

## AUCE LOCAL 6 - ANNUAL REPORT 1979

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An important stage in the process of certification was a hearing before the Labour Relations Board, applied for by the Local, to define our bargaining unit. The union had done considerable research to produce a reasonable definition, but the university administration disputed it, seeking to include additional categories. The hearing was a very legalistic procedure lasting 5 days. The union was represented by 3 of its own members - Michele Pujol, Suzanne Marria and Vinny Mohr, who had a much harder time adjusting to the legalese than did the university's representative - lawyer Tom Roper. The union's team did a great job, however, and their definition of the bargaining unit was accepted, with the addition of only one group of employees. The basis for the Board's ruling was that all teaching support staff employed on four month contracts should be included in the bargaining unit.

In November when the certification vote was finally held, we won it by a small margin. In January negotiations with the administration for a collective agreement began, and have been progressing slowly. Our first achievement was to get an office for the union - important, as we now have a concrete presence on campus. No initialling has taken place beyond procedural items, as the administration refuses to initial any articles until they have seen the whole contract. About half the contract has been discussed, and progress has been made towards agreeing on some items.

Writing the contract has been an important aspect of the union's activity in the last year. A contract committee was struck in June 1978, and has been at work ever since. The first stage was to obtain and study contracts from other unions - including other teaching support staff unions, but much of the contract had to be written from scratch, as our situation is unique, particularly with respect to teaching assistants, who have dual roles as students and teachers. A draft of the contract is now complete, but revising and editing continues.

The university administration's attempts to suppress unionization have resulted in a number of unfair labour practices being filed with the LRB. Although in September 1978 we were under a freeze, in terms of Section 51 of the B.C. Labour Code, the university introduced a number of changes in the terms and conditions of our employment. A voluntary Teaching Assistant Training programme, in which new T.A.s could participate, with

pay, was to be made compulsory for new T.A.s, and unpaid, and finally was dropped altogether. A letter from the Vice-President Academic was sent to all members of the bargaining unit stating that no annual increase could be given on account of the freeze - which was not true. Neither the union nor the LRB would have refused permission to implement a wage increase. The university also introduced changes to the strike policy. This complaint was resolved in discussions between the Industrial Relations Officer, the Union and the Administration, when the Administration agreed to clarify the policy with respect to Teaching Support Staff, and not to change existing policy. Other complaints were turned down by the LRB. The last complaint submitted by the Union stated that in failing to implement the 4% annual increase, which was customarily awarded to Teaching support staff in September, the university was in fact changing the terms and conditions of employment. A similar complaint was successful in Ontario last year. This complaint is still before the Labour Relations Board.

The most important work of the union remains organising the bargaining unit. After Local 2's strike we are faced with some reluctance and hesistancy from non-union members of the unit, but this is really only a temporary reaction to a rather difficult situation. We are confident that by the Fall 1979 we shall not only have our first contract, but shall have achieved a substantial presence within the university community. Organising has been assisted by a number of factors in the past year. The university administration appointed a Committee to review operations of the university, which recommended stringent cutbacks to the tutorial system - which caused concern to all teaching support staff. Irregular hiring practices in some departments caused grievances among employees, whcih were valuable examples of the need for a union. Being certified and having a contract under negotiation has also been useful in demonstrating the value of unionization. Organizing is important - the union is growing in strength, but still has battles to be fought.

The teaching support staff at UBC have been represented by an Association for the last three years. As this was not succeeding in achieving changes, they decided this year to unionize. Local 6 has tried to give them assistance in their attempt, and organized a workshop with them, and discussed organising, legal procedure for unionizing, and encouraged them to consider becoming a local of AUCE. However, as they felt the need to be supported by a large organisation, and to have a paid business agent, they decided to join CUPE.

A crucial issue for the Local was Local 2's strike. At an emergency meeting of the membership, the decision to respect picket lines was taken by a majority of those present. Many members of the union did respect the lines, but others felt, because of financial difficulties, that they could not do so. The average wage of teaching support staff is about \$500 a month. Two members of Local 6 were arrested on the picket lines, and await trial. The strike was a very important issue, as it forced the Local to face its position as a trade union. Although some members resigned, and the opposition to the union grew, and became more vocal and more organised, overall the union gained strength. The number of active members swelled considerably and membership meetings have been better attended.

During the past year Local 6 by-laws have been amended - changing the name to include Teaching Support Staff Union; changing the time for elections to January; changing the base for dues to 1% of wage; and changing the structure of the executive, to reflect the needs of the union better.

Our present membership is about 260 - the size of the bargaining unit varies from semester to semester, between 400 and 500 members. Our current executive is: President: Peter Lane; Secretary: Cristine Russell; Grievance Officer (Chief Steward): Bill Burgess; Information Officer: John Rowell; Treasurer: Vic Verigen; Staff Coordinator: Evelyn Schimmel; Provincial Representatives: Susan Knutson & Mary Mabin; Trustees: Michael Ewen & Alison Hopwood.

Finally - throughout its organisation and certification drive TSSU has received invaluable assistance from the Provincial Association, and other Locals of AUCE. We could not have made it without financial support in both grants and loans, and we would like to thank every member of AUCE for their help.

Mary Mabin for Local 6 Executive.  
May 14, 1979.

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*Mary Mabin  
for*

AUCE LOCAL 6 EXECUTIVE

*May 14/79*