

REPORT TO THE AUCE PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE RE SORWUC MEETING

At the Provincial Executive Meeting on September 15th we met with members of the SORWUC Executives - SORWUC National, SORWUC Local 1 and the United Bank-Workers. Earlier on in the day the AUCE Provincial Executive had formulated a proposed agenda for our afternoon meeting with SORWUC. This was done in order to best utilise the little time available considering the length of the Regular agenda, and in order that we might be well prepared with concrete motions and suggestions. The agenda was as follows:

1. Copier Bill
2. \$10,000 Loan outstanding
3. Library
4. SORWUC use of AUCE office & use of the library
5. AUCE-SORWUC use of the SORWUC workroom
6. AUCE use of SORWUC postage meter
7. Communication Improvement
8. Seminars

Reflecting the outstanding copier bills ( UBW owing \$812.29 & SORWUC Local 1 owing \$296.08) the following motions were passed at the AUCE meeting before SORWUC arrived:

MOTION: That AUCE Provincial ask the United Bank Workers for a minimum of \$10.00 per month to pay off the copier bill.  
CARRIED Moved by Carol McQuarrie Seconded by: Hester Vair

MOTION: That AUCE Provincial ask SORWUC #1 for a minimum of \$10.00 per month to pay off the copier bill.  
CARRIED Moved by Seconded by:

Regarding the \$10,000 Loan it was fully realised the extent to which SORWUC is in debt; the intent of bringing this item up was that the AUCE Convention had directed the Provincial Executive to discuss the matter with SORWUC without a specific time or payment plan intended.

Regarding the library the following motion was passed after discussing the amount of work which has to be done to make the Library useable for any/all members:

MOTION: That AUCE Provincial give SORWUC unlimited access to AUCE Library materials with the minimum of one day per month to be worked on organising and maintaining the library by a SORWUC member, in exchange for this use.  
CARRIED Moved by Carol McQuarrie Seconded: Ginny Gibberd

Regarding the SORWUC use of the the AUCE office and equipment it was agreed that we would discuss this with SORWUC, hear their proposals, discuss it either later today after meeting with them, or at our next meeting and get back to them later. We were reminded that there is a motion on record that limits the use of the self-correcting typewriter to AUCE members and the use of the new Gestetner equipment is limited as follows:

MOTION: That the Gestetner duplicator and the stencil maker are restricted to AUCE union business

Moved by: Sheila Perret Seconded by: Nancy Wiggs

with the amendment as follows:

Except in special circumstances and with the consent of three (3) members of the AUCE Provincial Executive, i.e. the table officers if they can be reached.

CARRIED: Moved by: Suzanne Marria Seconded by: Nancy Wiggs

The meeting transpired as follows:

Joan Wood was in the Chair and ruled that AUCE members would vote on the issues that came up; the SORWUC executive members were essentially guests at the AUCE meeting. Present from SORWUC were Susan Margaret, Marnie Maser, Charlene Avery-Girard, Jean Rands, Sheree Butt, Pat Barter, Sandra Currie, Jenny, Honey Maser, Linda Read, Jacquie Ainsworth, others whose names not on tape - Executive reps from SORWUC National, SORWUC Local 1, and the United Bank Workers section (UBW). We went through the items on the agenda after a few additions from SORWUC (communications, Workroom). Jacquie Ainsworth, UBW, responded to the request for \$10 per month for the copier bill by saying that UBW had constant obligations they were committed to making - the rent, the phone and the copier bill & that \$10 per month was O.K., they usually tried to pay more and if they can come up with more money they will try to pay more. She said that at that time there was \$30 left over this month after paying those three commitments. For SORWUC, Jean Rands, National Treasurer responded by saying that the SORWUC #1 bill can be paid at \$10 per month and that of course that would be a minimum.

Regarding the \$10,000 loan, it was asked of SORWUC what proposal they felt could be made to pay the bill. It was reported that the decertification left them \$65,000 dollars in debt, including \$30,000 in lawyers bills. They are not prepared to pay back the money until 'we are much stronger, until we are organised in the banks', and that 'the dues income only pays for monthly expenses'. They do not have the funds to pay the full salary to the full-time office worker.

The Library proposal met with their approval and they were glad that a concrete plan was evolving in order to make the Library more accessible to SORWUC and AUCE members'.

SORWUC was informed about the AUCE decisions regarding the use of the self-correcting typewriter and the Gestetner equipment; they did not protest this decision at the time. About the use of the AUCE office it was suggested that the room booking form be posted again so that use of the room could be planned in advance. It was stated by AUCE that use of the #901 meeting space would be on an AUCE-first basis and thereafter on a first-come, first-served basis. There was no further discussion about the use of the AUCE meeting room except that it was to be used by SORWUC, too.

About the SORWUC postage meter, it was stated by SORWUC that there was no problem with AUCE's use of the meter. Sheila stated that the postage was paid for when the balance owing reached \$25.00 or when the end of the month arrived - whichever came first. SORWUC agreed that this was a suitable arrangement with no problems.

When the subject of communications came up, Jacquie spoke about how communications were vital to the existence of the two unions & that we needed to know exactly what was going on in each others' locals in order to best be able to support each other. It was agreed that the two unions would provide the other with regular reports to be published in the respective newsletters. Also agreed was the idea that SORWUC go to AUCE Local meetings if possible in order to generate local support; AUCE Provincial would encourage the Locals to invite SORWUC speakers to the general membership meetings. Also agreed upon was the idea of joint executive meetings; we were reminded of the now-defunct AUCE/SORWUC committee and those present agreed a revival of some sort would be beneficial. A motion followed:

MOTION: That AUCE and SORWUC executives meet jointly on a regular basis, preferably monthly.

CARRIED Moved by: Hester Vair Seconded by: Sheila Perret

We never discussed the last item on the agenda - Seminars.

Alot had been discussed, the meeting ran over the time allotted and unfortunately there was no time for a general open discussion which might have resolved the feelings that emerged after the meeting.

The following Sunday night, September 16th, Sheila Perret received a phone call from Melody Rudd, a member of Local 2, past-President of AUCE Provincial, and past-Secretary-Treasurer of AUCE Provincial (1977-'78 & 1976-'77 respectively). She wanted to know if it were true that:

1. AUCE had in fact denied use of the self-correcting typewriter to SORWUC & was such a motion on the AUCE books?
2. AUCE had denied use of the Gestetner equipment to SORWUC
3. AUCE had asked for the minimum of \$10 per month from each SORWUC #1 & UBW for the copier
4. AUCE had 'told' SORWUC to go to AUCE Local meetings to get support from the AUCE membership.
5. AUCE had told SORWUC they couldn't use the Office/Library unless SORWUC put in the required one day per month working on organising the Library.
6. we had not at any time discussed 'organising the unorganised' or AUCE support on the Muckamuck picket line, or ways in which AUCE could support SORWUC's struggles.

Melody stated that she felt that AUCE/SORWUC relations were in serious shape and that something immediate should be done, if at all possible, in order to repair the bad feelings SORWUC was experiencing as a result of the joing meeting. She suggested that perhaps all the rules about the equipment could only have come about because of some suggestion I (Sheila Perret) had made to the Provincial Executive, that the membership was already angry about the \$10,000 loan not

being paid back and that perhaps if the Provincial Executive heard 'bad things' about SORWUC from me, they might jump at the chance to further persecute SORWUC by denying the simplest of supports, the unlimited use of AUCE resources and equipment and time spent on the Muckamuck picket line. She stated that she felt that it was my ultimate responsibility, as the sole AUCE office worker, as the person most in contact with SORWUC, to patch up the terrible feelings between the two unions and it should take the form of a meeting, as soon as possible. My response to Melody was that, Yes, 1, 2 & 3 were true. As regards 4, it was suggested to SORWUC that one way of making themselves visible would be by making visits to the AUCE locals and keeping the AUCE membership informed about and assured that SORWUC, although they had their struggles, they had successes, too, and, that by visiting the locals it might be one way of eliciting financial support.. As regards 5, Melody was told that the one day per month was not intended to be used as leverage, that it would be great if one of the SORWUC members could spend the time filing and carding their periodicals and books, and it would be another was of furthering contact between the AUCE Office worker, myself, and the SORWUC Office Workers. In no way was that suggestion considered conditional.

Regarding any discussion about/<sup>(6)</sup>organising the unorganised, Melody was told that, No, no such discussion had taken place and that one possible reason was the time constraints - AUCE had a lengthy agenda to clear within the following couple of hours and items were not even half dealt with.

The conversation ended by Melody stating that she felt that 'petty things such as office equipment' were discussed instead of important issues like the organising work that had to be done. I responded by saying that it was not our feeling that use of the office/library/equipment was in any way petty; that the purchase of the equipment came after alot of serious consideration which included looking at how much the use of SORWUC's tempermental, unreliable and worn-out equipment was costing AUCE, and, that in no way did AUCE want to wear out the SORWUC equipment for them to not be able to rely on it. Melody seemed to feel that it was wrong of AUCE to not allow SORWUC the use of the equipment, that that was 'like telling the poor they had to sleep under bridges' which carried the feeling that 'their (SORWUC's) equipment was not good enough for us, and our equipment was too good for them to use'. We signed-off by me saying that I would try to reach some of the SORWUC members and get a personal account/feeling from them, and that I would discuss Melody's concerns with the AUCE Table Officers - which I did. I set up a meeting for the Tuesday evening, September 18th. It was arranged that the AUCE Table Officers would meet with available SORWUC Executive members and we would try and 'iron out' some of the bad feelings and misunderstandings. We met after work. Those in attendance at the meeting, which took place in the #901 office, were

Jacquie Ainsworth, Susan Margaret, Jean Rands, Muggs Sigeregeurison, Marnie Maser, Honey Maser from SORWUC, Sheila Perret, Joan Wood, Hester Vair and Suzanne Marria from AUCE Provincial, and Melody Rudd.

Jacquie started off, after we opened the meeting, by stating that after the joint meeting SORWUC had drafted a letter to be sent to each of the AUCE Provincial Executive members. She stated for SORWUC that they felt the procedure of the Saturday meeting to be unfair, that it was their understanding that it was to be a 'joint' meeting, but they were surprised to be met with an agenda already drawn up without taking SORWUC into consideration, and they were not pleased with the fact that SORWUC had no vote at the meeting. About the copier bill, she said that they felt it patronising to be asked for \$10 per month when lately they had been able to pay \$250 towards the total \$812. She said that they were surprised to see the \$10,000 Loan on the agenda; and it was especially unfortunate that AUCE should want to talk to them about the loan when they had just received a letter from their lawyer, Ian Donald, telling them that he felt they were doing important work in the labour movement, and that he was 'writing off' the \$30,000 outstanding debt owing to him.

Susan Margaret then spoke and said that she felt it unfair of AUCE to say that the use of the AUCE library would be in exchange for the one day per month worked by a SORWUC member, unfair because it sounded unflexible to them, and because some of the material in the library belonged to SORWUC. The answer to that was that it was not conditional, that it was one way of setting up a structure for getting the Library organised, an impetus to get the work done, and that the work that had to be done did indeed involve sorting, carding, indexing and filing SORWUC material as well as AUCE material. Also, regarding the use of the office equipment, SORWUC was under the impression that all AUCE/SORWUC equipment was to be used on a collective basis, that SORWUC decided to buy the Gestefax stencil maker second-hand, and AUCE would use it on a cost-recovery basis, because SORWUC could not afford it if AUCE wasn't using it. Also at issue was the idea that AUCE would use the SORWUC workroom upstairs and SORWUC would have use of the meeting room/library at #901. They expressed shock at the idea 'you can use this, you can't use this, you might be able to use this but we have priority'. It was stated that communications were obviously bad, that the two unions haven't been keeping in touch, and that a system should be set up that would enable us to meet more regularly, AUCE agreed. SORWUC reps 'felt that they were called to task, which was surprising to them because 'we felt we were your Sisters'.

Hester Vair responded to some of this by stating that for AUCE to allow collective use of the AUCE equipment could only come with membership approval, that AUCE members would be most upset to hear the amount of the copier bill as well as AUCE

Provincial Executive allowing unlimited use of the office equipment.

Melody Rudd then spoke of how she saw the most important task to be done was to organise the unorganised, and that the Banks were the places that the job had to be done.

Hester spoke of how the membership has become somewhat insular, that because they have no way of hearing about SORWUC and how it's doing they can't very well support SORWUC struggles.

Suzanne Marria referred to the Saturday meeting. She stated that she felt we, AUCE, deserved a certain amount of criticism, that it was not a good meeting, not a good format. Yet we do not have much difference in opinion in the importance of organising the unorganised, and, one of our most important tasks right now is to make the conditions better for those who work. She also stated that the membership, because of a lack of information tended to see the problems SORWUC has as only financial. She expressed an interest in more meetings such as this one so we can figure out a way to get the debate going & keep it going in a supportive fashion.

Joan Wood spoke of the importance of working conditions, the importance of the working conditions of the AUCE Provincial office worker while assuring SORWUC that they certainly have the philosophical support. One way of increasing and expanding on the AUCE support for SORWUC has to be by getting the information back to the membership about what SORWUC is doing.

Back on the topic of the Library, Hester reminded the meeting that the Library (901) must get arranged, we have the budget to expand the Library but must rely on volunteers to organise it because the dues referendum didn't pass. Jean Rands said it seemed to her that there didn't seem to be any recognition of the fact that SORWUC material was in #901 as well, and that a year ago, Cathy Pike a former AUCE #2 member and then a SORWUC member offered her time to assist Sheila with the Library.

Muggs, said that SORWUC's decreasing use of #901 was because they had a baby to look after upstairs while her mother was working part-time and they couldn't often leave her to come downstairs for coffee and that they stopped using the room. She also said the it felt pretty uncomfortable and formal to use 901 because there seemed to be regulations about it's use.

Jean spoke about the result AUCE 's purchase of new duplicating equipment had on the information exchange. Also, she remarked about the lack of use the upstairs work-room was getting because we weren't using the equipment. Sheila responded by saying that we didn't understand that we were under any obligation to use the work-room, but rather felt a new machine was important for several reasons:

1. Since SORWUC's Gestetner often broke down because it's an old machine it meant it was unreliable for AUCE use because it literally drank ink and ate paper, almost as much paper as it would successfully print, and although there was now a new service contract on the machinery which cut down on the extra material and time expense, it didn't seem fair to
2. Wear out the machine for SORWUC since they had less financial resources, 7/...

for it's upkeep and/or replacement.

Jacque then spoke of how she saw it as AUCE <sup>Executive's</sup> responsibility to circumvent AUCE membership attacks on SORWUC, and at every AUCE Convention but the last one in June 1979 there was always a discussion about organising the unorganised. She stated that as feminists it is AUCE's and SORWUC's responsibility to get the membership to feel the importance of this organisation. Support for the Muckamuck picket line was mentioned as one way of getting AUCE members to support SORWUC and feminist aims. There was a lot of discussion about how extending the use of AUCE's equipment to SORWUC made for constant interruptions for the AUCE Office worker, Sheila Perret. This was not resolved.

So, the conversation actually took place over one and a half hours; at the end of it everyone was too exhausted to discuss specific ways of supporting each other, other than to acknowledge that another discussion should be held to get this clear.

Sheila stated that at the next joint meeting she would outline the extent to which she felt she could share various AUCE equipment and resources, and that if it did not meet total acceptance by SORWUC perhaps the situation could be reviewed after a couple of months time, but that in order to function effectively in the job which had particular priorities for the AUCE membership it might be necessary to limit the physical machine support.

Susan Margaret reminded us of the Working Women Unite leaflet that was distributed to 10,000 women in downtown offices, the leaflet explained the importance of the AUCE #2 strike and how an adverse settlement could affect Vancouver office workers - that it was this particular kind of action that enabled SORWUC to support AUCE. We adjourned the meeting with a commitment to meet again to discuss the specifics of how SORWUC could support AUCE, and how AUCE could support SORWUC.

The AUCE Table Officers met a few weeks later and discussed a possible meeting time for another joint meeting with SORWUC. Because of our conflicting schedules vis à vis work, school, eating and sleeping it was decided that 5:30 p.m. on Friday October 19 was the only available chunk of time before the AUCE Provincial Executive meeting, that we hoped to get back to the Provincial with some news/development on AUCE/SORWUC relations. However the time was not at all suitable to SORWUC so the time was scrapped with the intention of having AUCE propose 2 or 3 possible times for SORWUC and hoping they could make it to one time.

It is obvious that there are many assumptions that have been made about the other union by both SORWUC and AUCE. There are a lot of hurt feelings as a result of some misunderstandings about our expectations of one another. At one point in the conversation Muggs said 'Well, it's just obvious that you don't want us in your office at all and that we aren't welcome down here, it feels uncomfortable to even get the milk from the 'frig'.

We have a lot of work to do to solidify the relationship between these sister unions - how to go about that will require serious and thoughtful consideration & discussion.