

A QUESTION OF HONOUR

The dispute between our sister Local 2 and the SFU Administration, in which AUCE Local 2 escalated its pickets to Triumph and threatened to shut down UBC, brought to our attention the need to discuss the responsibility of trade unionists in respecting another Union's picket line.

The trade union movement in B.C. has succeeded in developing among trade unionists a respect for picket lines which is unsurpassed on the North American continent. This has enabled workers in B.C. to win extremely difficult disputes of a kind which are often lost in other areas. We, however, have been remiss in understanding the principles of and in assuming the responsibilities consistent with being a member of a trade union. What we fail to realize is that we are workers covered by a Collective Agreement - the same as 451,000 other unionized workers in B.C., 50.5% of which are men and 35.5% of which are women. The majority of articles in our contract are directly based on other contracts and these articles which we take for granted such as: the 7 hour work day, sick leave, wages, holidays, and job security were struggled for over many years by other organized workers and their unions. Therefore, it is unrealistic for us not to see ourselves as part of the entire organized community.

We haven't related ourselves to the mainstream of the labour movement because we are geographically isolated and because, in the past, it was felt that it did not represent our concerns.

Although, the Labour Relations Board feels that a member of a union must make her/his own decision about respecting a picket line, the Board for its own general purposes regards a picket line as an "electric fence" which workers just do not cross.

Because of the socio-economic climate throughout the 70's it has become increasingly clear that women are to be a permanent part of the labour movement. Active participation in the organized labour movement is one of the ways we can insure increased equality of opportunity and equal pay for work of equal value. Consistent with this, we must acknowledge the fact we are trade unionists and as such what our responsibilities are.

Carole Cameron
Union Organizer
and
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Union Co-ordinator

