. The union switched from negotiating on a branch-by-branch basis to a province wide basis. The CLRB did not endorse this tactic. Part of the reason that the Union switched to a province-wide negotiating stance was that it had ran low on money: donations were declining, and the union could not afford to send members throughout the province and they couldn't pay workers to be on the negotiating committees. This lack of moral and financial support took its toll on the union. Twenty-six UBW locals were decertified, and the membership as of August 1978 was 150.

The banks themselves had been working hard against the UBW and their tactics were paying off. They supported anti-union activities, laid off union activists who were employed in the banks, and blacklisted unions workers,

Problems with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) also led many problems for the UBW. In the fall of 1977, the CLC began organizing bankworkers as well. The CLC offered to accept the UBW into its structure, but the UBW refused. Support quickly fell for the union, and it ran into serious financial difficulties. The UBW also began to have difficulties in its negotiations. Also, the union became increasingly isolated and support from members dwindled. Thus, in 1978 the UBW, Local 2 was shut down.

In 1981, the Bank and Finance Workers, Local 4 of SORWUC was created and it carried on the actions of the UBW. The union widened

its scope to include workers from trust companies, and later it began to organize restaurant workers. But financial and organization problems plagued the union, and by 1986, the union ceased actions completely.

The structure of the executive of the union as defined in the constitution is as follows:

President
1st Vice President
2nd Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Secretary
Trustees (2)

The people of prominence in the union who figure most in the records, are the following:

Jean Rands (National President)
Dodie Zerr (President, UBW)
Charlotte Johnson (President, UBW)
Sheree Butt (President, UBW)
Jackie Ainsworth (Secretary, Treasurer UBW)
Melody Rudd (Secretary UBW)

Because it was part of the union's philosophy to have the executive change their positions frequently, the above only represents the most significant position that each person held in the union—not all of the positions they held, as this was not discernable.

Sources:

Charlesbois, Monique, "Bank Unions in Canada: The Mouse that Roared," 1980.

Lowe, Graham S., Bank Unionization in Canada: A Preliminary Analysis, 1980.

Scope and Content:

The records were transferred to the Special Collections Division of the University of British Columbia Archives in 1987. The material had no discernable arrangement. The material appeared to be classified according to its function, as in financial material and material relating to certification of bank branches. In some instances material was grouped together according to subject, such as in the research files. But from box to box there were no connections and it was impossible to discern how the files existed when they were in active use.

Because the material had no order, it was decided to impose an intellectual order upon the material, and to leave the physical order in place. The intellectual arrangement was based on the broad functions of the union. They are:

- Legal
- Organization
- Administration
 - Finance
 - Research
 - Public Relations
 - Executive Affairs

Within each of the above categories, the material was arranged according to series that were naturally found in the material. The material in each category is described by file numbers in numerical order, with a brief description for each grouping. The groupings themselves range from broad to specific according to the nature of the material. File subgroupings are provided in Appendixes I to III.

Inventory

I. Legal Papers [1972-1984]

This series consists of documentary and supplementary material compiled in the course of the union's legal activities. Subjects include: unfair labour practise charges filed against banks and heard by the CLRB; applications for certification in the CLRB. Also included in this series are notes, correspondence and legal briefs, some of the files on unfair labour practises are organized by individual filing charges.

II Organizing [1976-1984]

Consists of material relating to the organizing activities of SORWUC, including correspondence, research, membership forms, sign up sheets and information on the banks to be certified. Also included are contract proposals, organizing committee papers by branch, minutes of negotiation meetings, press clippings and press releases.

III Administration [1973-1984]

(i) **Finance**: This series consists of material reflecting the financial matters of SORWUC; includes receipts, deposit books, cheque stubs, payroll information, bank statements, accounts ledgers, and billing notices.

(ii) **Research**: This series includes information collected in regards to the activities which SORWUC carried out. The union

concentrated on women's issues, feminism, and women's rights in the workplace, health and hygiene issues. Material includes press clippings and releases in regard to banking business; brochures and pamphlets on unemployment, racism and women's issues; constitutions of other unions, paste ups, bulletins, anti-union literature, annual reports by banks and CLRB reports. File no. 19-25 includes legal agreement between SORWUC and the law firm Rush and Clague.

(iii) Public Relations: Materials used to make contacts with the public and like-minded organizations. Consists of mailing lists, newsletters, press releases, copies of the weekly bulletin, drafts for leaflets and information brochures.

(iv) General Correspondence: Includes correspondence regarding the union's activities; includes correspondence with banks, other unions, women's groups, special interest groups as well as others.

(v) Executive Affairs: Miscellaneous papers, re: finance, by-laws, minutes, correspondence. Also included are copies of Dimension magazine, fliers, women's centre brochures, blank dues authorizations; union histories; and minutes of the National Executive.

Appendix:**I Legal Papers**

File Nos: 1-1 to 1-53: File Dividers: 1-1 to 1-16 "In Court"

1-17 to 1-53 "CLRB Decided"

Consists of legal papers, correspondence, minutes and reports.

File Nos: 2-5 to 2-23

Consisting of 2-5 to 2-10: notes, correspondence, and legal papers re: unfair labour practice charges filed by Carol Dulyk and Eileen Quigley vs. Gibson's Bank of Commerce.

2-11 to 2-23: cases in CLRB: applications made by SORWUC seeking certification of bank branches as bargaining units.

Arranged by bank.

File Nos: 4-1 to 4-44: Case in CLRB re: unfair labour practices, hearings re: wage freezes. CLRB decisions with reasons for; cancellation of permits.

File Nos: 8-15: Unfair labour practices re: Bank of Montreal.

File Nos: 11-30: Legal papers re: Bonnie Wong vs. SORWUC; correspondence, legal and financial papers.

File Nos: 13-1: Unfair labour practices filed by Mary Jean Rands; correspondence, legal documents, notes, newsletters.

File Nos: 13-2: Legal documents re: certification applications in the Court of Appeal.

File Nos: 16-1 to 16-9: Legal documents re: certification and related issues. Victoria and Grey Trust: includes correspondence, notes, legal contract agreements, briefs of documents.

File Nos: 18-4 to 18-7: Legal: Brief of Authorities, applications for certification re: board and bargaining units.

File Nos: 19-19: Note, etc. re: Carol Dulyk and Eileen Quigley.

File Nos: 19-35: CLRB findings, SORWUC appeal, Fall 1983. Libel suit against the union by the Bank of BC.

File Nos: 20-1 to 3, 5, 12 to 13: Unfair labour practices:

20-1: Mary Jean Rands

20-2: Melody Rudd

20-3: Mumtaz Kasam

20-5: Gracinda Rodriquez

20-12: Melody Rudd

20-13: Mumtaz Kasam

File Nos: 21-13, 20, 22, 23: Re: Unfair labour practices; CLRB findings, memos; correspondence re: unfair labour practices.

File Nos: 21-24: Blank applications for certification and Chapter 68: Savings and Trust Corporation of British Columbia Act.

II Organization

File Nos: 5-17 to 5-33: BC Teachers Union: organizing information including, correspondence, research, wage information, membership forms, memos, leaflets, voter's lists, contract drafts.

File Nos: 5-34 to 5-44: BC Teachers Union negotiations: contract proposals, collective agreements, etc.

File Nos: 7-4: correspondence re: branch certification.

File Nos: 9-1 to 9-46: Membership forms, correspondence, application forms, notes, legal, membership lists filed by branch - certified/lost.

File Nos: 8-(loose papers): miscellaneous items: bank acts, grievance procedures; Chapman Report, pamphlets.

File Nos: 8-1 to 8-14: Organizing activities: "Basic" re: exclusions and inclusions in bargaining units, filed by branches, certified/lost.

File Nos: 8-16 to 8-63: Organizing Committee papers by branch.

* Note box nos. 9 and 8 follow in this order.

File Nos: 11-1 to 11-28: Negotiations by bank: contract proposals, newspaper clippings, correspondence, legal documents, minutes of negotiation meetings, bulletins, progress reports, minutes and agendas, rules of order, press releases.

File Nos: 12-1 to 12-2, 12-16: Organizing Committee papers filed by bank.

File Nos: 14-1 to 14-6: Bank directories, notes and lists of names re: bank organizations, loose papers re: proceedings. Cases before CLRB, newsletters, leafletting, fliers.

File Nos: 15-36 to 15-40, 15-43 to 15-47, 15-49 to 15-53: Committee information, proposals for collective agreement; appointment of members to bargaining unit, contract proposals, special convention agenda, and minutes.

File Nos: 16-10, 16-12 to 16-13: BC Teachers Union: SORWUC vs. UBE re: organization of bank employees; correspondence, legal.

File Nos: 19-1 to 19-18: re: Organizing, application for membership; CLRB decisions re: other unions; organizing information re: charge institutions, by bank. General information to employees.

File Nos: 21-19: Organizing the Bank of BC.

III Administration

(i) Finance

File Nos: 2-1 to 2-3: Finance, fund raising re: the Muckamuck strike.

File Nos: 6-1 to 6-34: Receipts, deposit books, cheque stubs, payroll information, cancelled cheques, financial reports, bank statements, accounts, ledgers, and billing notices.

File Nos: 10-12: UBW deposit book- TD Bank.

File Nos: 18-8 to 18-16, 18-22 to 18-28: Financial statements, bills paid, financial journals, receipt books, ledgers, deposit books.

(ii) Research

File Nos: 4-16 to 4-21, 4-23: Press clippings and press releases, re: banking business, CLRB.

File Nos: 5-1 to 5-13: Reports, alphabetical by subject, ie. unemployment, racism.

File Nos: 7-6 to 7-25: Constitutions of other unions, research contracts, newspaper clippings, statistics, pamphlets, newsletters, reports.

File Nos: 10-6 to 10-13: Copies of fliers, pamphlets, The Defender, news clippings re: union activities, fliers, leaflets.

File Nos: 12-17: Photocopies of the Canadian Labour Relations Act

File Nos: 15-41, 15-44 to 15-45: Paste ups, bulletins, anti-union literature, AUCE and SORWUC newsletters.

File Nos: 16-16: Briefs, newspaper clippings, Human Rights Act re: working woman vs. Human Rights Commission.

File Nos: 16-18: correspondence, newspaper clippings, newsletters, notes re: Canadian unions.

File Nos: 17-1 to 17-17 consisting of:

File Nos: 17-1 to 17-6: Information for negotiations, pamphlets, contract proposals, model contracts, newspaper clippings.

File Nos: 17-7 to 17-16: Bank information, annual reports, financial statements, pamphlets, internal documents, evaluation sheets.

File Nos: 17-17: Publication, Canadian Banker.

File Nos: 18-1 to 18-3: Information on banks, newspaper clippings, press releases, personnel manual.

File Nos: 19-20 to 19-34: Pamphlets, fliers, re: women's health, rights, birth control; information briefs; women's issues, daycare.
File Nos: 19-25 includes legal agreement between SORWUC and the law firm of Rush and Clague.

File Nos: 20-4: CLRB reports.

File Nos: 20-6 to 20-8: Research on unfair labour practises, law reports, research material. File Nos: 20-8 includes examination of a legal case.

File Nos: 20-9: Labour Canada publications re: labour standards.

File Nos: 20-14 to 20-18: Publications re: women and labour, occupations, banks.

File Nos: 21-1 to 21-12: newspaper clippings, bank business reports; other unions and union business.

(iii) Public Relations

File Nos: 1-8: mailing lists, newsletters.

5-14: National newsletters.

7-5: Local 2 Newsletter.

11-29: UBW Newsletters and others.

12-3: Activities, press releases.

- 12-4: Miscellaneous papers, newsletters, re: women's issues.
- 12-7: Copies of weekly bulletin, newspaper clippings.
- 12-14: Epic and Union Sisters newsletters.
- 15-42: Drafts for leaflets.
- 15-43: Information brochures.
- 16-15: Working Women's Association newsletters.
- 18-17 to 18-21: Leaflets.
- 21-14: Leaflets.
- 21-15: Cut and paste for Monthly Statement and newsletter.
- 21-16: Research for newsletter.
- 21-17: Layout for newsletter.

(iv) General Correspondence

File Nos: 7-1 to 7-3, 7-26, 10-1 to 10-3, 12-11 to 12-12, 15-1 to 15-35.

(v) Executive Affairs

File Nos: 1-54 to 1-60: Minutes, finance, by-laws, correspondence, constitutional bulletin.

File Nos: 2-4: Office layout, list of executives.

File Nos: 5-15: Transfer of Local 1 to Local 4; minutes, memos, correspondence, newsletters, constitution.

File Nos: 10-4 to 10-5: Correspondence, reports, minutes, press releases, newspaper clippings, copies of Dimension magazine re: UBW legal activities.

File Nos: 11-31: Correspondence, poster, newspaper clipping re: Muckamuck strike.

File Nos: 12-5: Re: Rental of office at 402 West Pender.

File Nos: 12-6: Minutes of National Union Executive meetings, with correspondence and memos.

File Nos: 12-8: Minutes of Executive Meetings, notes on meetings.

File Nos: 12-10: BFW activities, correspondence, Local 1 newsletter, SORWUC newsletters.

File Nos: 12-15: Union Histories.

File Nos: 16-9: SORWUC Local 4 minutes.

File Nos: 20-10 to 20-11: Blank complaint forms, Department of Labour complaint registration forms, Labour Code of BC.

File Nos: 21-18: BFW activities: minutes of National Executive, brief histories.

File Nos: 21-21: Office safety vis-a-vis video terminals.