

January 14, 1976  
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AUCE Local 1

This article is being written for the Across Campus newsletter, AUCE Local 1

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH OUR PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION?

We belong to an association of four AUCE locals: UBC, Local 1; Simon Fraser, Local 2; Notre Dame, Local 3; and Capilano College, Local 4.

Our Provincial has as its objectives (see Constitution) to:

1. bring about fair wage standards;
2. assure uniform job classification with equal pay for comparable work for all employees regardless of sex, age, marital status, colour, race, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or whether she/he has children;
3. bring about improvement in the working conditions of members and to dedicate its efforts toward maximizing the opportunities for personal growth in the work situation of all members;
4. maintain at all times the principles of local autonomy and democracy within this Provincial Association and its Local Associations;
5. charter Local Associations which will bargain collectively on behalf of Local Association members;
6. improve communications and interaction among members of the university and college community; and
7. to work with other members of the university and college community to create an environment which will better meet the needs of the members and those of the larger community.

We are about 1,700 people in all. UBC has about 1200, SFU 400, NDU 40 and Cap College 80.

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Each local elects two representatives to the Provincial; a President, Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer are elected by the entire membership of the Provincial in a referendum. Conventions are usually held once a year, but special ones can be called on two weeks notice by the President or Executive or by a petition signed by 25% of the membership. Delegates are elected from each local to attend this conference and make known their own local's views. UBC is allowed 10 delegates, SFU 6, NDU, 2 and Cap College 3.

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I haven't been affected much by the Provincial. I hadn't attended any annual conventions. I did attend a strike seminar (in September I think it was) where I found out about the ins and outs of the new Provincial amendments to the Labour Code. I also became interested when someone mentioned that the Provincial was thinking of sponsoring a working women's conference. I attended an organizational meeting where one other person came (it wasn't too productive in terms of organizing a conference but we had a good discussion about ideas for such a conference and possible reasons why no one else had attended). I decided to attend the special convention in November because I had taken on the job of Union Organizer and figured I should keep on top of these things.

I was puzzled, and frustrated by that Convention. The main thrust of the Provincial report was an argument in favour of paying a full-time person. Reports of actual work done by the Provincial during the past six months or so seemed to consist of failures to get anything going. A newsletter had not been published, the plans for the working women's conference were inactive

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because of an apparent lack of interest, there were rumblings prior to the Convention that Capilano College wanted nothing to do with the Provincial, there were rumours that the smaller locals resented UBC. The only positive report was from the Education Committee that had organized the strike seminar and grievance seminar. The energy for this committee came entirely from UBC people.

It seemed there were problems, both stated (no newsletter, no action from women in workforce committee) and unstated (resentment from smaller locals). There was very little discussion of these problems. Questions as to why the committees weren't functioning and why people weren't attending seminars were answered: communications gap is part of the problem in seminar attendance

Manpower was a general problem in why the Ad-Hoc Committees struck at the last Convention failed.

A communications gap is part of the problem in seminar attendance. The Provincial needs to ask the Locals what kinds of seminars they want.

(QUOTED FROM MINUTES OF PROVINCIAL CONVENTION.)

I wasn't satisfied with these answers. I wanted more discussion, more evaluation of work the Provincial had done. Is it just a lack of manpower and a communication gap or are the reasons why the Provincial isn't achieving its objectives more fundamental?

To remedy these problems, the Provincial Executive moved "that a referendum be conducted recommending that the Secretary-Treasurer be a full-time paid position on the Provincial Executive".

Two things came to mind in considering this motion. Firstly, is a full-time paid person the solution to the Provincial's problems. Secondly, what does it mean to have the Secretary-Treasurer in this full-time paid position?

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What will be the duties of the full-time paid person? These were not outlined. Will they be according to the Provincial's objectives or will this person do the Secretary-Treasurer's tasks: bookkeeping, maintaining records, documents and correspondence, submitting a detailed financial report quarterly? Will this expenditure mean an increase in dues to the Provincial?

There is a need for more discussion. I have too many questions to vote on such a motion.

Finally, I have a vision for the Provincial. I want to work with other workers who have interests in common, to work on common problems, share information and build the kind of strength that comes from working collectively. This hasn't happened in our Provincial Association. I think people from each local have to move towards other people in different AUCE locals. We could have exchanges, attending each other's meetings, get a Provincial newsletter going (or initially, if there isn't enough womanpower, exchange articles). We do have an organization that is supposed to carry out these functions, but it hasn't happened so far. Perhaps we should try another route.