



Radio Shack to pay \$330,000 to union

By WILFRED LIST

Radio Shack has agreed to pay the United Steelworkers of America \$330,000 in damages resulting from bad-faith bargaining and other flagrant violations of the labor laws during an organizing drive at the firm's Barrie, Ont., warehouse in 1978 and during a strike a year later.

The settlement, which also covers payments to be made to members of the bargaining unit at the time of the dispute, is based on a landmark decision by the Ontario Labor Relations Board in December, 1979. The board ordered the payment of damages and the most comprehensive set of remedies for bad-faith bargaining ever fashioned in Canada.

David Patterson, Ontario director of the Steelworkers, said preliminary calculations show that \$187,000 will be distributed among about 100 employees and \$131,000 will be retained by the union. The balance will pay for a film and other costs incurred by the union.

The union and Radio Shack also reached a settlement on a multi-million-dollar slander action brought by the company against the Steelworkers. It arose from statements made about the company during a union boycott of the firm's products.

Mr. Patterson said that under that settlement, the union will pay the company's legal costs of \$19,772.65.

Radio Shack signed a first

agreement with the union in April, 1980, ending an eight-month strike. Last March, it signed a new two-year agreement.

Union staff representatives in Barrie said earlier that relations between the company and the union have turned around "1,000 per cent."

Mr. Patterson said the union is proceeding with care to determine the distribution of the award to the employees. It has to take into account those on the picket line, those who struck but did not do picket duty and those who stayed in the plant.

"We want to be fair to everyone," he said.

Lawyers Aubrey Golden and James Hayes, who represented the union in the initial labor board proceedings, worked out the settlement in consultation with Mr. Patterson, who described it as a historic precedent.

"We think it will serve as proof to other employers that the union will always defend the interests of its members. The repercussions of this breakthrough will be felt throughout Canada," Mr. Patterson said.

Radio Shack is a subsidiary of the Texas-based Tandy Corp., which has more than 7,000 stores throughout the world. The Barrie warehouse is the only Tandy unit with a union agreement.

The labor board had found the electronics company guilty of a wide range of unfair labor practices.

200 women join the pickets at Radio

By John Deverell Toronto Star

Today was Women's Solidarity Day on the picket lines at Radio Shack in Barrie and at Blue Cross in Toronto, where workers are involved in long strikes for first contracts and union security.

More than 200 demonstrators from unions and Toronto women's organizations made the trek to Barrie, where members of the United Steelworkers have been on strike nearly four months.

But the company evidently got wind of the mass demonstration and pickets arrived at 7 a.m. to find workers already

inside the plant. They have normally entered with police escort around 7.30 a.m.

The demonstrators then returned to rally with members of the United Auto Workers in the seventh week of a strike at Blue Cross.

"We want to remind the Davis government that the right to a union and a first contract is an important issue for women," said Deirdre Gallagher, a Steelworkers representative.

About 80 per cent of the 200 employees at Radio Shack and more than 90 per cent of the 450 at Blue Cross are women.

The issue fueling both strikes is management's refusal to make the checkoff of union dues compulsory for all employees represented by the union.

Radio Shack is still insisting on voluntary dues, despite the Steelworkers' call for a national boycott of their stores. Blue Cross in the next few months will lose about \$30 million in annual premium income because the Auto Workers have persuaded Ford, General Motors and Chrysler to switch their employees' dental and health insurance programs to other insurance carriers.

The unions see a plot behind the

Shack and Blue Cross

companies' hard line on the dues issue.

"Without compulsory dues it's much easier for an anti-union employer to intimidate and divide the employees and get rid of a union after the first contract," Ms Gallagher said.

"Women need unions to help them out of their low-wage job ghettos so they can earn equal pay and equal benefits," she added. "The strikes show how determined these women are to do that."

Since the Steelworkers began to organize Radio Shack in early 1978, the company has been convicted of numerous viola-

tions of the Labor Relations Act, including firing employees for union activity. It now faces charges of bargaining in bad faith, with a ruling from the labor board expected soon.

At Blue Cross, where starting wages are \$135 a week, the employees want to replace the company's merit pay system with increases based on length of service. The change would reduce differences of up to \$50 a week among people doing the same work.

The disputes have sharply divided employees at both companies. At least half

the workers at both Blue Cross and Radio Shack are crossing the picket lines to go to work, creating animosity that likely won't end no matter what the outcome of the strikes.

To reduce this kind of strife in first-contract bargaining, the Ontario Federation of Labor has proposed union dues be made compulsory as soon as new unions are certified with majority support.

It also argues that arbitration should take the place of strikes in the first round of contract talks, when new bargaining relationships are being formed.

Radio Shack - another Fleck

By Beverly Bernardo

TORONTO—Another Fleck?

That's how the 200 striking members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) at Radio Shack in Barrie, Ontario, see their struggle. As with striking workers at Ontario's Fleck Manufacturing plant last year, a majority of Radio Shack workers are women; they face an anti-union boss and police harassment of their picket lines.

As during the victorious Fleck strike, the basic issue is union security. The workers are fighting for their first contract.

The company's anti-union stance is clear. Since the Ontario Labor Relations Board certified the Radio Shack workers last year, the company has been convicted of unfair labor practices; failure to comply with the Board's orders; interference with trade-union activities; and failure to reinstate workers fired for their union organizing activities.

Confronted with these union-busting tactics, the Radio Shack workers went out on strike in August. Already, five strike supporters have been arrested on the picket line.

The strikers are out to build support for their cause. A float carrying striking workers led the Steelworkers' contingent in the Toronto Labor Day Parade. Marching USWA members carried placards reading: "Radio Shack turns me off," "Don't shop at Radio Shack."

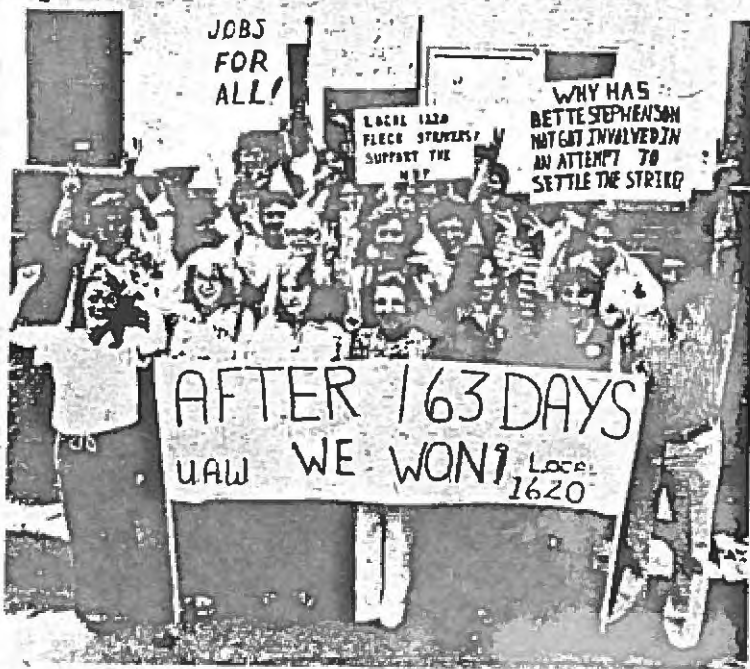
The Steelworkers are organizing a boycott of Radio Shack, a multinational corporation that prides itself in keeping unions out of its operations. USWA locals are being asked to set up informational pickets at Radio Shack retail outlets to urge shoppers to support the boycott.

Organized solidarity work was crucial to the Fleck victory. Trade unionists, women's organizations, and members of the New

Democratic Party will all need to get out the truth about the strike and build solidarity with it.

The Radio Shack workers deserve active solidarity from the rest of the labor movement. As one striker told me at a party at the Steelworkers Hall following the Labor Day parade, "Management saw us as just a bunch of women, but if Fleck can do it so can we."

Beverly Bernardo recently was a member of USWA Local 3767.



Fleck strike was a big victory for women workers.