

November 16, 1977

Steve Howard  
The UBSSEY  
Student Union Building  
UBC Campus

Dear Steve,

Pursuant to our conversation of day before yesterday, I am enclosing another press release from the Grievance Committee. Whether or not you find the statement newsworthy, I would like to add a few comments on why I think the UBSSEY should have more features, if not a regular column, on labour related matters.

Last year UBC spent \$107,270,628 on salaries for over 10,000 employees (including faculty). If the money spent for the services provided by those employees is also used as an excuse to raise tuition fees, then it would seem appropriate for students to pay close attention to the quality of the services provided. Labour relations is one of the factors that determine that quality. Students are the main beneficiaries of those services so there should be interest in the kinds of things that affect the work of university employees. Also, it should be noted that students are among those employed. Further, while the UBSSEY is primarily a newspaper produced by and for students, its readership includes university workers and their concerns should be acknowledged.

AUCE is concerned about the image of labour unions presented in the media. When AUCE went on strike in 1975, students reacted with indifference, or worse, with contempt. Trudeau and Bennett are quick to blame organized labour for Canada's economic ills and the media generally swallow such buck-passing hook, line and sinker. Students have apparently swallowed it too. We would like our side of the story told as well. We would like students to be aware of what it is like to be a woman in the labour force, of having any chance at diminishing the difference in sexually determined pay scales eliminated by the AIB, of the effect on working conditions caused by budget restrictions such as increased work loads and limited staff increases, of antagonistic resistance to any improvements in our working conditions whether through contract negotiations or through our grievance procedure. We would like students to know that if it seems to be taking longer to get books back on the shelves in the libraries, if secretaries seem snarkier, it is not simply that we are inept and rude employees but rather that our employer rewards our work by increasing it, by pushing contract negotiations ten months past the expiration date of our contract, by forcing us to take our grievances to expensive arbitrations. Management, of course, has its side of the story to tell too. I'd be interested in hearing it. It doesn't make much business sense to me to make one's employees angry.

It is easy for students absorbed in their studies to be indifferently ignorant of what it is like to have to put in a nine to five day of predominantly monotonous work in order to survive. I'm a grad student who finds himself working so I know both attitudes. At some point, most students will find themselves, like me, in the labour force. The attitudes that they develop at this institution are going to make a difference in the quality of the work they will do

Whether they turn out to be management people or labourers. We strongly feel tht it is important that students' consciousness be raise to the point where they can appreciate the situation of working people, in particular, of working women, on this campus. The UBSSEY, is seems to me, would be a natural forum for the kind of investigation needed.

We appreciated your paper's support for us during the '75 strike, but what was lacking (for which we are to blame) was a better pre-strike understanding on the part of the student body of who we were and what we stood for. We are not asking that you be our mouthpiece. We think the facts will speak for themselves if you were to take an abjective look at the labour situation on this campus.

I'd appreciate your bringing this concern to the attention of your editor if you don't have the time or inclination to consider ~~the~~ yourself. Please call me anytime if you wish to discuss this subject further. Our new telephone number is 224-2308.

Thanks for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,

Jay Hirabayashi  
Union Organizer, AUCE Local 1