

SFU 18 DEFENCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO 1980 AUCE PROVINCIAL CONVENTION

Submitted by: Bill Burgess

Press Statement, April 18, 1980.

Over a year ago, the RCMP violently dragged us off the legal picket line of a union defending basic rights.

We've been prosecuted on serious criminal charges at great public expense despite the demands to drop all the charges from the entire labour movement, students' and women's organizations and the BC NDP.

We've faced months of the harassment and intimidation of individual trials when one common trial was possible.

We've won against 27 of the original 36 charges against 18 picketers. Nine of us have been found guilty of obstructing a highway, three have been fined \$250, and the others have been given conditional discharges.

Our defence has cost over \$25,000 and we are still about \$10,000 in debt.

We consider that this has been a clear-cut attack on worker's right to strike.

Hundreds joined the AUCE 2 picket line to win a decent negotiated settlement; to fight to implement the Human Rights Act provision for equal pay for work of equal value; and, to defend high quality and accessible education.

Picketers acted upon their well established understanding of strikers' rights to picket the entrance to their employer's place of business. Without any warning or court order, they were violently removed on orders of RCMP Labour Liaison Committee officers.

Trial evidence has shown that the police strategy to deal with the mass picketing was to leave picketers in increasing personal jeopardy from reckless motorists. Police even selected motorists who were encouraged to try to "crash through the line", in hopes that picketers would "run for their lives".

The trial decisions have set unfavourable precedents for workers. Obstruction was defined as even hindering or slowing traffic. Individual picketers were found to be principals in any obstruction, whether or not they were personally involved or even on the picket line at that particular time. No warning that police considered picketers' actions to be illegal was considered necessary. No recognition of any rights except those of motorists was granted.

We feel that our defence campaign has been a success. We've been acquitted on most of the charges. Sentences for the guilty decisions have been mild. We've received support and donations for defence expenses from the trade union movement and students' and women's organizations. Our defence campaign has shown that it is imperative to defend ourselves against attacks on our rights. We have also shown that it is possible to do so.

NOTE: As of June 1, 1980 the SFU Defence Committee is about \$4,000 in debt.

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR SFU 18 DEFENCE COMMITTEE

March 31/80. To All Affiliates. From Dave McIntyre, Sec'y-Treasurer, B.C. Federation of Labour,

.... The trials of the 18 working people involved in that strike represent intervention by the courts into a labour dispute and a direct threat to the right of working people to establish and maintain effective picket lines.... Many affiliates have already made contributions to the "SFU 18 Defence Committee", however, the Officers are requesting that those affiliates who have not contributed, to do so as soon as possible.

On behalf of the 260,000 members of the BC Federation of Labour, I must strongly request that the charges against 18 persons arrested during the Association of University and College Employees Local 2 strike at Simon Fraser University be dropped, and no further action be taken against them.

Jim Kinnaird, President, BC Federation of Labour.

The Vancouver and District Labour Council is on public record, deploring the charges laid against the 18 persons attending a picket line at Simon Fraser University, during the legal strike being conducted against the University, by the Association of University and College Employees. The Vancouver and District Labour Council calls on the Attorney-General of British Columbia to order that all charges be dropped...

Vancouver and District Labour Council

...on behalf of the carpenters in the province ... we consider the RCMP actions at the picket line at SFU as an attack on the picket line by the police. We support your cause and the defense of the SFU 18.

William S. Zander, President, BC Provincial Council of Carpenters

At the July 19th meeting of the Hamilton and District Labour Council the delegates attending fully endorsed your appeal ...

W.C. Thompson, Sec'y., Hamilton & District Labour Council

The HEU herein adds the voices of our 22,000 members to the demand to drop charges against the 18 AUCE supporters arrested on March 22 picket line at SFU. Several of our members along with other trade unionists walked that same line for many hours. One of our number is counted among the 18 arrested.....We hope and expect the solidarity of all unions in these two demands: 1. Drop the charges against the SFU 18. 2. End police intervention in legal strikes.

J.D. Gerow, Sec'y.-Business Manager, Hospital Employees Union Local 180

March 22/79. The AUCE 2 Executive condemns the police provocation and brutality on the picket line today.

Executive AUCE 2

...., The dispute and the events on the picket line at SFU are issues that face all working people. The Vancouver Local of the CUPW at this time reiterates the demand made on April 26, 1979 by our National President J.C. Parrot that the charges against the 18 people arrested on the AUCE 2 picket line on March 22, 1979 be dropped. We fully support the SFU 18 and will do everything possible to help them defend and regain their rights.

Lloyd Ingram, President, Vancouver Local, CUPW

The Gay Alliance Toward Equality wholeheartedly supports those 18 persons arrested while picketing on the AUCE 2 line at Simon Fraser University. we call for all charges against the 18 to be immediately dropped.

Gary Bandiera, GATE

Recent events have raised again the issue of RCMP involvement in labour disputes. We are referring to the RCMP's excessive reaction to picketers at Simon Fraser University

Kerry K. Davis, Secretary-Treasurer, CAIMAW Local 12

January 14/79. To: A. Williams, Attorney-General, B.C.
On behalf of the 32,000 members of the British Columbia Student Federation, I most strongly request that the charges against the persons arrested on the picket line at Simon Fraser University, March 22, 1969, be dropped. These people, many of whom are students, were participating in a legal picket line. We feel this entire situation was unnecessary and we urge you to withdraw the criminal proceedings which are being taken against the SFU 18. Malcolm Elliott, Chairperson, B.C. Student Federation.

January 14/80. Press Release.

.....The Federation of Women, representing more than 40 women's groups throughout the province, demanded today, as they did at their recent Convention, that all charges laid against the SFU 18, on 22 March 1979, be dismissed.....

British Columbia Federation of Women.

January 14/80. Press Release. Text of letter to A. Williams, Attorney-Gen'l. On behalf of the 2860 members of the Provincial Association of University and College Employees, I reiterate our demand of the then Attorney-General Garde Gardom on the 20th June 1979 - the demand that the charges against all those arrested at the AUCE Local 2 picket line at Simon Fraser University be dropped. AUCE strongly opposes the use of the police and the courts for this type of intimidation and asks you to order that the remaining charges be dropped and that the probation orders be reversed.

Sheila N.L. Perret, Secretary-Treasurer, AUCE Provincial.

BE IT RESOLVED that the NDP demand of the Attorney-General of B.C. that all charges against the SFU 18 be dropped,

Emergency Resolution passed at BC NDP Annual Convention, September/79.

BE IT RESOLVED: 1. That the BC Federation of Labour again publicly demand the withdrawal of the charges against the SFU 18 who reinforced the AUCE picket line; and 2) That the BC Federation of Labour demonstrate publicly its support by sending a representative to all future trials of the SFU 18; and 3) That the B.C. Federation of Labour encourage financial assistance for the defence of the SFU 18 and call on all affiliates to join in this action. 4) Furthermore that the B.C. Federation of Labour participate in an open defence committee to defend the SFU 18.

Consolidated Resolution passed at BC Fed Annual Convention, Nov/79.
