

AUCE/SORMUC COMMITTEE REPORT

At the third annual AUCE Convention this motion was passed -

That AUCE Provincial Executive establish a joint committee with SORMUC to organize unorganized workers and that this committee report to future conventions.

This committee was formed and represented by Anne Moody of Local 2, Nancy Wiggs of Local 1, Melody Rudd and Susanne Lester of the Provincial Executive and Ulryke Weissgerber, Heather MacNeill, Jackie Ainsworth and Pat Barter from SORMUC. In the past year this committee has taken the single direction of helping in the organization of Local #2 of SORMUC - the United Bank Workers. The two main areas of activity were publication and leafletting. Two publications of UNION WOMEN SPEAK were leafletted to bank employees and downtown office workers and sent to each AUCE member. The first issue had articles about women in the workforce, what is a union contract, what it is like to work in a union office and the history of AUCE and SORMUC. The second issue had articles on the bank workers organizing drive, employee benefits in the banks and in AUCE, leafletting and union democracy in SORMUC. This committee also did some work in organizing AUCE and SORMUC members to leaflet banks.

In this report we hope to outline first the nature of the bank workers drive, second the importance of this organizing and third recommendations for this committee.

On Tuesday June 14th the Canadian Labour Relations Board (CLRB) handed down their decision that banks may be organized branch by branch. This historic decision is a victory for the United Bank Workers. SORMUC has applied for union certification for 20 bank branches and 1 data center. As soon as the problems of inclusions and exclusions have been dealt with these units will receive automatic certification or a representation vote. There is presently a massive organizing campaign underway in the Province. They are setting up organizing centers in Kamloops, Port Alberni, Victoria, Nanaimo, Prince George, Kitimat/Terrace, Powell River, Sechelt Peninsula, the Kootenays and the Okanagan. They will have every bank in the Lower Mainland leafletted by the end of June. In terms of funds they have been receiving loans and donations from many unions. At the end of April letters were sent to many union locals asking for donations. From these letters alone they have received \$2700 in donations from unions such as the OTEU, IWA, CUPE, CUPW, UFAHU, IBEW, CPW, CALFAA, LCUC etc. As well as that the PPMC have loaned them \$3000 and the CBP Local 400 has loaned them \$1000. The BCGEU donated \$1000 and offered further help. AUCE Provincial has loaned \$2000 and will have donated \$1200 to help pay the salary of the UBW office person. As well \$200 was donated to SORMUC last spring and three AUCE locals have donated money. Loans and donations to date received by the United Bank Workers have totaled over \$10,000.

The bank workers are one of the largest groups of unorganized women workers in Canada. Their wages are disgustingly low, their benefits are minimal and any employees' control over their wages and working conditions is non-existent. Yet with over 100,000 workers in Canada and the awesome power of a strike in the finance industry bank workers could have one of the most powerful unions in the country.

AUCE made gains during an NDP government when other public sector unions also made gains. The general cry at that time was that public sector workers were behind. Some gain was made and now the government is working hard to keep the Public Sector in line. The actual fact is that technicians and maintenance workers in our units are still somewhat behind unionized rates in the private sector. Yet gains in the clerical sector put these workers ahead of the private sector and as there are virtually no large segments of unionized clerical workers their wages have consequently been held down. In negotiations we have been told - NO WAGE INCREASE! We are Market Leaders! - We can make no great monetary gains without improvements in the private sector. Just as the BCGEU is willing to offer help to the bank workers organization because it is in their best interests, we must do the same. We have learned our bargaining power is limited. The ultimate weapon - a strike - is used merely to balance the books and there is some suspicion that certain of our employers would encourage us to strike during the summer months.

The importance of the success of the Bank Workers Organizing drive to AUCE is immense. We have given large amounts of both time and money to aid this organizing drive and yet we have no direct say in how this aid is used. AUCE needs a structure to ensure that this aid is used in the best possible way consistent with the aims and principles of AUCE.

We therefore recommend -

1. That the AUCE/SORMUC Committee should include representatives from all locals of AUCE.
2. That activities of the AUCE members in this committee be approved by the Provincial Executive and reported in the Provincial Newsletter.
3. That AUCE members continue to work with SORMUC members to organize unorganized workers and promote union democracy.
4. That this committee discuss the possibilities of merger, affiliation or other formal joint structures with SORMUC such that AUCE members may have more direct input and control in the organization of unorganized workers by this committee.
5. That the AUCE/SORMUC Committee be Authorized to organize a joint stewards seminar and other joint educational activities.