

A UNION FOR TEACHING SUPPORT STAFF

WHY ORGANIZE?

If Simon Fraser University weren't growing like a fungus, we might not need a union. But it is. If budget cutbacks weren't forcing administration to squeeze everywhere it can, we might not need a union. But they are. If all departments hired teaching support staff and distributed scarce resources on a rational basis, we might not need a union. But many don't. If we weren't doing necessary and demanding work, we might not need a union. But we are. So we need to organize!



If you were working for a small company where everybody knew everybody, you might be able to protect your rights and interests. You might be able to negotiate face to face with your boss and get what you need. But working in an institution as big as SFU--no matter how competent and articulate you are--means you can't protect your rights and interests. You're like an ant trying to open discussion with an elephant. You can't even get the beast's attention. And it might stomp on you any minute, with or without awareness or malice. To avoid getting stomped on, you need a union.

Most other workers on campus are unionized and have contracts. When budget makers put the squeeze on, they'll naturally squeeze where there is the most give. Budget cuts will most affect unprotected workers. Until we get a union, that's us. At the moment, we have no security from budget to budget. Cutbacks could eliminate any of our positions, could arbitrarily reduce our salaries, and there would be no effective means of protest.

In some departments, jobs, pay, and workloads are distributed evenhandedly and with a view to making us as secure as possible. But in others, department heads exercise a whim of iron. Arbitrary favoritism in hiring, workloads, and unequal pay keeps teaching support staff cowed and divided. A union would fight these abuses.

As a teaching support worker, you do an important job--about 40% of the university's teaching! Yet, you are hired under conditions which make doing your best work difficult. Often you don't know until the last minute if you have a job or what field it is in. Often you are assigned to a course you know little about. Your paycheck is handled as though it were a grant or an act of charity instead of wages for work. A union could struggle against these conditions. We are organizing a union. If you are a teaching assistant, language aide, lab assistant, or sessional lecturer (or have been in the last 60 days) you can join our union.

In the next few weeks there will be more leaflets like this one in your box. They'll cover such topics as the special problems of foreign teaching assistants, sessional lecturers and language aides, the legal distinctions between unions and professional organizations, the process of establishing a union, the procedures for treating grievances, our economic welfare, hiring procedures, and other questions that need answering. If you want to join, or have questions the leaflets don't answer, or want answers more quickly, we hope you'll phone us at 684-6737.

"No employer, and no person acting on behalf of an employer, shall...seek by intimidation, by dismissal, by threat of dismissal, or by the imposition of a penalty...to compel or induce an employee to refrain from becoming or continuing to be, a member or officer or representative of a trade union."
--Labour Code of British Columbia Act, 1973 (2nd Sess.),
C.122, s.3.

To: Association of University and College Employees, Local #6
1113-207 West Hastings, Vancouver, B.C.
Phone 684-6737

Name _____ Dept. _____
Address _____ Phone _____

For further information. All replies in strict confidence.