












Chapter 5 Resources for Creating Flexible Workplaces, Not Infinitely Flexible Workers

5.1 An Action Checklist

Many of the recommendations that were included in “Strategies for Working Families” continue to be appropriate and useful in 2003. Most unions who had representatives at the “Bargaining For Working Families” Symposium when we first presented this material in 1994 have put these recommendations into action. They may find this list useful use as a tool to evaluate their efforts over the past ten years and to re-new their efforts for the next ten. Unions or locals that have not been active around these issues can use it to get started.

Bargain Strategically - A Summary

-  Work in coalitions with other unions and community activists. It is difficult to take initiatives to the bargaining table without support in the community.
-  Discuss work-life issues at union meetings, hold education sessions, and ensure that members have paid union time to work on the issues.
-  If “caring friendly” measures are new to your workplace, bargain for a survey of members’ caring needs.
-  Increase eligibility for all benefits, time measures, leaves and programs so that they include part-time and contract workers.
-  Expand the definitions of families and spouses.
-  Bargain for reduced time at work.
-  Bargain for more paid caring related leaves, paid vacation, limits to overtime, control over scheduling, reduced work weeks, etc. (See the Workplace Checklist). Current challenges are top-up agreements for paid parental leave and including the new compassionate leave in legislation and agreements.
-  Link demands for increased caring related leaves with campaigns to increase EI benefits and expand basic employment standards.
-  Link demands for workplace services to the expansion of quality public programs: early childhood care and education, home care and pharmacare.
-  Continue working towards pay equity. Women will continue to carry the burden of caring as long as their wages are lower than men’s.
-  Take control of joint, or employer-based funds and programs.

Raise these ISSUES with members and employers:

- 📖 Develop sectoral bargaining in hard to organize, low paid personal service sectors like child care and home care. The goals for sectoral bargaining are higher wages, insurance benefits, sick leave, training funds and caring friendly leaves.
- 📖 Connect the day to day personal responsibilities and worries of workers to their analysis of corporate and economic restructuring. Our lives have been restructured, along with our work.
- 📖 Challenge the idea of the “ideal, flexible worker”. Redefine the “ideal, flexible workplace” as one that recognizes and supports workers’ caring responsibilities.
- 📖 Create broad support for employment equity, and address any backlash. Systematic discrimination continues to exist. And we must treat people differently in order to achieve equality.
- 📖 Address any misgivings members may have about these “new” leaves and benefits. For instance, women who raised their children and worked without these measures may not understand why younger parents should have more assistance. Encourage members to see what has changed: e.g., wages are lower, hours are longer and extended family networks are no longer available.
- 📖 Address any ways that measures such as flexible work weeks, job sharing or homeworking can be used against workers, or set workers up in competition with each other.
- 📖 Resist any temptation to simplify the issues or reduce campaigns to a single issue: the solutions will be interconnected measures which touch a number of different parts of our caring lives.

Create Union-life Balance

“The Ways that Unions Work It's a balancing act. They say they want her to get active,

A checklist for caring unions:

- 📖 Create union guidelines and handbooks for bargaining for caring time/ reduced work time.
- 📖 Hold union meetings and courses, as much as possible, in locations and at times convenient for people with caring responsibilities. Provide child care.

*Take a course and run for office.
But will they help her to succeed
And adopt a child care policy to meet her needs?*

- USWA

www.uswa.ca

- 📖 Organize bargaining so that workers with caring responsibilities can take part.
- 📖 Conduct union surveys about members caring needs.
- 📖 Hold social or educational events in accessible locations for union members and their households.
- 📖 Organize a "discount committee" to identify outlets of inexpensive union made goods and services for workers and their households. (USWA)
- 📖 Organize a support network of retired members to create a seniors network, organize social and educational events or maintain an "on-line" computer bulletin board of union and community resources, events and contacts.
- 📖 Establish a union fund to assist members who may need help with child or dependent care costs.
- 📖 Establish union run, non-profit medical and dental clinics for members and their families.

5.2 Work-Life Balance Resources for Activists

Resource	What is it? How do I find it?
Canadian Union Resources	<p>A Steelworker Guide to Negotiating the Balance of Work and Family Responsibilities. Available at www.uswa.ca</p> <p>Public Service Alliance of Canada, Issues: Hot Topics for Collective Bargaining Available at: http://www.psac.com/news/publications/publications-e.shtml</p>
<i>Work and Family Provisions in Canadian Collective Agreements</i>	<p>Book, 2000. Produced by Human Resources Development Canada, this is a study of caring friendly provisions in major collective agreements that span the mid-1990s to early 2000s. It can be viewed at http://labour.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife/collective_agreement1/intro-en.html#6</p>
<i>The Labor Project for Working Families</i> (U.S.)	<p>Resource Centre and Web Site. While the U.S. legislative framework is very different than Canada's, the Labor Project for Working Families provides a collection of resources that can be useful for Canadians. It is an advocacy and policy center providing technical assistance, resources and education to unions and union members addressing family issues in the workplace including child care, elder care, flexible work schedules, family leave and quality of life issues. Find it at http://violet.berkeley.edu/~iir/workfam/home.html</p>
<i>Compendium 2001: 150 Canadian Statistics on Work, Family & Well-being</i>	<p>Report, 2001. Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, The Center is based at the University of Guelph, and is "committed to using its research and teaching expertise to promote individual and family well-being, responsive and productive work environments, and strong, sustainable communities." The Compendium is available for download at http://www.worklifecanada.ca/.</p>
<i>National Work-life Conflict Study 2001</i>	<p>Report. 2001. By Linda Duxbury and Chris Higgins, conducted for Health Canada. Available for download at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/work-travail/</p>
<i>Voices of Canadians: Seeking Work-life Balance</i>	<p>Report, 2003. This is a compilation of the comments of Canadian workers regarding how they feel about the stress they are facing in their daily lives. It draws from Health Canada's 2001 <i>National Work-Life Conflict Study</i>. Available for download at http://labour-travail.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife/vcswlb-tcrctvp/pdf.cfm</p>
<i>Work-life Balance in Canadian Workplaces</i>	<p>Website. Created by Human Resources Development Canada's Labour Program "to help organizations design and implement supportive programs and policies facilitating work-life balance". http://labour-travail.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife/</p>

Work-life Balance in Canada: a report to ministers responsible for labour in Canada Report, 2002. Prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee on Work-Life Balance of the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL). The Report focuses on legislative framework and recommends “options for action” for jurisdictions across the country. Available for download at <http://labour-travail.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife/wlbc-ctvpc/tm.cfm>

The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies Web site and resource centre. The Clearinghouse provides cross-national, comparative information about the policies, programs, benefits and services available in the advanced industrialized countries to address child, youth, and family needs. Coverage focuses on 23 advanced industrialized countries. At Columbia University. <http://www.childpolicyintl.org>

Work and Family Connection Web Site. This site provides a view of how Human Resource managers see these issues. It is a “Worldwide Information Clearinghouse for Work-Life Professionals”. Available at <http://www.workfamily.com/>
