

April 14, 1976

Lenore Weiss
Union W.A.G.E.
4129A Penniman Court
Oakland, California
U.S.A. 94619

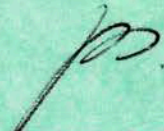
Dear Lenore,

I've retyped and edited your copy of the conference tape. I was amazed at how incoherent the whole thing was - I hope people were able to understand me when I was speaking! I enlarged on a couple of points and clarified where you had question marks. I hope it's ok.

When the pamphlet is finished, would you please send 15 copies here. Also would you please quote us the price on 100 copies and on 1,200 copies (in case we want to distribute it to shop stewards or the membership at large).

I will be leaving here at the end of this month, so I'd appreciate you forwarding a copy to my home address: [REDACTED], Vancouver, B.C.

Sincerely,



Peggy Smith
Union Organizer

UNION W.A.G.E. CONFERENCE
PEGGY SMITH

I started working at the University of British Columbia in December '73, about a month before the union applied for certification. I spent my first three months on campus organizing - talking to people about the need for a union. People voiced reservations about joining a Union: they wouldn't be represented; Unions are greedy; their conditions weren't bad enough to warrant a union; they were happy as they were. I was constantly talking to people. It wasn't just a matter of seeing someone once. I had daily contact with people, visiting different offices. We had frequent meetings. After the initial period of suspicion, people started talking about their problems at work. They weren't that happy with their working conditions. There were lots of problems, and it was in discussing possible solutions to these problems that the need for a union became apparent.

AUCE was certified in April 1974. I was elected to the contract committee to negotiate our first collective agreement.

I should explain our decision-making structure. The campus is divided into ten divisions that represent about 100 people each. Each division carries on its own discussion of issues and makes decisions as to policy. They then bring their decisions to general membership meetings to be voted on by the membership at large. It was through this process that we decided on issues to fight for in our first contract. It was up to the contract committee to see that these policies got implemented.

The contract committee was thirteen people - one member from each division plus ex officio members of the Executive. We relied primarily on our own resources throughout negotiations. We didn't have lawyers or

paid representatives. None of us had had previous union experience. We faced many problems; fear of speaking up, intimidation by male management, the feeling of isolation being stuck in a room with the administration away from our co-workers, and each of us personally at times doubting our ability to see it through. But we collectively held on to the belief that we were capable of representing ourselves, we maintained steady contact with our co-workers through numerous phone calls and regular meetings, and we established contact with other unions in the city who were willing to share their knowledge and skills. We managed to get a pretty good contract together.

The primary issue in our first contract was wages. The base rate at UBC was \$408 a month. We asked for a \$250 across-the-board increase. We asked for an across-the-board, rather than percentage, increase to minimize the difference between lower and higher paid workers. With percentage increases the people at the top of the wage scale get more of an increase than workers on the lower end. But it is the lower paid workers who have the greater need and should be getting higher wages. We also felt this would help prevent the resentment that occurs when there are pay differences among people who do similar work. We asked for \$250 to lessen the disparity between female and male-typed jobs. We have one particular example that we use to show this disparity between male and female workers on campus. An Assistant Technician Trainee is required to have a Grade 8 education, no previous experience, and training is provided on the job. Salary: \$950 a month. A Clerk I, the base position in our union, is required to have high school graduation, business training, some knowledge of office procedures and typing of 40 w.p.m. Salary: \$633. That's a pay

difference of over \$300 between clerical work (traditionally female-typed) and "technical" work (traditionally male-typed), which doesn't even require the same level of qualifications or skills.

Negotiations took place from May to September 1974. After months of negotiations, a period of mediation (appointment of an independent arbitrator by the Department of Labour), and the threat of a strike, we finally signed our first collective agreement.

Some of the highlights of this first contract were:

- temporary employees received, on a pro rata basis, all benefits of the contract, except maternity leave
- temporary employees, after a three month period, became continuing part-time or full-time
- a union shop, which meant that everyone hired automatically became a member of the Union
- the right to leaves of absence, and a special short-term leave of absence to do union work
- the right for the union organizer (our one full-time paid person) and shop stewards to take time off work to represent people and contact people regarding union business.
- discrimination clauses that recognized the fact that women's work had been traditionally undervalued, and that every effort would be made to equalize wages
- a paid two-hour lunch once every two months for union meetings
- the right to have time off to take one course per year, paid by the University on successful completion of the course
- a 35-hour, flexible work week, which allowed people to choose to work a 4-day week
- medical and dental plans, 50% paid by the University
- a grievance procedure that allowed us to settle grievances within a 23-day period
- a \$225 across-the-board monthly increase
- maternity leave with full pay for 15 weeks, plus the right to a further 3 months unpaid leave