

S.F.U. 18 Defense Committee,
c/o A.U.C.E. Provincial
Suite 901
207 W. Hastings,
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1J8
29 May, 1979

Dear Brothers and Sisters

On 22 March, 1979, 18 persons were arrested on the picket line of the Association of University and College Employees, Local 2 (AUCE 2) at Simon Fraser University (SFU). This letter is written to request your support for their defense campaign.

AUCE 2 is the bargaining unit for 650 clerical and technical workers at Simon Fraser University. The union, 80% of whose members are women, won important gains for its membership when it was certified in 1974. The principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" was put into play at that time. However, with the expiration of its third contract on March 31, 1978, AUCE 2 was consistently subjected to the hardline stance of an employer determined to reverse those gains. Initially the employer offered only one-time bonuses, and later offered percentage increases far below the rate rate of inflation.

After months of bargaining, AUCE 2 began a series of rotating strikes in December, 1978. In January 1979, the SFU Board of Governors stated that its final offer was 6% over a two year contract. When added onto the AIB-limited increases of the previous two years, this offer amounts to a cut in real wages of over 20%.

On March 8, 1979, AUCE 2 voted to go on a full-scale strike when the University escalated selective lockouts. A picket line was set up at the entrance to the university and remained in place until April 20. At the end of March, the university succeeded in obtaining a severe court injunction against AUCE 2 which limited the number of picketers to 10. AUCE 2 then continued to press for a settlement by picketing allies of the University, leafleting, and publicity actions. An Industrial Inquiry Commission, whose decision will be binding, has now been appointed by the Minister of Labour, and AUCE 2 has returned to work.

Throughout negotiations, the SFU administration showed bad faith and attempted to break AUCE 2. For example, the administration repeatedly made the offer of CONDITIONAL binding arbitration, a major condition being comparability with UNORGANIZED clerical workers in the private sector (selected by the employer); unfortunately, the latter are traditionally low paid, and comparison was really put forth for the purpose of reducing unionized wages. The fact that members of the SFU Board of Governors represent big business is important here. Board members such as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who are President and Vice-President of the anti-union Employers Council of B. C., clearly manipulated the dispute in the interests of employers and not those of the University community.

After the full-scale strike began on March 8, 1979, the administration took the view that the operation of the campus would be cut back in some areas but that all classes would continue. In some cases, scabs were hired to do the work of AUCE 2 members; in other cases, people

volunteered. Scabbing against the food service workers, B. C. Hydro bus drivers, teaching assistants, and others who respected the picket line was also common.

As well, students who respected the picket line were threatened with academic penalties; professors who held classes off campus were warned that these were considered "unauthorized". The administration thereby encouraged and coerced people to degrade themselves and break the strike by crossing the AUCE 2 picket line. The administration virtually ignored the plight of students who felt that the picket line must be respected, especially those who were also members of trade unions.

It is in this context that the events of March 22, 1979 should be viewed. On that date, a rally at the picket line led to approximately two hundred supporters joining to strengthen the line. The picketing was completely peaceful and legal; at no time did the R. C. M. P. tell the picketers that they were committing an offence or require them to disperse.

However, after about three hours, the police, including members of the R.C.M.P. Security Service's "Ad Hoc Labour Liaison Committee", made a violent attack on the picket line and arrested 18 of the picketers.

Fourteen of those arrested are or have been members of trade unions, including the Construction and General Labourers Union; the Hospital Employees Union; the Service, Office, and Retail Workers Union of Canada; the International Steelworkers of America; the Association of University and College Employees; the Hotel, Restaurant, and Culinary Employees and Bartenders Union; the International Woodworkers of America; the B. C.

Government Employees Union; the Canadian Paperworkers Union; the International Association of Bridge, Structural, and Ornamental Iron Workers; the Canadian Union of Public Employees; and the Carpenters and Joiners United Brotherhood of America. Twelve of those fourteen were also students at the time of the arrests.

Organization to defend the 18 persons arrested began immediately after the police attack. The SFU 18 Defense Committee, composed of those arrested and supporters, was set up shortly after and began to lobby for the dropping of the charges and the raising of defense funds. The charge laid at the time of the arrests was "obstruction of a peace officer in the execution of his duty". A month later a second charge, "blocking a highway", was added.

The Crown is proceeding with the charges against 17 of the 18 persons originally detained. Costly and time-consuming individual trials, rather than a more sensible common trial, have now been set, the first occurring at [REDACTED] (in courtroom #3, the Provincial Courthouse, 6263 Gilpin St., Burnaby). Two experienced trade union lawyers have been retained by those arrested.

The SFU 18 Defense Committee is currently continuing and expanding its campaign to have the charges dropped: a petition is being circulated (copies enclosed), "Drop the SFU 18 charges" buttons are being sold, representatives from the committee are speaking at meetings, and printed information regarding the arrests is being disseminated. The demand that

the charges be dropped has been endorsed by the individuals and organizations on the attached sheet.

Because the legal defence will be expensive if the trials proceed, the Defense Committee is asking the labour movement for its financial support. Support for the committee must be strong to provide a good defense for the persons arrested, and generally to protect the sanctity of the picket line against police attacks. Let us not forget that strike-breaking by the R. C. M. P. is nothing new and must be vigilantly guarded against.

The Defence Committee kindly requests that you donate to the Defence Fund. We would also appreciate any assistance in obtaining the support of others. A petition, requesting that the charges against the 18 arrested be dropped, is enclosed. Please, ask your members and friends to sign it. The address for all donations and correspondence is: SFU 18 Defense Committee, c/o A.U.C.E. Provincial, Suite 901, 207 W. Hastings, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 1J8.

Thank you.

Yours fraternally,


For the SFU 18 Defense Committee

P.S. The following persons can be contacted to speak for the committee.

