



## association of university and college employees

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A U C E   I N   A   N U T S H E L L

### HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

Local 1 of the Association of University and College Employees was certified in 1974 as the Union representing U.B.C.'s secretarial, clerical, and library workers, both on the Point Grey Campus and at V.G.H. Certification followed the organising efforts of a group of U.B.C. employees and a vote in which a large majority of workers voted for the union.

Subsequently locals of A.U.C.E. were formed at other post-secondary institutions in B.C., including S.F.U. and Capilano College.

The original group of U.B.C. employees had decided to create a new and independent organization rather than to go with an already established union. This was done because it was felt that traditional union structures often stifled democratic decision making by the membership and concentrate power in the hands of professional bureaucrats. A.U.C.E.'s philosophy is that all major decisions should be taken by membership meetings and should be filled by members elected from the workplace who return to their jobs once their term is over.

Women constitute 92% of the membership of Local 1. Therefore a major concern of ours has been the status of women in the workforce in general and at U.B.C. in particular. Most women are not in unions, and consequently earn only half to two-thirds as much as the average male worker. U.B.C. was no exception, and in fact at the time of our certification, wages were even lower than those paid in offices downtown. The \$250 across-the-board increase we won in our first contract did much to offset this, but still left A.U.C.E. (female-type) jobs significantly underpaid compared to male-type jobs on campus of similar skill and qualification levels. The roll-back of our wages under the AIB and subsequent small annual increases have been once again widening this gap. Our demand for equal pay for work of equal value is therefore more appropriate now than ever.

### STRUCTURE

Local 1 with its approximately 1500 members is divided into 9 divisions, each of which consists of a number of office areas and/or buildings. Each division holds its own meetings at which it informally discusses current union issues and elects a representative to the

Executive, the Grievance Committee (responsible for enforcing the Agreement), the Contract Committee (responsible for negotiations), the Communications Committee (responsible for publishing the Newsletter), and the Strike Committee (responsible for organizing any action the membership may decide to take during negotiations.)

The President, Treasurer, and other Executive table officers are elected by the entire membership through a mail referendum.

Every office area should elect a steward, whose duty it is to help keep members informed of union activities and to ensure that all members receive their rights under the Agreement.

Any member is eligible to run for any of these positions. You might consider doing so after you have been here for a few months. There are always vacant positions to be filled and you will probably find the experience interesting and rewarding.

General membership meetings are held monthly. Our Agreement with the University allows 9 meetings a year to be held from 12:30 to 2:30, with time off from work so that all members can attend.

#### COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

Most of the energy of the Union is expended in negotiating improvements in the Collective Agreement and in ensuring that this agreement be abided by. You may find many of the rights and benefits we enjoy under it are significantly better than those found in non-union or even other unionized offices. However, it must be remembered that these rights were not granted through the generosity of the University but rather because of an oftentimes difficult fight on our part. And preventing erosion of some of these rights, much less expanding them, remains a perennial struggle.

Remember too that the Collective Agreement is your document, and will only benefit you to the extent it is enforced. It is therefore in your interest to know what it contains, and if you feel any of its provisions are being ignored at your workplace, you should bring the matter to the attention of the steward or the Union Office. You should not be afraid to do so -- nobody can be penalized for asserting their rights under the Agreement.

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