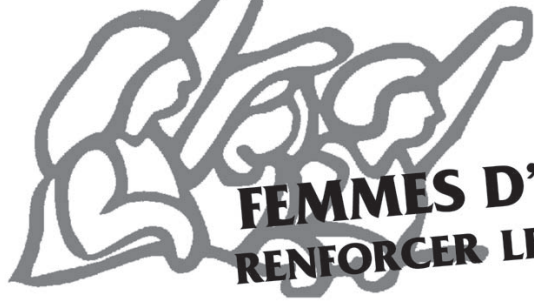


**WOMEN OF STEEL:
BUILDING POWER**



**FEMMES D'ACIER :
RENFORCER LE POUVOIR**

Women of Steel Building Solidarity

United Steelworkers Reference
Guide for Local, Regional &
District Women's Committees





United Steelworkers Building Power

Merged April 14, 2005

United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber,
Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and
Service Workers International Union



Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Our commitment to organizing, servicing and working for social and political change is reflected in this step-by-step guide to developing and supporting an active network of local, area, regional and district women's committees.

The United Steelworkers represents workers in a wide variety of workplaces: mines, mills, universities, offices, hotels, hospitals, credit unions, counselling centres, retail stores, nursing homes, travel agencies, forestry and manufacturing environments. As our membership grows and expands into virtually every economic sector, our resources and services must change to meet the diverse needs of our members.

Since we adopted strong policies to prevent and challenge workplace harassment and violence against women, developed programs on human rights, pay equity and the Women of Steel Development Course, we have seen an increase in the number of office, health care, social service and female-dominated units joining our union. Sure, these workers join because of the Steelworkers' record and tradition on a wide range of issues, but our specific attention to issues of equality and fairness sets us apart.

But there is always more to do.

Everyday, we hear about people experiencing difficulty as they try to balance workplace demands and family responsibilities. While in some workplaces and jurisdictions our struggles and successes can be seen in legislation and strong collective agreement language, in other areas, we have to fight hard for recognition and every provision in a collective agreement.

As we continue to experience the impact of a global economy and fight to protect what we have, we must look at new ways of organizing and supporting each other to enhance our solidarity and strength. Establishing a network of local, area, regional and district women's committees will help to ensure that our union can respond and organize quickly to changes and initiatives that threaten our gains in areas of equality and human rights.

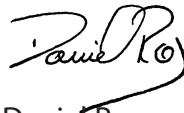
This step-by-step guide responds to the need for advice and information on how to set up and organize a women's committee. It was designed and written by representatives from each of the Canadian Steelworker Districts with assistance from the National Office.

We encourage you to use this guide, share it with a sister or brother and together start your own local, area or regional women's committee. Together we are strong.

In solidarity,



Ken Neumann,
National Director for Canada



Daniel Roy,
Director, District 5



Steve Hunt,
Director, District 3



Wayne Fraser,
Director, District 6

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

If you are thinking about setting up a women's committee, looking for new and creative ways of reaching new members, and sharing your experiences and successes, this guide is for you.

If you are looking for background information on collective bargaining and public policy issues, this guide is for you.

Designed to be easy to use and keep up-to-date, this guide is made up of two parts.

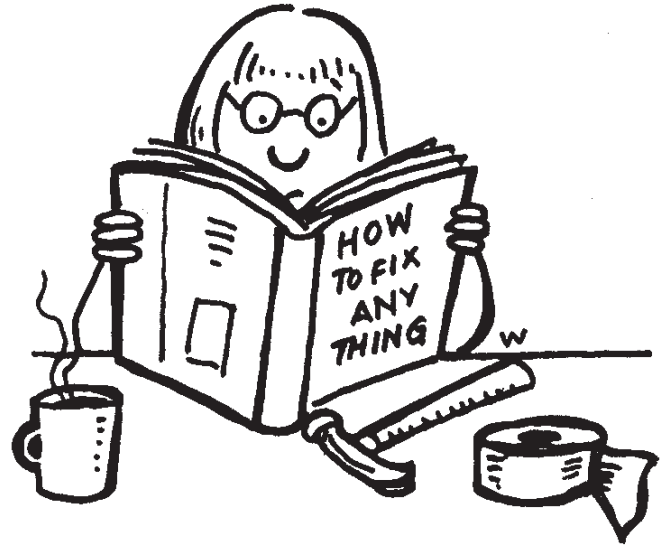
"The United Steelworkers' Reference Guide for Local, Regional and District Women's Committees"

outlines what women's committees can do; how they are set up; who participates; and what role they can play at all levels in the union.

"Putting Together Your Plan: Steelworkers Calendar of Action"

highlights some important dates and women's contributions in the labour movement. You should build on the sample calendar that has been included.

This resource guide was produced as a result of sisters' requests for advice and information on setting up and organizing women's committees. It is a working document and that should be revised as needed. Please let us know how this guide can be most effective. Suggestions for additions or amendments will help to make this a valuable resource in the future. Your feedback and ideas will help other women's committees. Please send your comments and suggestions to the **National Women's Committee c/o United Steelworkers National Office, 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 800, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K7** or e-mail info@steelworkers.ca. Good luck!



CONTENTS



A BRIEF HISTORY ... 1

The important of women's committees to unions ...2

Why should we treat women differently? ...2

Do women's committees help men understand women's issues? ...3

GETTING TO WORK: DIGNITY & RESPECT ...4

Special interest group committees ...5

Sharing the work ...5

Reasons for setting up a women's committee ...6

Steps to setting up a women's committee ...7

GETTING TO WORK: STARTING A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ...9

THE NUTS & BOLTS OF A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ...10

Membership ...10

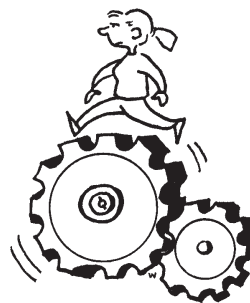
Responsibilities ...10

Where and when to meet ...11

Financial resources ...12

Covering expenses ...12

GETTING TO WORK: YOUR FIRST MEETING ...13



WHERE DO WE FIT IN? ...14

Local Unions ...14

Committees ...14

Conventions ...14

Elections ...16

Resources ...16

GETTING TO WORK: YOUR RESOURCE LIST ...18

GETTING TO WORK: WOMEN OF STEEL ON THE WEB ...19

GETTING TO WORK: SOAR ... 21

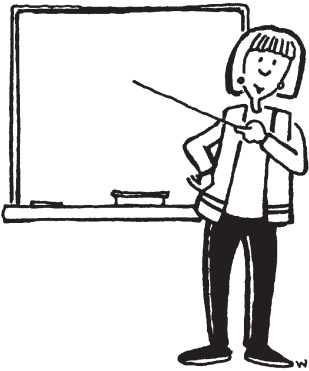


KNOWLEDGE IS POWER ...22

Educate and raise awareness of women's issues ...22

The Steelworkers education program ...24

GETTING TO WORK: BACK TO THE LOCALS ...25



TO YOUR HEALTH! ...26

Let's Talk About Your Health ...26

GETTING TO WORK: WOMEN'S STRESS AT WORK ...27

BARGAINING THE BEST ...28



ORGANIZING: SPREAD THE WORD ...29

Lots of potential ...29

GETTING TO WORK: BUILDING SOLIDARITY AND A STRONGER UNION: ORGANIZING NEW MEMBERS ...30

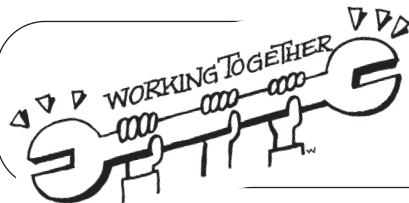
POLITICAL ACTION: LOBBYING FOR CHANGE ...31

Identify the Issue of the Problem ...31

Identify Support ...31

Propose Change ...31

GETTING TO WORK: FINDING OUT ABOUT THE NDP ...35



IN SUMMARY: IS YOUR WOMEN'S COMMITTEE WORKING? ...36

GLOSSARY ...37

A BRIEF HISTORY

According to a report from the international agency UNESCO, women perform two-thirds of the world's work, head one-third of the world's households, yet earn only one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one per cent of the world's land property.

The clear need to address economic and social inequities faced by women led to the establishment of the first women's committee in Canada in 1961 by the Ontario Federation of Labour. Nine years later, in 1970, the British Columbia Federation of Labour established its first women's committee. Close to 60 per cent of Canadian women between 15-60 years old are in the paid labour force today. As these women have entered the workforce, the need to address issues which affect them as women has been recognized.



The United Steelworkers organized its first women's committee in 1986 to help achieve dignity, security, and equality. Today, in addition to a National Women's Committee, each of the Canadian District Directors has established women's committees to help encourage women's participation across the union.

At the Steelworker 32nd Constitutional Convention held in Las Vegas April 11-14, 2005, delegates to the Convention voted unanimously to amend the Constitution as follows:

Article VII, Section 13, line 21:

"To further our commitment to encourage activism, leadership development and greater understanding of gender issues in our Local Unions with female membership, a Women's Committee, under the direction of the International Union or its designated representative, shall be established by such Local Unions."

This guide is designed to help you and your local set up a successful committee.

The importance of women's committees to unions

The United Steelworkers is a stronger union when our policies and collective agreements reflect the needs of our brothers and sisters. Women's committees help to build solidarity and mutual respect among our membership and potential membership.

Providing support to women organizers, officers of the union, stewards, executive members and negotiating team members, is an essential part of any women's committee mandate.

Building solidarity and a strong union – that's what's Steelworker women's committees are all about.

Why should we treat women differently?

In many of our workplaces: mines, factories and offices, women are in a

minority. The work environment – from the physical layout of the office or plant, to the behaviour of management and the traditional “shop talk” – create barriers to women's employment and training. In the retail and service sectors, where work is traditionally undervalued and underpaid, and hours of work vary tremendously, women struggle to organize and fight for job security and decent wages. In virtually every sector across Canada, women

continue to face workplace harassment and discrimination.

Unionized women fare better;

unionized women working together fare much better. Given the opportunity and security, women will share their stories and experiences and work together to identify strategies for change that benefit all workers. Whether it is working toward workplace and union events free from harassment, scheduling union meetings and events that do not conflict with family responsibilities, or bargaining pay equity, we have all gained from the work of women and women's committees.

Simply put: unions need women and women need unions.

Do women's committees help men understand women's issues?

Absolutely. One of the key elements in effecting change is communication. Through communication, we educate and help to change attitudes and behaviour. With the understanding and support of men, we can be much more effective in securing changes inside and outside of our workplaces and communities: through collective agreements, policies, practices and legislation.



Since offering the Women of Steel course and establishing women's committees in the districts, we have seen a considerable increase in women's participation at all levels of the Union. The input and perspective has helped to shape the agenda and content of our education programs, conferences and policies. Providing information and opportunities to discuss and meet the needs of our diverse membership in turn helps us to reach out of the unorganized and ensure we can indeed be: Everybody's Union.



GETTING TO WORK:

Dignity and Respect

On June 25, 1993, 136 employees of the Hudson's Bay store in Kamloops, British Columbia joined the Steelworkers. After seven fruitless months of negotiations, it was obvious the parties could not reach an agreement. In June 1994, 97 per cent of the members voted to strike. In August, workers launched a series of rotating job actions, including refusing to answer phones and replacing the Bay's conservative dress code with blue jeans and Steelworker T-shirts.

Workers went on strike on September 25, 1994. The Bay tried to keep the store open, believing shoppers would cross the picket line. Eventually, the store was forced to close in October. The Bay began to move out merchandise, prompting rumours that it was shutting down for good because of the workers' demands.

In February 1995, with no end in sight, the strikers expanded their campaign against the Bay. Besides asking shoppers not to shop at any nonunion Bay store in B.C., they asked customers to cut up their Bay cars. The strikers took their message on the road, touring the province in a motor home, handing out leaflets, making their point in a nonviolent, non-threatening, but effective way.

A provincial mediator delivered a series of non-binding recommendations to the union and the Bay in mid-May 1995. The Mediator's report

recommended that the workers get almost everything they had been fighting for. Not surprisingly, the Steelworkers voted 97 per cent in favour of acceptance, but the Bay killed the deal.

The strikers' next step was to apply for binding arbitration, which allows newly-unionized workers to obtain a first contract. In June 1995, the Bay was ordered to reopen its doors and let the strikers back to work. After nine months on the picket line, the workers were close to winning their first contract!

In August 1995, the contract was awarded; it contained the earlier recommendations for settlement, including language to protect employees against sexual and racial harassment, strong seniority rights, wage increases, and improved holiday benefits. The deal was a major victory for the strikers, most of whom were women with no previous union experience. The strike wasn't about money – it was a struggle for dignity and respect.

What Can You Do?

- The more we talk about our union, its policies and the type of protection we can negotiate in our collective agreements, the more other people will talk about us!
- Volunteer some time to help the union's organizing outreach.



Special interest group committees

Even before the 2005 amendment to the union's Constitution, many locals had set up women's committees in addition to other permanent (standing) or temporary (ad hoc) committees. How often these committees meet will depend on the level of interest and the tasks set out by the members. Whatever the committee, the members are accountable to the local union executive, the constitution and by-laws, and should report frequently to general meetings, again helping to communicate, educate and build solidarity.

Sharing the work

Everyone is experiencing an increase in work and family demands. There is no point in dreaming up an ambitious plan or calendar of events if there is no one to help organize and implement it. Set priorities. If you set realistic goals and achieve those goals, the confidence sisters and brothers have in the committee and its purpose will grow.

If holding meetings is difficult because of the shifts people work and their responsibilities outside of the workplace, find alternative ways of communicating and planning events. Meet over lunch hours or on breaks, hold monthly support meeting, use the telephone or jump on the information highway. Learn how to use computers and computer networks and bulletin board systems to send messages and electronic mail.



Schedule meetings that are as accessible as you can make them. A safe location is a priority, as is a convenient time. The provision of child care could mean a much larger turnout at the meeting. Make the meetings interesting and, dare we say it, fun! The more relevant, interesting and enjoyable the work, the more volunteers you will have to help organize future events.

If attendance at meetings is declining or interest is fading, ask why and review

your goals and objectives. No one has time to go to another meeting simply for the sake of going to a meeting. People need to feel useful and see results. Include a working part to your meetings as well as an educational component so members will see immediately how they can have input and be of assistance. Finally, show your appreciation for

each other. Say thank you and congratulate each other on your achievements. Celebrate your successes!

Reasons for setting up a women's committee

There are many reasons for establishing a women's committee. Committees offer a way for women

A women's committee can:

- Provide a safe environment for women to discuss current workplace, community or personal issues and strategies for change.
- Educate women on their rights, obligations and responsibilities to themselves and other women.
- Educate and work with the male membership on understanding women's issues and perspective.
- Provide advice and guidance to the leadership on issues important to women.
- Network and communicate with women in local unions and in community, national and international organizations.
- Research and present policies.
- Lobby for legislative improvements and change.
- Encourage the development of more women's committees.
- Act as mentors to young and newly organized women.
- Organize informal educational and social events with community and local committees.
- Assist in the planning and organization of conferences and local schools to ensure the content, speakers and participants reflect the diversity of the union's membership.
- Identify women's education and training needs to ensure union courses and programs are accessible and applicable.
- Assist the organizers in organizing and educating new members.

to raise issues, press for change and get their issues onto the convention floor and negotiating table. One of the first tasks of a committee should be to reach consensus on some short and long term objectives. From these, you can develop a plan and set realistic goals.

Steps to setting up a women's committee



Step One: Is the Local on-side?

The Local has voted to have the committee. The Executive has approached a woman to be responsible for the committee (the chairperson).



Step Two: What's our mission?

Build a network of women in the local and/or region. Provide the bargaining committee support on women's issues. Build women's power in the union. Reach out and work with other women's committees/groups. Educate, communicate and mobilize.

Sample mission statement:

"The Local Women's Committee will work in solidarity with sisters and brothers to raise awareness of women's issues; increase the involvement and participation of women in the Union; support organizing and outreach efforts in the community; and support the Union's campaigns for equality and progressive political change."

Step Three: Who participates?

Locals with a significant number of women should have a women's committee. Explore working with other local women's committees to create a regional committee. Find out who the women are in your Local(s)/Region. (numbers, jobs, age, race etc.)

Step Four: How do we do it? (The nuts and bolts)

Decide when and where to meet, and set the first agenda. Decide on a meeting process that allows everyone to participate. Find your allies in the

union. Know where to find the resources you will need. Decide how you will make yourselves visible. Divide up the responsibilities on the committee.

Step Five: What's the plan (what will you do?)

Consider the following when you put your plan together:

- How does it promote issues of importance to women?
- Who has the power to do something about the issues of concern to women in your local?
- Can you mobilize the women in your local/region to get involved in this plan?
- Do you have allies in the union and in the community who can help?
- Is it doable?
- Is it fun?!



Step Six: Is it working?

From time to time evaluate how your committee is doing. (For example, are you getting any new women involved in your activities?) Decide what you can do differently to build a stronger committee.



GETTING TO WORK:

Building Your Women's Committee

List three good reasons why someone should join your women's committee:

1.

2.

3.

Your answers to the questions or arguments:

1.

2.

3.

Who are you going to speak with about encouraging participation on the committee (e.g., local union executive, unit chairperson, union committee members, women in your local, women activists in the community, your staff representative)?

Who will help?

List three good questions or arguments you may face when trying to get started:

1.

2.

3.

Where can you get started?

-
-
-
-



THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

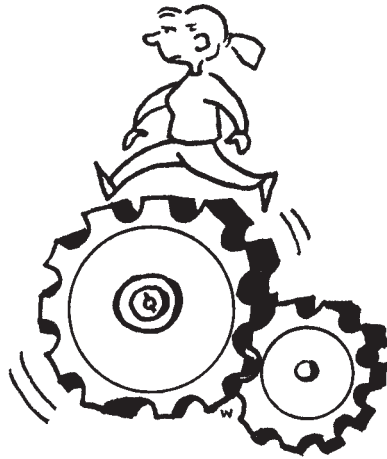
Membership

In addition to setting up a women's committee in your local, you may want to work with women from other locals to set up a regional committee or subcommittee of your area council.

Should men sit on a women's committee? One of the key tasks of a women's committee is to look at how it will work with the other local committees to provide and receive support. Some local women's committees have set up subcommittees to look at specific issues of concern. In these cases, men may be asked to join the subcommittees to help identify solutions to problems that will benefit all members.

Women's committees should be reflective of our diverse membership: geographically, by economic sector,

and inclusive of visible minority women, women with disabilities and aboriginal women. Women face many different barriers to their participation in the workplace and in the union. The committee should be sensitive to the various needs of potential members.



Women's committees can help set an example of how inclusive union structures can be when steps are taken to break down barriers to those

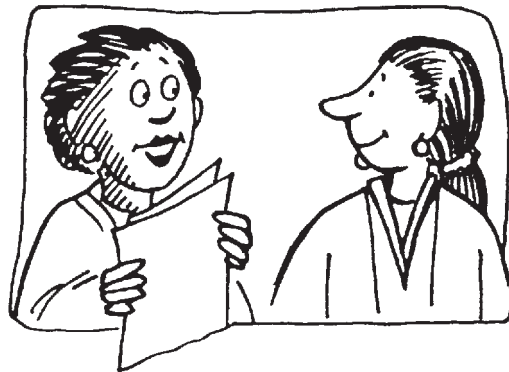
who have been traditionally disadvantaged in the workplace, the union and in the community.

Responsibilities

Elect or ask for a volunteer to act as the chairperson of your women's committee. This person should preside over meetings, keep order and make sure the agenda is followed. If shift work prevents a chairperson from presiding at every committee meeting, rotate the

responsibility, or elect co-chairs. This will also give others the chance to learn how to conduct a meeting. Since the committee is accountable to all members, elect a recording secretary or ask for a volunteer to take minutes of the meeting. Record any motions passed and actions to be taken. Pass on information to other committees and the local union executive.

Delegate tasks to committee members. Ask for volunteers to, for example, invite a guest speaker to your next meeting, contact the area education coordinator about training needs, post notice of meeting, or put together a contact list of community resource people for the committee.



All members should take responsibility for keeping in touch with other women members in the workplace, talking to them about current issues and concerns, reviewing the collective agreement and in turn, planning and organizing for change that will benefit all members.

Where and When to Meet

Try to make meetings as accessible as possible. Hold meetings in places that are safe and at times that are convenient. Provide child care if necessary.

Possible locations and times to meet:

- Use the union hall before or after regular local, or area council meetings.
- Arrange to meet at an area or district office.
- Ask for time to meet at conferences and conventions.
- Arrange to meet in the lunchroom at work.
- Organize a potluck lunch or dinner at someone's home.
- Set a regular time to meet, for example, the week before the regular meeting of your local union, and start the meeting on time.
- If scheduling is a problem because of shift work, the same meeting may have to be repeated to give everyone a chance to attend.

Remember, make sure the meetings are interesting and fun. Perhaps the position of chair can be rotated from meeting to meeting so people don't "burn out." The more relevant and enjoyable the work, the more successful you will be.

Financial resources

Usually, each committee of a local will propose a budget for the year. The budgets are submitted to the local's executive for consideration.

A women's committee, when developing a plan or calendar, should consider establishing a budget and guidelines for expenditures. While the costs of attending conferences or schools will be determined and covered by the local union, area council, district, national or international union, a committee may want to consider how they will cover the costs of their activities: meeting room rentals, child care, refreshments, transportation where necessary, publications, etc.

Like all union committees, everyone must understand that not all their work on the committee can be paid. The committee will have to rely on its

members to volunteer their time when it is outside their work day.

Covering expenses

Once a committee is established, spend some time brainstorming how you want to raise funds and for what. For example:



If your local has not negotiated paid education leave, look at raising the issue in the next round of bargaining. Education funds and paid leave help to ensure that members can attend courses, workshops and conferences.

Within the local structure, propose that money be specifically budgeted for women's committee activities.

Organize activities where profits are donated to women's groups, for example, garage sales or selling buttons, calendars, t-shirts, etc.

Work with your area and district office to learn what resources are available, for example, special project funds and government grants.

Remember:
Keep track of your expenses, and where you are in your budget.



GETTING TO WORK:

Your First Meeting

1. Before you even call your first meeting, find out when and where is the most convenient for women to meet. For example, is the best time after work, on break, on weekends, or by conference call? Is the best place to meet at work, the union office or at a community centre or school?
2. Try to give as much notice as possible of the meeting. Use different methods: bulletin board; telephone tree; word of mouth. Remind people of the time and place and try to get a commitment from people to come. Provide transportation and child care if necessary.
3. Talk to members of the committee about what they would like to see on the agenda. Draft an agenda and circulate it in advance. Put the most important items first on the agenda. If there are articles or resource materials that you think the committee should review, make sure there are enough copies to go around.
4. At the meeting, ask people to introduce themselves and talk about why they think a women's committee is important. Note their expectations on a flip chart or black board for everyone to see. Make sure you allow enough time of the committee to get to know each other!
5. Ask for a volunteer to take notes and record any actions to be taken or suggestions. Discuss how the minutes will be made available to the other members.
6. Invite a guest speaker to talk about the participation of women and value of women's committees. Meet with the guest speaker to ensure they know what your expectations are, and to provide you with an outline of their comments.
7. Start putting together a list of short term and long term goals. Make sure they meet the expectations of the members.
8. What kinds of things can committees do?
 - Put together a list of people for information and help.
 - Draft a newsletter article or bulletin about the committee.
 - Identify community groups and agencies that might be interested in helping local union members or working together with the committee.
 - Review the collective agreement for issues that might be helpful to women.
 - Report back to the local union executive.
9. Set up a date, time and place for the next meeting. Ask the committee what should be on the agenda. How will people communicate with each other between meetings? Are they willing to set up a telephone or fax tree or e-mail list? At future meetings, you may want to show a video, or hold the meeting over lunch or supper. Get suggestions from the committee.
10. Say thank you!



WHERE DO WE FIT IN?

Local unions

Local unions, and individual units within an amalgamated local, are the foundation of the United Steelworkers. Established through a charter issued by the international union, local unions are administered by their own officers elected by the membership every three years.

When developing a women's committee in your local union or area council, it is helpful to understand the structure of the union. This will enable the committee to direct questions, suggestions, and requests to the appropriate person or place for immediate attention. If you are unsure of who or where to turn to, your local union executive (or area council) and your staff representative will be able to help.

Committees

Within each level of the union there are many committees. Each

committee develops goals and strategies. There are a number of committees at the local level required by the union's constitution: Grievance, Safety and Health, Workers' Compensation, Civil Rights/Human Rights, Organizing, and Women's. There are also a number of committees specific to local unions like an Education Committee, a Pay Equity Committee, an Entertainment Committee, a Building Committee, a Trades Committee, and a Labour Management Committee.



Conventions

The United Steelworkers holds conventions to develop policies, strategies, agendas and resolutions around labour, national and community issues: the International Constitutional Convention; the Canadian Policy Conference; and the District Conferences. Delegates to these policy-making conventions are elected by the local union membership.

District 3 holds a conference every even year. This conference provides a prime location to tap into and/or to develop networks on particular issues or concerns; it allows for communication and recreates a sense of solidarity. It is also where the district component of the United Steelworkers determines and sets the directives and actions that all of us are subject to. Because we are a democratic union, directions and actions are debated on at this conference.

Importance of your Attendance

The District 3 Conference is an informative union event as well as a very useful tool for all local union activists:

- You meet and share “Union stories” with other members across Western Canada.
- You learn how to present an idea, thought or strategy to large groups of your peers.
- You participate in panel discussions and breakout groups.
- You meet face to face the leaders of our Union and have the opportunity to chat with them about what’s on your mind.

The list goes on.

How We Get There

Local unions may send as many delegates as they would like (within their financial capabilities) to District conferences. The local makes this decision at the General Membership Meeting so make sure you are there for the discussion, decision making, nominations and voting. You may nominate yourself to attend the conference. It is portent to have support at the meeting; brothers and sisters may speak in favour of your nomination – they will also provide votes for you.

Be prepared to explain why your local would benefit from sending you as a delegate to the conference.

Written by the Sisters from District 3 Women’s Committee (1996).

Women's committees can help draft resolutions for local unions and encourage women to run as delegates to speak to resolutions and participate in conference workshops. The United Steelworkers is a stronger union when our policies and collective agreements reflect the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Elections

The United Steelworkers is the most democratic union because Local Officers (President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Guard, Guides and Trustees) and the Grievance Committee are elected by local union members every three years; and International Officers, the Canadian Director and District Directors are elected by direct vote of members every four years. In our union, democracy means officers at every level are responsible to the membership.

Women's committees help ensure resources and support are available

to women who are interested in seeking an elected position. "Step-by-Step to Elected Office: A Steelworker Affirmative Action Guide to Local Union Elections" provides activists with descriptions of each elected position and tips on how to run a successful campaign. Copies of the Guide are available from your staff representative or the national office.

Resources

The United Steelworkers has a wide variety of resource materials available upon request. These resources are also applicable across the country. Among the materials are the union's constitution, local by-laws, convention proceedings and resolutions, step-by-step guide to local union elections, and local union election manuals.

The constitution of the international union outlines the objectives, the offices and the structure of the union. It describes who is eligible to run for office, how long one can hold an office, and what duties and responsibilities the offices hold.



The constitution manual explains discipline, finances, strikes, contracts, and amendments. Amendments to the constitution can be made at international constitutional conventions with a majority vote.

By-laws for local unions outline the objectives of the union, the structure of the local union (including the offices and their respective duties), meetings, membership, discipline, finances, delegates to conventions, committees, strikes, order of business, how to fill vacancies as well as provide a supplementary on governing amalgamated local unions. Amendments to the local union by-laws may be adopted after they have been read out at two consecutive local union meetings and then by receiving a 2/3 vote at the next meeting (subject to approval of the international executive).

If your local union or area council does not have these materials, contact your staff representative for copies.

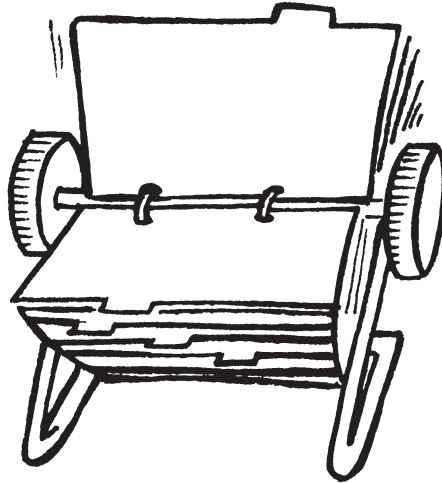
Mobilize!



GETTING TO WORK:

Putting Together Your Resource List

A list of resource people and emergency contacts will help you and the committee research issues and help members in times of crisis. Ask the committee to brainstorm who should be on the list. Divide up the list between members to identify the people and contact numbers. Not only will you have a good resource list but all the people on the list will know that you have a women's committee. This is the start of working together for a stronger union and a stronger and healthier community.



Designated Harassment Counsellors:

Community contacts: (e.g., Employee Assistance Program, Labour Council, Other women's committees, New Democratic Party women's representative)

The Local Union: (e.g., Unit Chairperson, Executive members and Committees)

Staff Representative:

District Director:

Emergency contacts (e.g., sexual assault centre, emergency shelter for battered women, women's health centre, the police):

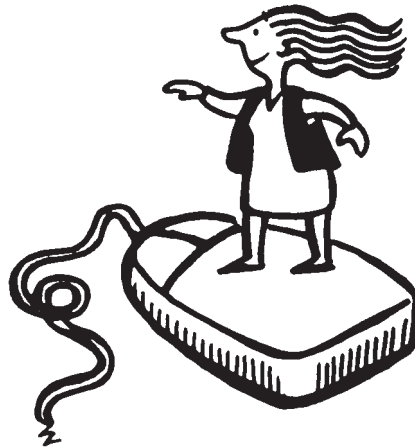




GETTING TO WORK:

Women of Steel on the Web

You will find the Women of Steel section of our website under the heading "Who We Are". This Steel section has always been an integral part of the Steelworkers Canadian web site and provides a variety of useful tools and information for our women members. Most documents are available in two formats: one is quick to view the other "pdf" version intended for you to print out and distribute.



conferences to ensure that all Steelworker gatherings are free of any kind of harassment.

Use the **Steelworkers' Guide to Preventing and Dealing with Harassment** to identify, prevent and combat harassment in the workplace and in the union hall. This guide examines the different kinds of harassment: racial, sexual, sexual orientation or disability. The guide includes tips for union activists and a checklist for workplace policies and procedures.

Combating harassment

Steelworker members are entitled to a harassment-free environment at all union activities, events and meetings.

There are two principles fundamental to the labour movement: human rights and solidarity. Harassment strikes at the heart of both.

Here you can view and print the well-known and highly-regarded **Yellow Sheet** – the Steelworkers' anti-harassment policy. This policy is read out before all Steelworker events from local union meetings to policy

The new 2005 edition of **A Steelworker Guide to Negotiating the Balance of Work-Life Responsibilities** includes information on gay, lesbian and transgendered rights, compassionate care leave provisions, child care and more.

Get Involved, Speak Out in the Legislature

Use the Steelworker website to lobby the government on a variety of issues of importance to women. Go to **Fax Your MP** in Bargaining, Campaigns and Political Action section of the website to send a message to your MP about Violence against Women, the World March of Women, and Child Poverty. All you need to know is your postal code to



More... Women of Steel on the Web

send a fax to your own MP. You are welcome to make any changes to the sample letters we have written for you on these issues.

Get Involved, Speak Out in Your Local Union

Go to the Steelworkers' Members Only section of the website and view the **Steelworkers Affirmative Action Guide** to learn how run for office in your local and how to win!!

The Members Only section of the site also has examples of progressive collective agreement language and an educational course calendar.

Sign Up for WIN

Districts 3 and 6 have launched a Women's Information Network (WIN), which is a network designed to assist in communicating with women activists throughout our Districts on issues of relevance to them.

Visit your District's section of the website and sign up to WIN. Those who join WIN will get periodic information on upcoming women's conferences, lobby efforts that pertain specifically to women's issues, and initiatives in your District that relate to women.

Check out your District's website for additional Women of Steel information.

E-mail address: info@steelworkers.ca

Web: www.steelworkers-metallos.ca

We want to know what you think

Please send us an e-mail to let us know what we can do to help you become more active in your union. We welcome any comments on how to make our website more effective.





GETTING TO WORK: SOAR

SOAR: the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees, is a terrific resource for members looking for advice, guidance and inspiration from women and men of Steel who have faced similar struggles and appreciate the opportunity to share their stories and experiences. And, members are active and interested in helping you!



What Can You Do?

- With the help of your staff representative, contact active retirees to join your committee, speak on a specific issue or help you in a particular campaign.
- Many women workers are concerned about planning for their retirement. Members of SOAR can help people plan and prepare as well as provide a network of support.
- SOAR members may also be willing to help your committee reach out and provide support to people who are temporarily disabled or away from work because of personal or family responsibilities.
- Who is the contact person for SOAR in your area?
- Is there an issue or campaign SOAR is involved with in your area?
- What kinds of activities can you do together?

What Are You Going To Do?



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Educate and raise awareness of women's issues



There are many issues facing our members today, and many people with expertise to share. Find out what the needs of the members are, and identify possible guest speakers or videos to show at future meetings.

Ask your committee to brainstorm issues they may want to learn more about and discuss. For example:

Women's health and safety issues:

- Sexual and racial harassment
- Violence in the workplace or home
- Stress
- Repetitive strain risks and injuries
- Protective clothing and devices
- Breast cancer
- Menopause
- Aging

Note:

Before inviting someone to speak to your group, spend some time with the person to let them know a little bit about your committee and its background. This will also provide you with an opportunity to get to know the speaker and discuss how they might approach the issue and lead a discussion.

If you plan to show a video, make sure you see it first. Some videos, particularly on issues of violence and harassment can be quite disturbing and difficult to watch. You may need to prepare the committee for what they will see and take particular care to have a full discussion after the film. You may want to invite a community resource person or harassment counselor to facilitate a discussion afterwards.

Economic issues:

- Pay equity
- Employment equity
- Child care
- Retirement
- Unemployment
- Layoffs
- Technological change

Workplace and community issues:

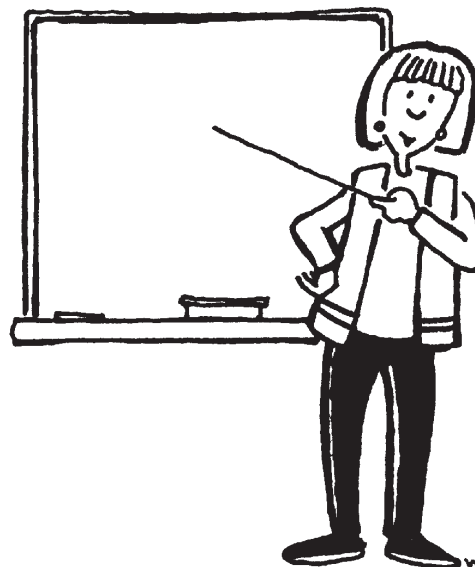
- Gay and lesbian rights
- Political action
- Women in the media

Education and communication:

- Organizing new members
- Creating newsletters, posters or flyers
- Dealing with the media
- Running orderly meetings
- Preparing/presenting briefs and submissions
- Making bylaw changes and submitting resolutions
- Surveying the needs of members and preparing proposals for collective bargaining.

A women's committee can encourage women to seek further educational opportunities and help to ensure union programs and courses are accessible to women. Women can do more than just attend courses, they can also teach them! You may want to survey members about their needs and where and when courses and workshops are best held.

The union provides many courses. For example: **Women of Steel: Building Local Union Power for Women's Committees; the Women of Steel Leadership Development Course; Preventing and Dealing with Conflict; Steelworker Stewards in Action; Health and Safety courses; and courses in collective bargaining and arbitration.** For help in setting up courses, please contact your local union executive, area council education committee, or staff representative.



The Steelworkers Education Program

Education of Steelworker members is one of the union's top priorities. Providing members with the tools and knowledge to be stronger advocates makes the union stronger. The more people trained and active, the better we are at servicing the needs of our members, reaching out to the unorganized and working for long term political change to benefit our families and communities.

All Steelworker courses are developed by the union's Education Department and local union members with knowledge and experience in the specific activity covered by the course. Instructors themselves are Steelworkers, chosen for their expertise and educational skills. All courses depend on the full participation of the members. Small group exercises, role plays, brainstorming, and problem-solving help members to discuss and apply what they learn.

Courses can be brought to you, or you can be brought to the courses. To bring a course to the local or area council, make a request for the course through your local or area

council, or through your staff representative. Ask if there is a calendar of courses being offered for the year. If the course you would like is not on the calendar, speak with your staff representative or area council education committee about how to add a course to the calendar.

There are two ways of getting to a course outside of your area: (1) being sent by your local union or area council; or (2) obtaining a scholarship. Either way, the cost of attending does not come out of your own pocket. All costs are covered (course fee, traveling, accommodation, per diems, and lost wages). Scholarships are distributed by the district office to the staff representatives for distribution to the local unions.

Courses are updated and new courses are developed as necessary. Courses may be a few hours or a full five days. The Canadian Labour Congress and your local labour council also offer courses. For more information contact your staff representative.



GETTING TO WORK:

Back to the Locals Education Program

Women's committees are often the best source of encouragement for women who are looking for a chance to gain skills and confidence.

Following the Constitutional change in 2005, the Union developed a two-day course for locals setting up women's committees. In addition, the union offers the Women of Steel Leadership Development Course. The Women of Steel course is offered across the union for women who are interested in becoming more active in the union. Many sisters who have taken the Women of Steel course have become leaders in their local unions and in the districts. In turn, these sisters have helped to change other courses so that examples and techniques are accessible to women and the growing diversity of the membership. Getting involved in your area council or regional education committee will help to ensure courses are offered that are of interest and meet the needs of women members.

Sometimes when we survey education needs of women, we hear about how they want more training at work to do their job and improve their skills to be able to post for better jobs. Help the sister contact other union activists in the workplace and the staff representative to look at how training needs in the workplace are met. Helping to meet the sister's needs will help her to understand the union's role and, in turn, may help to get her involved in building a stronger union inside and outside of the workplace.

What Can You Do?

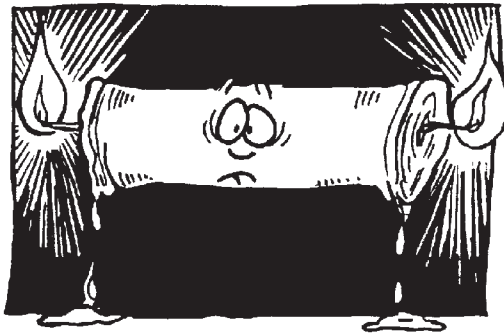
- What courses have been offered in your area? Have women attended the courses?
- Are courses offered at times and in places that allow women to attend?
- If people have child care or elder care responsibilities, how are these responsibilities met?
- Do materials have to be available in different languages?
- Find out what courses are offered by the Steelworkers, the Canadian Labour Congress and your local labour council. School boards and community colleges also hold adult courses that may be of interest to your members.
- When will the course be offered?
- Where is it most convenient to hold the course?
- Do you have to charge a fee to cover the cost of lunches, coffee, child care, etc.? In some cases, these costs are covered by your local union or area council.
- Are there other special needs or requests of the participants (i.e., materials available in different languages, etc.)?
- Try to spend some time with the instructor to talk about the course, the needs of the women and their expectations. This will help the instructor prepare a course that is relevant and meaningful.



TO YOUR HEALTH!

Let's Talk About Your Health

Feeling tired?
Stressed out?
Worried about your job?
Working double time just to stay ahead?



You aren't alone.

Are you concerned about the effects work might be having on your health? Some examples of workplace health problems include:

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Hours of work
- Reproductive issues
- Repetitive strain injuries
- Musculoskeletal injuries
- Inadequate protective clothing
- Workplace violence and harassment

- Headaches, back strain or sore muscles
- Hazardous substances in the workplace.

Find out how many days of work have been lost due to illness and how many lost time accidents have been reported in the past year in your workplace.

To get others talking about their health, create a survey for women to use in their workplaces. Discuss women's health issues at your next meeting.

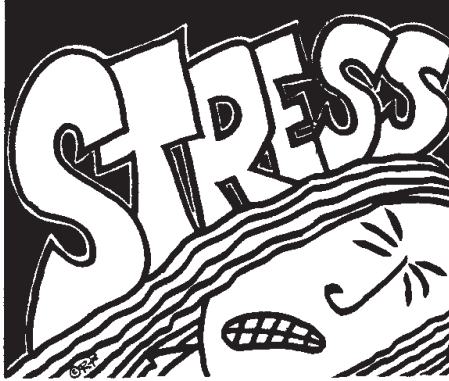


Ask your unit or local to do a workplace health and safety audit, paying particular attention to the design of the workplace and the job to see how the work can be modified to reduce identified accident and health risks for women.



GETTING TO WORK: Women's Stress at Work

It is very difficult to define stress. Sexual harassment, violence, discrimination, lack of pay equity, job and family responsibility demands, lack of child care and its high costs, care for elderly, sick or disabled relatives, the design of the job (ergonomics), electronic monitoring and too much supervision, job insecurity and fear of layoffs and unemployment, all contribute to stress.



part-time work, enhanced severance and retirement provisions.

- Negotiate benefit coverage that includes same-sex partners and part-time workers.
- Negotiate a job evaluation system to implement equal pay for work of equal value.
- Identify community programs and agencies that

provide counseling and support to victims of harassment or violence; many local unions have negotiated Employee Assistance Plans.

- Organize social events and opportunities inside and outside of the workplace to help build solidarity and support within the bargaining unit.

What Can You Do?

- Survey members about sources of stress.
- Look at the hours of work and schedules and how they might be changed to better accommodate the needs of workers.
- Negotiate on-site child care, a child care allowance, or flextime to help relieve some of the stress parents feel in juggling family responsibilities.
- Negotiate a joint anti-harassment policy, and an education program for all workers and supervisors on discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Ensure union events are harassment free and accessible to all workers.
- Negotiate strong job security provisions: restrictions on contracting out, limits on

What Are You Going To Do?



BARGAINING THE BEST

Women's Committees can play a key role in supporting the bargaining process. From surveying women's needs to helping negotiating committees better understand the impact of workplace changes and collective agreements on women, your committee's involvement in bargaining can make an enormous difference.

Winning a provision in a collective agreement does not just happen at the bargaining table. Committees can help design campaigns and resource materials to bring an added focus to a demand that may be seen as "new" or outside of the norm for the sector.

Local Women's Committees have helped to develop support campaigns for negotiating committees raising child care and work-life issues in bargaining. The District 3 Women's Committee has helped to identify collective agreement language on human rights and health and safety issues that address women's issues.

Keep track of the kind of grievances and complaints raised by your

committee. Work with other Local committees to design a strategy to address the issues at the bargaining table, where necessary. Many issues may be addressed in between negotiations of the agreement by staying active and in-touch with other workplace and local committees. In this way, you can think of bargaining as a continuous process.

Contact your staff representative or area office for copies of Steelworker policies, guides and sample collective agreement language on, for example:

- **It's a Balancing Act: A Steelworker Guide to Negotiating the Balance of Work-Life Responsibilities**
- **United Steelworkers' Guide to Preventing and Dealing with Harassment**
- **Anti-harassment workplace training sessions**
- **United Steelworkers' Guide to Violence Prevention**
- **Hours of Work**
- **Pay equity and job evaluation**
- **Limiting contracting-out**
- **Pensions and Benefits**
- **Protecting Health, Safety and the Environment**

Sample collective agreement language can also be found on the Steelworkers Members Only section of the website. Contact the website administrator at the Steelworkers (info@steelworkers.ca) for information on how to get access.

ORGANIZING: SPREAD THE WORD

Lots of potential

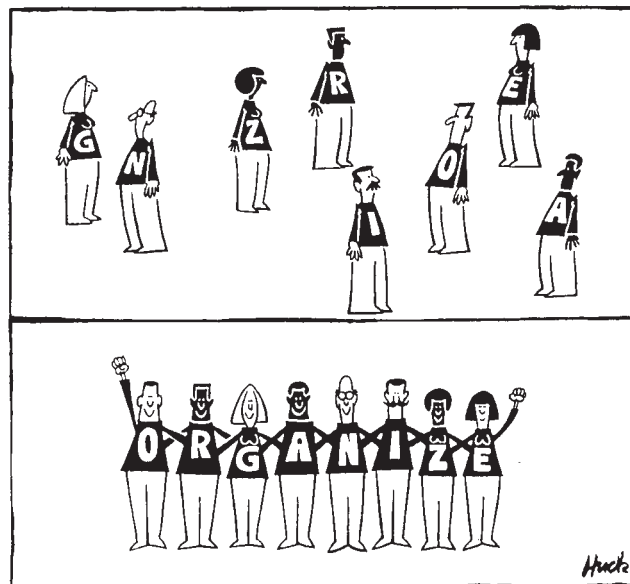
The future of our union depends on our ability to attract and encourage new members, in new and old industries.

We need to find ways of connecting with workers in new industries and non-unionized workplaces. We need to spread the word.

The advantages of being part of a union are clear:

- Full-time work;
- Better wages and benefits;
- Fair working conditions; and
- Access to a grievance and arbitration procedure.

Reach out to non-unionized women. Help them organize and continue to build a stronger union!





GETTING TO WORK:

Building Solidarity and a Stronger Union: Organizing New Members

The majority of women work in unorganized industries and services across our economy. Workplaces are often small, wages are low and working conditions are poor. Working together with other volunteer organizers, Steelworker women are often best able to reach these unorganized women to talk about the benefits of joining a union and negotiating a collective agreement.

Women activists and organizers provide important role models to new and potential members as they develop leadership skills, self-esteem and confidence in the union.

What Can You Do?

- Invite your staff representative to your meeting to talk about organizing.
- Can you identify three workplaces that are unorganized?
- Work with community groups on various issues (e.g. violence, harassment, pay equity, employment equity, human rights).
- Promote solidarity amongst women by participation in demonstrations or events

on International Women's Day or December 6th, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.



- Explain to other women that women's issues (e.g., work, equality, discrimination, family, health and safety) are a priority for the union.
- Ask potential new members about their working conditions.
- Demonstrate what the union has done for women and visible minority groups.

- Talk about the union and its membership with neighbours, friends and acquaintances in stores, restaurants, day cares, etc. – talk and get the message out!
- Share resources with other women's groups (e.g., policy statements, research, information, literature).
- Develop a local newsletter to educate and promote awareness about women's issues.
- Participate in school visits; set up an information kiosk at university job fairs.

What Are You Going To Do?



POLITICAL ACTION: LOBBYING FOR CHANGE

The United Steelworkers has a strong history of fighting for political, economic and social equality for all people in Canada. Struggles at the local level for strong collective agreement provisions are often the first step toward changing labour laws and regulations to benefit all workers.



The following is a step-by-step guide to help you lobby for change.

Identify the issue or problem

Talk to your members. If, for example, there has been a change in the design of the workplace, ask how that change is affecting them. Has the change made their job better? Has it helped them to work better with their coworkers or has it increased competition between workers and led to problems of harassment and discrimination? If there is a problem or issue to be addressed, research and define the problem with your members.



Identify support

Build alliances and partners in your work for change. You might be surprised as you talk about the issue how many people will support you and work with you. Work with them to further define the issue and identify possible solution or strategies for change. You will be much more successful if those involved take part in bringing about change.

Propose change

The Collective Agreement:

Many of our laws on health and safety and human rights issues reflect the struggles and gains made through collective bargaining. Review your collective agreement for provisions

that help improve wages and working conditions for women and all workers.

If your collective agreement does not have a provision to prevent and deal with incidents of harassment, you might want to talk to other members in your workplace and together propose contract language to your negotiating committee and membership. Provide background information and demonstrate why your issue is important not just for you but for all members and future members of your local.

Identify support and make sure you maintain the focus and attention on your issues. You don't have to nag but let your negotiating committee know you are willing to back them up if negotiations get difficult. If you have never had a woman on the negotiating committee, your experience in lobbying for change will encourage other women to take a more active role in future negotiations.

Local Union Policies and Procedures:

Meetings and the conduct of local

The following resolution was drafted by Local 9288 to ensure the local union executive would reflect the membership. The resolution, passed by 2/3 of the members at the regular Local Union meeting, amended their bylaws.

WHEREAS, there is a need and a desire for affirmative action at the executive level; and

WHEREAS, the constitution of the workplace is approximately 50 per cent women.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the United Steelworkers Local 9288 adopt a policy ensured that at all times either the president or the vice present of the local will be a woman.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the above policy become a ByLaw of Local Union 9288.

union officers are set out in the by-laws for local unions. Often, local unions will amend by-laws and procedures to meet specific needs of their membership. For example, meetings held at 7 pm may be impossible for people to attend if they have child or elder care responsibilities. You can propose

changing meeting times and the location to be more accessible. Survey the needs of workers, draft a proposal or resolution and together, with your supporters, present your recommendation for change to your local union membership.

Union Policies and Procedures:

Every several years, the United Steelworkers holds an international constitutional convention. In between, there is a Canadian national policy conference to focus on current union and workplace issues and to develop strategies on how to respond to these issues. Local unions submit resolutions that are debated at these conferences and, if adopted, become union policies.

In November 1995, at the Canadian Policy Conference in Vancouver, the union passed the following composite resolution on harassment:

WHEREAS, the United Steelworkers has strong policies on dealing with and combating all forms of harassment and discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the growing diversity of the members we represent requires that our Union take new steps to ensure harassment-free workplaces and internal activities.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the next phase of our Union's anti-harassment initiatives include the following:

That our Union examines the feasibility of training workplace anti-harassment facilitators, and that we support local unions in

their efforts to have the facilitators' work sponsored and paid for by their employers.

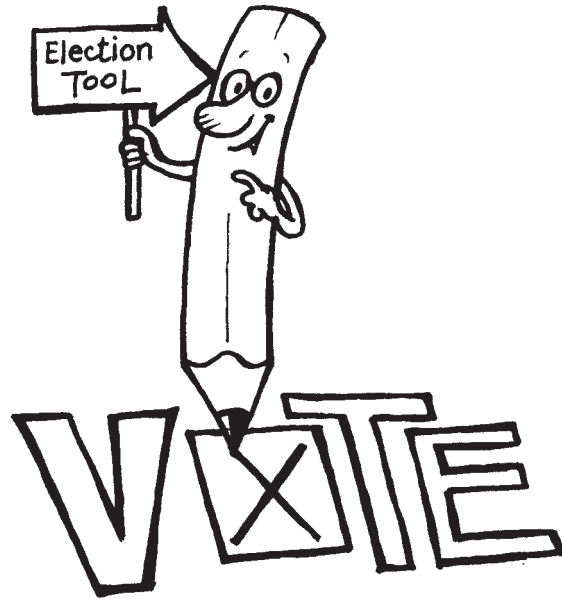
That the Union also develop a program to train local union and unit officers, union instructors and education coordinators on how to respond to cases of harassment and discrimination, and continue to train and support regional complaints counsellors.

That the Steelworkers education program develop a module on identifying and handling issues to be included in the Basic Stewards and health and safety courses.

That this Conference encourages our local unions to negotiate language in their collective agreements that provides for non-discriminatory and harassment-free workplaces, backup up by union-trained anti-harassment coordinators.

Community and Government:

Many of the provisions achieved through struggle in our collective agreements are now shared by all workers thanks to legislative change. Union activists together with community activists have worked hard to elect government members who fight for strong labour laws, health and safety provisions and social legislation to protect workers and their families. A strong women's committee can help to ensure candidates for political office understand our issues and in turn, help members of women's committees better understand the political process. Getting involved in election campaigns not only helps to promote the union's issues, it also helps to expand the network of activists and potential union members. Meeting other volunteers is a great way of reaching out to unorganized workers.





NDP → NDP

GETTING TO WORK: Finding Out About the NDP

One of the most important things you can do for yourself, your family, your community and your union is to get politically active. The union supports the New Democratic Party (NDP) because of its democratic principles and its support of the trade union movement in Canadian political culture. The CCF and NDP have in the past, and continue today, to break new ground in social and economic policies.

Together, the labour movement and the NDP have made a difference in Canada, since the CLC and the CCF came together as founding partners of the new party. We have accomplished great things. And our relationship has helped make labour stronger, more secure, and better able to resist those who would see us simply eliminated from the Canadian social and economic scene. Together, labour and the party have successfully campaigned for universal health care, government training, unemployment insurance and the protection of social programs.

Working people have never needed a strong social democratic party more than now. The NDP has never needed the strength and security of its link to the trade union movement more than it does now.

What Can You Do?

- Are you a member of the New Democratic Party?
- Are you active in your local riding association?
- Is your local union affiliated to the New Democratic Party?
- Invite a speaker from the NDP to come to your next women's committee meeting.
- Help identify potential NDP electoral candidates: municipal, provincial and federal.
- During the election campaigns, develop a list of questions on women's issues. Ask the candidates how they would address your concerns.
- Attend NDP meetings and conventions to make sure your concerns are reflected in the party's policies and resolutions.

What Are You Going To Do?



IN SUMMARY: IS YOUR WOMEN'S COMMITTEE WORKING?



We hope the suggestions in this document help your women's committee. After having reviewed this guide you should be able to pinpoint and clarify some of the areas in which you feel your women's committee has been successful, or is experiencing growing pains. Don't feel that you are alone in these struggles. Often, what you think is a problem unique to your committee

simply is not. It's the same one that many other women's committees have experienced or are experiencing in the process of development. That's why women's committees should be networking, sharing, talking, attending conferences, lobbying, and looking to each other for support and ideas.

Don't give up! Try not to isolate your committee. Support comes when the committee reflects the priorities of its members and everyone recognizes the committee's function.

This resource guide was produced as a result of sisters' requests for advice and information on setting up and organizing women's committees. It is a working document and should be revised as needed. Suggestions for additions or amendments will help to make this a valuable resource in the future. Please send your comments and suggestions to the National Women's Committee c/o United Steelworkers National Office, 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 800, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1 K7, or e-mail info@steelworkers.ca.

**Building
solidarity and a
stronger union
- that's what
Steelworkers
women's
committees are
all about.**

Remember, the main goal of a women's committee is attainable. Women's committees are a key part of the Steelworkers. We are a stronger union when our policies and collective agreements reflect the needs of our sisters and brothers.

GLOSSARY

Activism: The process of taking positive and direct action to achieve a particular goal (e.g., women’s equality).

Advocacy: The support of a cause, whether through oral or written submissions. When women support equal rights, they are acting as advocates for the cause.

Affirmative Action: Any action designed to overcome barriers to equality, compensate for past and present discrimination and improve the economic status of the disadvantaged group.

Caucus: Similar to a committee, a caucus provides education and information about women’s issues as well as a power base from which to make recommendations. A caucus can formulate policy, make recommendations, lobby, and provide representation on union executives.

Coalition: A group of individuals with a common purpose to initiate action, usually through lobbying, with the objective of reaching out and building campaigns, raising awareness, and

achieving legislative change (e.g., fair and decent working conditions).

Equality: Equal access and opportunity to pay, jobs, pensions and other benefits (e.g., pay equity means equal pay for work of equal value).

Empowerment: The process of democratizing power and authority so groups in society can make their own decisions and give their own voice to issues which affect them (e.g., a women’s committee can empower women).

Feminism: The movement of women to have political, economic and social rights equal to those of men.

Gender: The classification of male and female according to sex groupings (i.e., men or women).

Lobby: Acting for a special interest group to influence changes or improvements in legislation, policies, programs and government decisions.

Minority: A group of people in society who because of their racial origin, religion, sexuality, or physical and mental challenges, are politically and socially controlled by a larger group.

Networking: Building alliances and support throughout the union structure. Communication, contact, developing links, meeting new people, and keeping in touch with other women are all part of networking.

Racial harassment: Words or actions which show disregard or cause humiliation to another person because of race, colour, religion, language, creed, ancestry, place of origin, or ethnic origin.

Resolution: A formal statement of opinion adopted by a group, which leads to a specific action.

Sexism: Social and economic exploitation and domination of members of one sex by the other.

Sexual harassment: Unwanted, implied or sexually oriented remarks, behaviour and actions, which are perceived to create a negative psychological and emotional environment.

Solidarity: Expressing group unity and agreement of ideas and principles, which creates an atmosphere of mutual understanding and helps achieve similar goals.

Strategy: A broad plan that explains where you are at present, where you want to be in the future (goal) and how to get there. It can be a list of ideas or methods needed to attain objectives.

Women's Committee: A committee (of a union in this case) established to mobilize the activities of its women members. The committee can lobby, advocate, research and develop policy, report, advise, and make recommendations to the local union executive about issues important to women.