

# "After all, they are only typists!"

Dear Sisters,

Lately on the news there has been a lot of coverage of the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE) strike at Simon Fraser University. Eighteen students and other union members were arrested on Thursday while supporting AUCE workers on the picket line. AUCE workers are mostly *clerical workers*. They are fighting for *better wages*.

The University Administration says "No, we can't give you an increase. You lead clerical workers in wages and working conditions. No increase until the private sector catches up." The administration is using this as an excuse to keep women's wages low.

"What does this strike have to do with me? I work downtown. I don't have anything to do with the University!"

One student being interviewed on the radio was outraged by the AUCE workers interfering with his education\* and demanding higher wages. He said, "After all, they are *only* typists."

Only typists. The work that women do is as important and necessary as the work men do. Clerical skills are devalued because the majority of clerical workers are women. Typing is an important skill that we learn after much practice and experience. We have language skills, we know how to use the many office machines, we have communication skills, both written and verbal, we keep the books, and we know how to get along with bosses and customers. We are skilled workers. Many unskilled labourers begin employment at over \$8. per hour. (The International Woodworkers of America (IWA), the largest union in B.C., starts employees at a rate of \$8.16 per hour.) The average weekly wage in B.C. is \$312. per week. The average weekly wage of an AUCE worker is less than \$250. What is your weekly wage? If AUCE workers win their strike, it will make it easier for other clerical workers to get better wages.

The University is involved in education: the students take it, the teachers teach it, the administrators administer it, and *the clerical workers make the whole thing happen*. So it is in business. The value of our work is equal, but the pay is not. The conditions are not. We're still the "girls" in the office.

\*Many students are actively supportive of the AUCE struggle which is a part of the opposition to government cutbacks in education.

# What is A.U.C.E. ?

AUCE is an independent, democratic Canadian union composed of 80 per cent women workers. In 1972, clerical workers at the University of B.C. decided it was necessary to join together to bargain collectively for wages and working conditions. They formed the first local of the Association of University and College Employees.

The AUCE workers at SFU in fighting for a third collective agreement are struggling to maintain the gains they've already won. The increase they are seeking will not even fully cover the costs incurred by inflation. Their previous contracts provided for:

- in the first contract, an across-the-board increase of \$350 per month for each employee;
- full maternity leave with full pay. The University pays the difference between U.I.C. benefits and the usual employee salary;
- all benefits pro-rated for part-time employees;
- personal rights clause;
- voluntary overtime paid at double time;
- grievance procedures.

*For further information about AUCE, phone strike headquarters: 299-8600.*

*If you are interested in the possibility of a union where you work, contact the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC): 684-2834, 681-2811.*

Working Women Unite is a group of women, affiliated with the B.C. Federation of Women, concerned with the struggles of all working women.

**Working Women Unite** *women have always worked.* Box 65563, Stn F., Van.