

Affiliation Committee Meeting with SORWUC  
March 10, 1980

Jackie Ainsworth speaking for SORWUC

First off, we have discussed this at our national executive, and we wouldn't see AUCE joining us as an affiliation, but more as a merger, which is to say that SORWUC is very small, about 300 people, and if AUCE joins us it's a bit ridiculous to call it an affiliation, so we would call it rather a merging of our two unions, and would welcome a joint convention if AUCE wants to make such a decision to merge with SORWUC. We don't want to say to you--well, you could join us and this is who your national executive would be--but if AUCE were to decide to merge with us, then we would see holding a special national convention where both AUCE delegates and SORWUC delegates could be nominated for a national executive.

And otherwise, in terms of our structure, both the dues and the constitution, if AUCE disagrees or would like to see changes in our constitution as part of the merger, we are more than willing to discuss that. That's not to say we our constitution's democracy and autonomy, but we understand that AUCE's principles are really similar, so we're not expecting a drastic change in our constitution if you want to join, but anything around the structure in terms of how AUCE would fit into it, or around the dues, there are certain things we would really like to discuss with you, but it's not like "this is our dues, and this is what you would have to pay if you came in". There's certainly room for discussion.

The other thing, in terms of the SORWUC constitution, we have, unlike AUCE, provisions for a section, as well a local, and that would be a way that AUCE could merge with SORWUC. We have provisions for occupational groupings in SORWUC, mostly because of the diversification of our jurisdiction. Our jurisdiction is that we organize all unorganized industries, all workers in and around them, which means that we don't just have university and college employees, we don't just have daycare workers and don't just have bank workers. They can all be included under SORWUC's jurisdiction. We were really nervous that in a local in a town there would be a bunch of daycare workers, in small units, small offices, a couple of bank branches, in one local. But different groups, say day-care workers, their interests could get lost within the local, but it makes sense for them to be in that local because they're going to be working with the people in that town on various issues. So what we decided to do was to form were sections, which is how United Bank Workers, of which I'm a member, was formed, and is how AUCE could join SORWUC. A member could not only belong to SORWUC, the Vancouver local of SORWUC, but also to the United Bank Workers section, which is an occupational provincial grouping. In a way it's similar to your provincial organization, which is that it would be responsible for negotiations research and the educational requirements and research of the section.

So, if you're in a section of the local and you're also a member of the national union, what we do is we divide the dues, per capita dues from the local two ways, a half to the national and a half to the

provincial, because presumably the provincial would be taking over some of the educational duties and the research duties of the national for that specific occupation. If you're only a member of the local and the national, then your dues go directly to the national--your per capita dues.

The provincial has the constitutional right to elect somebody full-time; it's quite autonomous from the national union, quite similar, almost exactly to your provincial union, which we had in mind when we set up the section. We see SORWUC as quite a loose federation of independent unions, that is, the United Bank Workers section is quite autonomous and independent within SORWUC, as would a university and college employees section or a hospital employees section, as would the city hall employees section. What we wanted to do is try and maintain the structure of federated union locals.

Our primary objective is to organize unorganized workers and particularly in the private industry, and basically that means that our objective is to organize working women, because that's who's unorganized. To that end we've been doing a lot of leafletting downtown, and are just about to start on another beg leaflet campaign down, and we're holding again something we've done twice and have had a very good response, which is that the Y is going to be co-sponsoring a noon-hour series on lunch hours downtown, a brown-bag lunch meeting, and what we do is we give out about ten thousand leaflets over the series that will run about six weeks every Thursday afternoon, and we get from twenty to eighty office workers every lunch hour. We're going to do that again, starting the first of May.

The first one is "The Girls in the office", sexism in the workplace, the second one is the concern we can never forget, daycare or childcare, the third is "everything you ever wanted to know about your legal rights on the job", the fourth one is about women's federations and unions, and we really interested to see who comes to that one, the fifth one is "a union contract--what's the point?", and the sixth one is "organizing your office". Various people from downtown are going to be giving the seminars. We met lots of people who are organizers in SORWUC now through the old library series. It's really good the Y is co-sponsoring it; they've put in onto their bulletin for things to do on your lunch. That's one of the main things we're working on right now.

As well, we've been really concentrating on getting organizing workers into offices these days.

Last year the priority of the Local 1 convention was winning the Muckamuck strike. I'm not so sure we've won it but we haven't lost it. This year's priority is organizing offices downtown

\*Due to damage to the audio tape the transcript will continue from notes taken at the meeting.

We have applied to the Federal and Provincial Labour Relations Boards for certification of a telephone answering service, just to be sure we get certified (under one of them). A hearing has been scheduled on the the third decertification application for Muck-a-Muck for March 26, 27 & 28. Evidence of management harassing people to sign decertification letters will be led. A meeting between SORWUC, Rod Germaine, the Chairman of LRB, the employer and scabs was held on March 10, 1980. Ulryke Weissgerber will represent SORWUC at the hearing. Adams Laboratories decertification hearing will be held on 10, 11 and 12 March, but we don't expect a decision to be made before the Muck-a-Muck decertification hearing.

Local 3 has organised the OXFAM office workers - there are 24 people, 10 in Ontario. Because the employer voluntarily recognised the union, it was not necessary to apply for certification.

Star Rosenthal (SR) : What would AUCE contribute to SORWUC, and why would you want AUCE to affiliate with you?

JA: I would only consider it beneficial if both organisations are committed to organise unorganised workers. AUCE members would have a say on how SORWUC operates. SORWUC would benefit from having 2000 more working women in the union. We see AUCE as a sister union in the struggle to organise. Our constitution is similar to yours, and ensures local autonomy.

Sheila Perret (SP): How successful have your fundraising campaigns been?

JA: We survive financially on dues, personal pledges and donations. Our day to day expenses are covered by dues. That is to say, the union members support the day to day operation of the union. The United Bank Workers are not going to do their next drive in the same way. They will not be dependent on other unions for the money to finance the drive. Signing up the downtown core will be crucial. We have set up a shop steward structure which will operate a dues check-off before first contract is signed.

Sara Diamond (SD) : Would you see SORWUC and AUCE, if they were to merge, maintaining a perspective of trying to join the CLC?

JA: SORWUC did apply to the CLC some years ago, during the first bank organising drive. They gave us the same response as they gave you - that they would not consider us intact, that we occupied the jurisdiction of one of their affiliates, OTEU, CUPE - BUT they said they would be glad to have the United Bank Workers' Section, they didn't want the service and office workers or the daycare workers. And we told them that they would have to take all of us - we weren't going to split. They weren't interested in the Bank Workers, they've never seemed interested in bank workers historically - but they sure were interested AFTER we got the decision to organise banks branch by branch. That was a major decision that we got without any help from them - we did it on our own. Actually, we think they should still have us and our recommendation to affiliate as SORWUC National still stands - intact.

About CCU (Confederation of Canadian Unions)? We didn't want to affiliate with the CCU because our first commitment is to organise working women and the CCU suffers from a lack of female membership, at least then it did, there's male domination; their affiliates are mostly trades, which are occupied by men mostly - they wouldn't have too much in common with our members...

SORWUC: Did you know that a majority of women workers in B.C., the ones in unions are in independent unions! There's the B.C. Teachers' Federation, mostly women; the Registered Nurses Association of B.C.; the Vancouver, Municipal and Regional Employees Union (VMREU) - they broke away from CUPE; there's the Hospital Employees' Union - they broke away from CUPE, too; there's us; there's AUCE. That's interesting...there's also the Service Employees International. I think that the 'break-aways' are independently managing; it wasn't for feminist reasons that they broke away - but they're certainly doing O.K.

AUCE: If you had 150,000 members the CLC would want you...

SORWUC: When we met with Ed Johnson' of the CLC and he told us the same thing as they told you - that we had overlapping jurisdictions. But, he told us that when the United Steelworkers of America are organising office workers in Saskatchewan! It seems that whoever has the cards gets the jurisdiction...

AUCE: How's your 'Legal Department'?

SORWUC: Well, we have researchers, we have set up an apprentice programme so that everyone can learn. We represent ourselves at the Labour Relations Board - we take turns, and our record is pretty good. The only time we had a lawyer was for the 'branch-by-branch' decision. We have made applications on unfair labour practises, assault charges, criminal charges (related to the Muckamuck strike), the people who are involved learn to do it themselves and they're getting pretty experienced with the Labour Codes and how to ask questions. Often we will have a lawyer 'go over' our submissions, once they're prepared - but we do the work of the lawyers.

AUCE: What is the relationship between organising the unorganised and servicing the locals?

SORWUC: We feel very strongly about local autonomy, SORWUC is a bargaining unit organisation... We service our locals better than any other union; we lobby the government for the changes... It is important for the units to look after themselves - one good one is the Homemakers - it seems that the employer is out to get them...

AUCE: An explanation of your dues?

SORWUC: Well, Powell River for example, they were just setting up - so we try to help them out. They send us their dues and we have sent some back. Because they aren't on the Lower Mainland it is easier if they service themselves as much as possible - they get experience. (See the 12-page bulletin, dated February 1980 for the detailed breakdown of the dues structure, ed.)

SORWUC: We are committed to the idea of building our own union and we can do that best ourselves. Education? - this is a primary function of the National Executive. We are producing a Negotiating hand-book; we used some AUCE contract clauses in it - it's a collection of various 'musts' for negotiations; bad and good contract clauses; tips on research; resources; bargaining pointers - it's not finished yet. It also includes all the standard management arguments used in bargaining. Well, we also offer Shop Steward Seminars, for our in-town and out-of-town locals - we have travelling Shop Steward Seminars. We are really interested, we really see a need for educating unorganised workers. Our seminars are back-to-basics types and also for people with different experiences. We shared a seminar at Capilano College with AUCE a couple of years ago. Did you go?

AUCE: Yes, I participated; it was a good seminar. We're looking forward to your seminars at lunch time at the 'Y' in May. Good luck with them and thanks a lot for coming to see us. Thanks for your time, Jackie. END OF MEETING./see other report,