



POLICY STATEMENT

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

For years the B.C. Federation of Labour has had Affirmative Action policy in principle. There has been a long debate on affirmative action, what it means and the best method of achieving it. This debate has taken place not only in the labour movement but in management circles, and in the political forum. The longer the discussion, the more expanded the proposals; each reflecting the vested interests of the debater.

For this reason, the Women's Rights Committee of the B.C. Federation of Labour feels it imperative that the labour movement very clearly establish the basic principles around which we will see affirmative action built, whether through its internal structure, through the collective bargaining process or through the legislative process.

Equal Access

The labour movement endorses the principle of equal access for hiring of women to do any job in the workplace that she is able to do. All affiliates must be prepared to take up the cause of sisters who are discriminated against during job application. This applies whether she is currently a member in the bargaining unit, bidding for a job, or is applying for initial entry into a job from outside the jurisdiction of the bargaining unit.

The same principle must apply in all areas of job promotion.

Equal Training

The labour movement endorses the principle of the equal right of women workers to training in every occupation, whether through apprenticeship, education, on-the-job skill development, or through any other form of training program.

Seniority

Seniority is a sacred trade union principle. When a worker invests her or his job-learning time in an enterprise, that enterprise owes her or him something not owed to people who have not done so. Seniority is the most offensive principle to employers; and most dear to union people. It was secured at greatest initial cost, and is maintained only with the greatest vigilance.

Indeed, seniority is the only barrier against employers using promotion and training to reward their friends and punish their enemies. The labour movement does not accept the employer motivated argument that seniority is responsible for women's slow progress in training, promotion and access to non-traditional jobs. The labour

movement therefore will only accept affirmative action that continues to protect the sanctity of the seniority system which ultimately protects all workers, both women and men.

Affirmative Action Program

Affirmative Action programs whether developed through new legislation or in the workplace can only take place effectively if the worker is adequately represented. Therefore, the labour movement takes the unalterable position that any affirmative action program must be developed with at least fifty percent union representation on all committees.

Summary

The trade union movement was founded and has developed because of our strong belief in the right of workers to a just society and a just working environment. That belief is as valid today as it was at our birth, and it is embodied in the spirit of this affirmative action policy statement.

Adopted in Convention 1980 B.C. Federation of Labour

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