

# Clara Fraser



# VS.



# Seattle City Light

*Fraser's defense of a working woman's right to express her political ideology on and off the job is the civil liberties test case of the '80s.*

BY ROBERT CRISMAN AND MARC KRASNOWSKY

**S**eventy years after Pacific Northwest courtrooms reverberated with the tremors of the free speech fights launched by IWW rebels, the First Amendment rights of working people are once more on trial in Seattle.

As the testimony unfolds in the critical case of Clara Fraser against Seattle City Light management, a harrowing story comes to light, an incontrovertible record of city management skullduggery against a woman employee who has long been a

frontrunner in the crusade for the dignity of labor and for affirmative action for minorities and women.

The right of workers to speak their minds on and off the job, and to freely choose their own friends and associates, is on trial in Seattle.

The job rights of the most exploited and demeaned workers—lowpaid women and people of color—are also on trial.

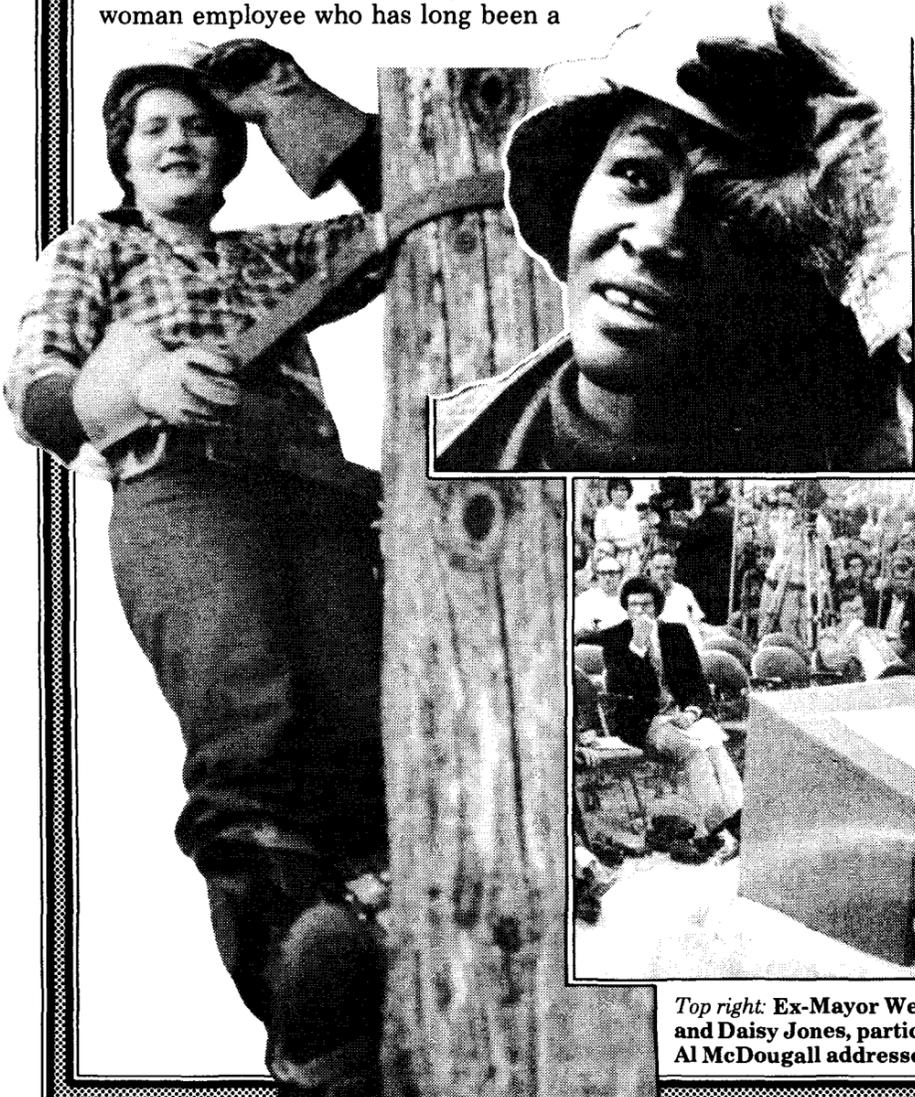
And the right of political radicals and critics of all types to express their convictions, without persecution from today's breed of McCarthyite witchhunters in government and business, is on trial, too.

That is why feminist Gloria Steinem called this case "the human and civil rights test case of the '80s."

And that is why an impressive and significant groundswell of support erupted almost overnight once the case came to public hearing on January 14, 1980.

Fraser filed her sex and political ideology discrimination charges six years ago, in August, 1974, and was upheld by the Seattle Human

TO NEXT PAGE



Top right: Ex-Mayor Wes Uhlman and Gordon Vickery. Left: Electrical Trades Trainees Heidi Durham and Daisy Jones, participants in a unique training program organized by Fraser. Above: Walkout leader Al McDougall addresses City Light workers in April, 1974. Fraser, in white jacket, seated behind him.

# As Clara Fraser's historic case of discrimination based on political ideology unfolds in the courtroom, it is clear that her political ideology, labor, as well as the tenets of socialist feminism, are equated to be associated with Clara."

Rights Department in 1977. In 1979, Mayor Charles Royer conciliated a settlement, but the Seattle City Council rejected it and called for a hearing to determine whether Fraser may win job reinstatement, back pay and damages.

**With endorsement from Washington State's King County Labor Council AFL-CIO, the National Lawyers Guild, and scores of labor, civil rights, and other social-issue organizations and concerned individuals across the country,** Fraser's charge—that Seattle City Light harassed and then fired her in a blatant act of discrimination on the basis of sex and political ideology—has won sympathy from thousands of people.

## Fired for her principles

**C**lara Fraser was hired on June 4, 1973 to be the first Education Coordinator for Seattle City Light, a public utility. A few months later, she was assigned to organize the Electrical Trades Trainee (ETT) program, designed to bring women into the all-male trade.

Fraser was chosen for this unique task because of her rich experience as a feminist and civil rights leader, as an organizer and administrator, and as a professional developer of adult vocational projects for the disadvantaged. A veteran labor activist, Fraser helped pave the way for women's massive entry into unions and nontraditional trades in the '60s and '70s.

Her background in labor struggles thrust her into another leadership role during and after a dramatic mass walkout by City Light employees in April, 1974, a year after she was hired.

She was elected by the employees to chair a committee to negotiate a Bill of Rights with management. She participated in the Mayor Uhlman Recall Campaign, an offshoot of the walkout. She criticized management's elimination of planned affirmative action training, and its inadequate safety policies, during hearings of a Public Review Committee to investigate City Light Superintendent Gordon Vickery's practices. She drew attention from the media, and was publicly criticized by Vickery.

Many other City Light employees were highly visible leaders. But Fraser was also a known socialist, a 35-year participant in the antiwar, civil liberties, Black freedom and Native American movements, and support work for international struggles. After 21 years in the Socialist Workers Party, she had left it and helped to found the Freedom Socialist Party in 1966 and Radical Women in 1968.

Fraser was clearly anathema to the anti-labor mayor and the City Light bosses, and she was marked for removal.

**Management subjected her to a red-baiting smear campaign, attempted to disrupt and destroy the excellent ETT program for women, and removed her as coordinator of the program. Constant harassment included a specially contrived civil service exam to get rid of her, the secret elimination of her position from the budget, and unwarranted reprimands. She was finally "laid off" without notice, which is illegal under the City Charter.**

The stated reason? A "5% cutback of the labor force."

## Disobedient and Disloyal

**E**choing and intensifying the original redbaiting, guilt-by-association charges hurled by top management against Fraser, Assistant City Attorney Dona Cloud, representing City Light, has used the hearing procedure to perpetuate and expand the political discrimination already inflicted on Fraser.

Fraser is charged with being a "disloyal and disobedient" troublemaker who "influenced" and "manipulated" the massive worker discontent to further her own political "ends."

Cloud has also introduced a new charge, "incompetency," a rationale for firing

Fraser especially devised for the trial.

Cloud has focused heavily on Fraser's off-the-job "affiliation" with some of the women trainees in Radical Women, a socialist feminist organization.

And of course Fraser is denounced as "abrasive" (she "couldn't get along with people"), as lazy (cheating on working hours), as a crook (documents disappeared), and as dishonest (padding a consultant's bill). Like every whistle-blower against government chicanery, Fraser is being personally maligned and slandered to blunt the effect of her criticism.

But Fraser's case is armed with the strongest of all weapons—truth, facts, and logic. Faced with the potent testimony of scores of Fraser's witnesses, management's legal house of cards has already been demolished.

Under questioning by Fraser's attorney, John Chen Beckwith, witnesses have attested to her effective work for affirmative action and labor's aims at City Light, the respect she earned from her coworkers and from sections of mid-management, her sudden removal as ETT program organizer in June, 1974, which seriously endangered the program, and Superintendent Vickery's strong hostility to her, expressed in schemes and tricks employed to discredit and remove her.

## Testimony on the walkout

**A**l McDougall, a journeyman Cable Splicer and a leader of the employee walkout in 1974, testified at length about the bitter division between dictator Vickery in his "marble palace," and employees in the field.

Marilyn Bircher, Cost Accounting Manager, was a spokesperson for the clericals during the walkout. She described how the Vickery administration "**manipulated people out of their positions and did little about affirmative action.**"

Dick Sugiyama, former Equal Employment Opportunity Investigator, stated that Vickery "**circumvented the proper personnel practices and promoted his own favorites.**" Sugiyama said that Vickery angrily "stressed loyalty over competence" and used his "hatchet people" on those who differed with him.

During the employee eruption against Vickery, Fraser quickly became a leader, according to Mike Sharar, former Community Relations chief and close associate of Vickery, because of "**her experience in the antiwar and women's movements, her force of personality and her capabilities. She was a central figure.**"

Marilyn Bircher recounted how instrumental Fraser was in forging the alliance of the primarily female and nonunion clerical workers and the unionized males. "**Clara explained that this was a labor/management dispute, that our problems were fundamentally the same as the men's. She became a focal point for us.**"

Two days after the men of Local 77 (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) walked off their jobs, the clericals, engineers, and many professionals poured out of the City Light building to join them. Fraser and Bircher were key figures in sparking this solidarity.

## Negotiating a Bill of Rights

**T**he unprecedented eleven-day walkout was ended on April 19, 1974 with an agreement between the workers, the mayor and Vickery. One provision authorized negotiations to hammer out an employee Bill of Rights and Responsibilities to replace Vickery's militaristic "Disciplinary Code."

At the mass meeting ending the walkout, the dissident workers elected Fraser to their negotiating team, and the team, in

turn, selected her as their chairperson, which made her the co-chair of the combined worker-management negotiating committee.

Robert S. Leighton III, Senior Power Station Operator and a walkout leader, testified that Fraser "consistently upheld the positions of the employees" in the negotiations. "**She tried to get management to fulfill its promises.**"

George Rauch, Underground Systems Supervisor, was management co-chair on the Bill of Rights and Responsibilities Committee. Rauch, a hostile witness, admitted that Fraser "represented the employees in a manner agreeable to them," but complained that she forced management to "compromise" and to lengthen the time of meetings.

Rauch, Leighton, and McDougall all testified that the adopted Bill of Rights, completed after a year of negotiation, was never implemented by management. Attorney Beckwith has stressed this as an example of management treachery.

## The big red scare

**M**anagement lost little time in redbaiting Clara Fraser once the walkout erupted.

Joan Whiley, former Community Relations Specialist, said that at one point during the employee upheaval, Vickery showed her "what looked like extracts from a **police file**. It said Clara had been a member of the Communist Party in the New York area. I said 'It looks like someone's been going into **FBI files**.'"

Personnel Specialist Fran Ross testified that Administrative Services Director Carole Coe, Vickery's adjutant and Fraser's boss, labeled the walkout "**communist-inspired.**"

Said Ross, "Coe reminded me of the McCarthyite witchhunt of the '50s." Coe credited her inside information to "**a friend in the FBI,**" according to then-Assistant Personnel Manager Steve Church.

Charles Poole, a former Employment Practices Specialist for City Personnel, said he was told by Bill Rheubottom, Fraser's supervisor, that "**she was terminated because she was a communist.**"

Mike Sharar recalled the events surrounding a sloppily-produced, hoax leaflet that was circulated throughout City Light two days before the start of the Public Review Committee hearings (the public investigation of management policies won by the walkout).

The spurious leaflet invited people to hear Fraser speak about Vickery and Mayor Uhlman at a "Trotskyite" meeting at Freeway Hall. The leaflet also included an inflammatory FBI-style account of Fraser's radical history, including her voting record for Socialist Workers Party candidates!

Vickery gave one of the flyers to Sharar, saying he had been "made aware" of it "**at a meeting of downtown businessmen.**" Vickery asked him "to find out what I could about it." Sharar phoned Freeway Hall and found that no such meeting was scheduled. Vickery's reaction to this information was "**uncharacteristic silence.**"

"It was most particularly unusual for him to walk into **my** office, and to have no reaction to the fact that there was no meeting. My dealings with the Superintendent were such that I never found him at a loss for words . . . Mr. Vickery **knew more about the leaflet than he cared to share with me.**"

Robert Leighton, the head of the Mayor Uhlman Recall Committee, said he was "worried about the leaflet," so he and a fellow worker went to Freeway Hall on the evening of the alleged meeting. No one showed up, and Leighton concluded that the leaflet "**was an undercover smear campaign to convince employees not**

to be associated with Clara."

Marilyn Bircher testified that Fraser analyzed the hoax leaflet at a mass employee meeting, calling it a management-inspired provocation to divide the workers and diffuse their militancy. Fraser defended her right to be a radical, but offered to resign her official positions with the employee group. She was given a rousing vote of confidence to continue her role, said Bircher, and was applauded.

## The competency question

**W**itness after witness attested to Fraser's proficiency and professionalism, and her good relations with people.

Dick Sugiyama found her "very competent, very organized. When she was not getting any direction, she picked up the slack. There was good planning for the ETT programs. She met the deadlines."

Former trainee Jody Olvera, now a journeywoman Station Constructor, said Fraser set up the women's program so that "we could succeed, and not get dumped onto the job to see who would survive. I thought a lot of care had gone into dealing with the problems we would face, the things women haven't been taught."

## 1973

**June 4**—Clara Fraser hired as Education Coordinator.

**September**—Fraser assigned to coordinate the planning and implementation of the **Electrical Trades Trainee program for women**, a landmark project to develop women into City Light electricians.

## 1974

**February-March**—Supt. Gordon Vickery **cancel[s] the slots reserved for minorities and women** in a management training course, and also cancels a shorthand course developed by Fraser to help upgrade lowpaid minority and white women clericals.

Fraser, her supervisor, and two ETT officers protest these decisions.

Administrative Services Director Carole Coe blames Fraser for the protests, declares that Vickery is unhappy with Fraser's "attitude and performance," and instructs Fraser's supervisor, William Rheubottom, to be "more judgmental" of her.

**April**—Vickery issues a harsh "Disciplinary Code" for City Light employees.

**April 9-20**—Mass employee relation results in an **11-day walkout**.

The walkout inspires the subsequent **Mayor Uhlman Recall Campaign** (antilabor Uhlman backed Vickery against the 1500 City Light employees).

The walkout wins a no-reprisals pledge, reinstating suspended foremen, the establishment of a labor-management committee to negotiate a **Bill of Rights and Responsibilities** to replace the Disciplinary Code, and a **Public Review Committee** to investigate Vickery's practices.

Clara Fraser becomes a leading spokesperson for the dissident employees. She is instrumental in organizing support from the clericals and professionals to the Local 77 IBEW r who initiated the walkout, and she helps articulate the workers' grievances to the media.

Vickery and Coe try to discredit Fraser and the walkout through a red-baiting campaign. Vickery distributes sections of her FBI file to management while Coe announces that a friend of the FBI has told her that the walkout was "**communist-inspired.**"

**April 30**—First meeting of the

## ed on sex and at the rights of lly on public trial.

Former trainee Heidi Durham, now a junior Power Station Operator, testified that while Fraser was ETT Coordinator, the men electricians in the field were "open" to the trainees. "It was obvious that Clara had done a lot of communicating with people," she said.

Rod Handley, formerly Personnel Supervisor, said that Fraser was "a strong, forthright, rugged individual . . . highly competent . . . committed to affirmative action."

Said Willine Guillery, Fraser's secretary, "She was professional, more competent than Bill [her supervisor]. She generated much more work than he did, especially when she worked after hours."

Jack Telerico and Charles Poole, from City Personnel, said she was a good coordinator in the planning of the ETT program. Telerico said she was "very enjoyable to work with and disagree with," even though he opposed special training for women. Poole said that though he originally disagreed with some of Fraser's program concepts, he was later proven wrong.

Fran Ross said Fraser was adept at Human Relations training, and several foremen testified that they worked well with her.

(Fraser's Performance Evaluations were all graded as satisfactory—until

after the walkout.)

### ETT program sabotaged

**I**n a cynical effort to blunt the effects of Fraser's good work, and discredit her as well, management launched a campaign against the program Fraser had been assigned to promote.

The women Electrical Trades Trainees were supposed to be provided with three weeks of orientation and pre-placement training to help them cope with the difficulties of entering an unfamiliar and dangerous field of work. But after eight days, their pre-training was abruptly cancelled on July 3, 1974. A few days later, in a blatant instance of arbitrary, sexist practice at City Light, Fraser was removed as ETT Coordinator and replaced by her supervisor, Training Coordinator Bill Rheubottom, a less-qualified and totally disinterested male.

The ten trainees, according to trainee testimony, were then shoved out into the field "without proper equipment, clothes or preparation." If they ran into "racist and sexist harassment," they had no recourse, "no place to turn."

Trainee witnesses recounted the total lack of direction and support from Rheubottom. Said Daisy Jones, a Black trainee, Rheubottom "was just not there for us. Clara had reached out, been there when we needed her." Supervisor George Rauch corroborated this, affirming that Rheubot-

tom gave only "weak and ambiguous" direction to the trainees.

On August 5, 1974 nine trainees and Fraser filed a sex discrimination suit with the Office of Women's Rights. According to the trainees, their treatment from that time on was often marked by neglect and harassment.

George Rauch admitted that the trainees brought him "ongoing complaints" of sexist harassment. When trainee Megan Cornish objected to an obscene drawing posted at work, he ordered it removed. But otherwise, "I did nothing unless I could prove the allegations were true."

The ETTs were abandoned to shift for themselves. Supportive foremen had no authority to help them, and Vickery wanted to be rid of them.

### Guilt by affiliation

**O**n November 15, 1974 nine of the ten trainees sent a letter to Vickery requesting he make good on his promises for program supports, and also reinstate Fraser as coordinator.

On December 2, a very strange memo appeared, ostensibly sent to Vickery by the ETT Working Committee (composed of foremen and supervisors). The memo decried ETT "militance"—and charged that "the direction for this militancy is coming from a person who has no responsibility in the program at all."

The memo "questioned" the ETT

selection process because of Fraser's off-the-job "affiliation" with three of the women. Fraser "did not reveal her affiliation at the time, or disqualify herself from voting on these three women."

Attorney Cloud has repeatedly tried—McCarthy-style—to hammer home the "affiliation" accusation, and the fact that Fraser and trainee Cornish were housemates. And the testimony has dramatically revealed how Fraser's radical politics were used to turn the foremen and supervisors of the ETTs against them, and to lay the basis for destroying the program.

According to Office of Women's Rights Investigator Sue Ammeter, Vickery told her that "the ETT sex discrimination case was instigated by Clara Fraser." The December 2 memo actually expressed Vickery's and Coe's views about Fraser's influence, not the views of the coerced signers.

Pat Wong, a pro-management, renegade trainee who did not join in the sex discrimination suit, testified she "could tell" that "three of the trainees were Radical Women previously acquainted with Clara." She said Fraser's "influence" over the trainees "was like a mother's over her kids." This "alienated" Wong, a self-professed "individualist" who dislikes groups, and who publicly testified against the other ETTs before the Public Review Committee in 1974, branding Fraser and other ETTs as Radical Women engaging in a "mad play for power."

TO NEXT PAGE

# The six-year saga of Fraser's fight

of Rights and Responsibilities Committee. Fraser has been elected, at a mass employee meeting, to be one of their three representatives. She is selected to chair the employee team and to co-chair the total labor-management committee.

Vickery tells division directors to "evaluate" the Training Section and forward their criticisms to him.

**June 6**—Ten women Electrical Trades Trainees are selected by a 5-person hiring panel, including Fraser.

**June 8**—An inflammatory *hoax leaflet* is widely disseminated at City Light, announcing that "Trotskyite Communist" Fraser will speak at a Freeway Hall meeting. The leaflet also states that she has voted for socialist electoral candidates.

**June 24**—ETT's start work. Vickery stages a press conference, crows over his "commitment" to affirmative action and the program's success.

Clara Fraser testifies that evening before the Public Review Committee, lambasting top management's hypocritically inadequate, purely cosmetic *affirmative action, training, and safety policies*.

**June 26**—Fraser addresses an employee mass meeting on the subject of the *hoax leaflet*, calling it a flagrant management/FBI divide-and-conquer tactic. She describes her political philosophy, advocates the unity of all the workers around their common grievances, and is supported and applauded.

**July 3**—Vickery and Coe abruptly *curtail ETT pre-placement training eight days after it begins*.

The trainees confront Coe; she is furious. They seek out Vickery, but he avoids them.

**July 5**—Vickery removes Fraser as ETT Coordinator.

**July 10**—The trainees are shoved into the field without preparation, clothing or equipment. Their new coordinator, William Rheubottom (Fraser's supervisor), is disinterested.

**July 17**—The *Human Relations Council*, which includes Fraser and other employee leaders and sympa-

thizers, is disbanded by Vickery. Sensitivity training on race and sex, planned for ETT foremen and supervisors, is also cancelled.

**July 31**—Coe objects to Fraser's excessive time involvement with the Bill of Rights Committee.

**August 5**—Fraser and the ETTs file a *sex discrimination charge* with the city Office of Women's Rights, and testify before the Public Review Committee about Vickery's treachery against their program.

In *retaliation for filing the suit*, the ETTs and Fraser are subject to escalating harassment. Fraser's job assignments are downgraded, and her expense vouchers ignored.

**November 15**—ETT's send Vickery a memo requesting reinstatement of both their original program and Fraser as coordinator.

Fraser reprimanded for a letter she wrote *four months previously*.

Fraser denied extra pay for supervisory duties assigned to her during her boss's absence.

**December 2**—A memo to Vickery, actually written by Coe but appearing to come from foremen and supervisors, denounces ETT "militance," Fraser's "influence" over them, and her prior "affiliation" off-the-job with several trainees.

**December 6**—Vickery issues a *loyalty oath* to the trainees, demanding they sign or be terminated.

## 1975

**January-July**—A new mayoral *Recall Campaign* starts, led by Firefighters Union.

**February**—Vickery orders a "study" of the Training Section.

**March 25**—A 5% "employee reduction" announced.

**April 30**—Bill of Rights and Responsibilities completed.

**May 13**—Fraser's job *secretly deleted from the upcoming 1976 budget* and replaced with a newly-titled position. City Personnel starts preparation for a *special civil service exam* for her position.

**May 19**—Fraser amends her original discrimination complaint to include the exam as a reprisal.

**June**—Civil Service Commission votes to make "Training Coordinator" exam "non-competitive" for all incumbents, who now will only have to pass the exam to retain their jobs. Thus, Vickery cannot eliminate Fraser via the exam.

**July 1**—Recall election *loses*.

**July 8**—Vickery denounces and rejects Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (violating the Agreement that ended the walkout).

**July 11**—Fraser "laid-off" at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, without notice, because of a "reduction in force." No other administrative or professional staff are terminated.

**August 15**—IBEW Local 77 passes Resolution supporting Fraser and so informs Civil Service Commission.

**August 29**—Vickery and Mayor Uhlman announce their own "Bill of Rights and Responsibilities" (never implemented).

**September 24**—ETT's "congratulated" by Vickery on "completing their program" and are *terminated*.

**September 26**—Fraser's *unemployment compensation withheld* as she is ordered to repay the severance pay she received. She makes a public protest and the order is dropped.

**October 16**—Fraser's unemployment compensation stipend is *cut in half* after Vickery petitions the City Council to reduce such payments. (Vickery currently receives *two separate city pensions plus his federal salary*.)

## 1976

**January 9**—Fraser files a *protest to the Civil Service Commission* on her contrived exam score.

**January 14**—City Personnel *denies protest* but grants adjustments to other protesters.

**June 21**—Fraser's job filled by a less qualified male.

**July 9**—ETT's *win their sex discrimination case, and are awarded*

\$120,000 back pay and damages, reinstatement, and retroactive promotion to Electrical Helper positions.

Fraser's case had earlier been separated from theirs and channeled to the city Human Rights Department because "political ideology discrimination" was in its jurisdiction.

## 1977-1978

**May 24**—Human Rights Department issues findings in Fraser's favor.

**August 9**—Fraser case referred to Mayor Uhlman for *conciliation* (a mandatory procedure).

**August 24**—Mayor Uhlman *rejects* conciliation.

**September, 1977 through May, 1979**—A string of motions, appeals, and legal challenges and delays by City Light attorneys.

## 1979

**June**—Mayor Charles Royer works out a *conciliation agreement* providing for \$30,000 to Fraser and a job with the Human Rights Department.

**July 2**—City Council *rejects conciliation settlement*, 6 to 2, and orders the case to Hearing. The two Black councilmen vote for settlement.

**September 17**—City Council appropriates \$13,500 for the Human Rights Department to hire an outside attorney to represent Fraser, and \$7,500 for salary for pro tempore Hearing Examiner Sally Pasette.

Human Rights Department retains attorney *John Chen Beckwith* to represent Fraser.

## 1980

**January 14**—Hearing *begins* in Room 500, 400 Yesler Building, Seattle, before Pasette and a volunteer Hearing Panel composed of Elizabeth Ponder, Darlene Allison and Beverly Stanton; Bernice Holland, alternate.

**January 29**—Hearing adjourns for four weeks.

**February 25**—Hearing reconvenes, with the prospect of finishing by the end of April, due to recesses.

**May**—The Hearing Examiner then has 20 days in which to issue her proposed decision, subject to adoption or reversal by the Hearing Panel.

A favorable verdict for Fraser would mean reinstatement at City Light and the awarding of back pay, damages and expenses. ■

George Rauch recalled that "it was discussed that Fraser was motivating the ETTs to take negative stands. *The ETTs seemed to be taking outside direction . . . through their affiliation with Radical Women. They belonged to common organizations.*" Rauch held Fraser responsible for ETT "aggressive actions" because the ETTs "seemed to respond as a unit, rather than as individuals," and were pushed by "some outside source."

The testimony of Pat Wong and Rauch—like the affiliation charge itself—is not only classic redbaiting, but is a violation of Seattle's Fair Employment Practices Ordinance which prohibits differential treatment based on "political ideology."

The ETTs were justifiably angry at management for its record of broken promises and reprisals, and their anger was intrinsic, they testified, not a product of "outside agitators."

Daisy Jones bristled when asked if Fraser had prodded the ETTs to protest the pre-placement training cancellation and visit Carole Coe as a unified group. "It was our idea," Jones declared. "My idea. Nobody puts ideas into my head! I was the leader!" Jody Olvera called the charges "baseless" and said that Fraser "never tried to control me."

Four of the six ETT Working Committee members who purportedly sent out the "affiliation" memo testified that neither they, nor anyone else who signed the letter, drafted it. They all said they were "induced" to sign it by management.

Former trainee Megan Cornish, now an Assistant Power Dispatcher, testified that George Rauch told her that the memo had been drafted "on the 9th floor and he was told to sign it."

A retired Station Construction supervisor, Walt Wheelles, testified he signed the letter because he "just wanted to get things over with one way or another." He was told that there was "too much dissension on the crews," although "there was no dissension on my crews." Wheelles said he did not see "anything wrong" with trainees raising complaints, nor did he note "any problems with their work."

Clarence Weigelt, Cable Splicer foreman, signed the letter because "everybody else on the Working Committee had already signed it and I did not want it to look like there was dissension on the Committee." Had he been the first one approached, he "would not have signed the letter," because he disagreed with the section accusing Fraser of directing militancy and being affiliated with trainees off the job.

"I didn't know anything about that," he said. "The trainees were a closely-knit group and there's nothing wrong with that."

Larry Christensen, Distribution supervisor, testified that he "regretted signing the letter . . . and taking someone's word for the allegations I did not know were true and still do not. I would

not sign that letter today . . . *what people do on their own time is none of City Light's business!*"

Trainee Daisy Jones said she had known Joan Williams, one of the interviewers, when Jones was hired (yet nobody has complained about this!).

Several of the foremen witnesses said that outside affiliations have no bearing on interview or selection procedures and that it is not common practice for interviewers to indicate social relations with applicants.

According to Robert Leighton, "those affiliation rumors about Radical Women got started because Clara was the trainees' advocate, working to make sure the trainees got what was coming to them. *It was only natural that women interested in non-trad-*

This was September 24, 1975.

### Trainee victory

One year later, on July 9, 1976, the indomitable trainees, supported by the Office of Women's Rights, won their sex discrimination suit against City Light. The settlement provided \$120,000 in damages and back pay, job reinstatement, and retroactive promotion to Electrical Helper.

Trainee Pat Wong, who had called the suit "senseless" and refused to participate when it was filed, admitted on the witness stand that she threatened City Light management with a suit unless she were awarded the same

him develop the test.

Moore said it was customary to interview all job incumbents when preparing a test. But Employee Relations Manager Don Winkley told him "there is no point talking with Clara Fraser . . . she won't be around much longer."

Moore and his coworkers concluded that the exam was being contrived as a "hatchet job" against Fraser, and said so, whereupon he was rebuked by City Personnel Director Jack Driscoll. Moore refused to continue with exam preparations. "I knew I would not be allowed to proceed in an ethical or professional manner," he testified.

Soon after, subjected to retaliation by his supervisor, Moore left his job.

Anet Fox, former Water Department Training Specialist, and current Personnel Director, recalled that she feared the exam would be used against any or all the incumbents such as herself. She lodged an official protest with the Civil Service Commission, whereupon Vickery, "very upset," phoned her boss, the head of the Water Department, and urged him to tell Fox to "stop holding up the exam."

But the Civil Service Commission supported Fox and ordered the exam to be given non-competitively for incumbents, so management had to abandon the test as an exclusionary competition for already-occupied positions.

### The axe falls

The Bill of Rights work had been finished in May, 1975 and the Uhlman Recall election was held on July 1. It lost. The employ-

ee movement subsided, and it looked like a safe time to fire Fraser. Late on Friday afternoon, July 11, 1975, management cited a "5% budget reduction" and laid off Fraser, effective immediately.

Mike Sharar, who was responsible for dealing with the media, was advised by Carole Coe that "there is bound to be media scrutiny" of Fraser's termination. Sharar also testified that it was "unusual that Clara was the only administrative person laid off." Fraser was also the only provisional (non-Civil Service) laid off, the only professional, and the only fulltime woman employee.

Robert Leighton, in his testimony, refuted the budget cut explanation: "It was a typical management device to circumvent required procedure and get rid of someone . . . City Light is a revenue-producing agency and did not need to cut back. Clara was not laid off. She was terminated."

And witness Al McDougall was equally emphatic: "[Until Clara] I never heard of anyone being laid off at City Light for incompetence . . . If you are incompetent at City Light, you are promoted to management!"

### What next?

Clara Fraser's sex and political discrimination case reconvened, after a three-week recess, on February 25, and is likely to proceed through April.

It is already abundantly clear that the future of on-the-job democracy, affirmative action, and the right to political dissent and free association will be determined, to a considerable degree, by the outcome of this singular case. The new McCarthyites, like the old, first isolate and silence the radicals, and then they come for everyone else.

Clara Fraser's good fight for political freedom warrants the support of everyone who believes in the right of political minorities and nonconformists to earn their living and enjoy the same benefits as the majority. Without guaranteed freedom from discrimination on the job, there can be no freedom at all. ■

## A cross-section of Fraser case supporters

King County Labor Council of Washington, AFL-CIO  
National Lawyers Guild  
AFSCME Locals 2083, 2083-N, 1488, Seattle  
CWA Local 9102, Seattle  
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587, Seattle  
Boilermakers Local 104, Seattle  
Rhonda Allgaier, Seattle  
United Feminist Front, Seattle  
Feminist Women's Health Center, Los Angeles  
Seattle Gay Community Center  
Dick Gregory, Plymouth, MA  
Flo Kennedy, New York City  
Kate Millett, New York City  
Gloria Steinem, New York City  
Ruth Messenger, New York City

Paul Skyhorse, Los Angeles  
Joanna Russ, Seattle  
Julie Evening Lilly, Los Angeles  
Nellie Wong, San Francisco  
Merle Woo, Berkely  
Rosa Morales, Seattle  
Juan Soliz, Chicago  
Jesus Mena, Long Beach  
Humberto Brown, New York City  
Yolanda Martinez, Seattle  
AIM for Freedom Defense Committee, Portland, OR  
Committee to Defend Iranian Legal Rights, Seattle  
Live Without Trident, Seattle  
Black Panther Party, Los Angeles  
Lesbians of Color Caucus, Seattle  
Howard Wallace, San Francisco  
Jeff Cohen, Los Angeles

### ditional electrical trades would be in Radical Women and other activist groups."

Fraser recruited actively for the program, as part of her job, and was acquainted with a large number of the 300 applicants. A panel of five, including three foremen, selected the final slate.

### Loyalty Day

On December 6, 1974, four days after the affiliation memo, Vickery sent the trainees his now-notorious loyalty oath.

Acting on advice of attorneys from their union—Local 77 IBEW—most of the ETTs signed the document only after writing in "I wish to remain in the . . . Trainee program providing all conditions are consistent with the Fair Employment Practices Ordinance."

Trainee witnesses testified that while this reply won them a temporary reprieve, reprisals and harassment mounted in the ensuing nine-month period until, three months after Fraser was "laid off," the trainees were summarily "graduated" from the incomplete ETT program, congratulated by Vickery, and "laid off" themselves.

benefits! Management quickly "juggled my civil service records" to change her entry date as a Helper so she could accrue the same seniority as the victorious trainees, and the City Council allocated a financial settlement for her!

### The hatchet job exam

Long before the Friday-night massacre layoff of the trainees, City Light had determined to get rid of Fraser so she could not protest or try to prevent their firing. Jack Telerico, a city planner on the ETT program, testified that "on July 5, 1974, I met with Jack Driscoll, Vickery, Joan Williams, Bill Rheubottom, and Carole Coe about what to do with the program. Clara Fraser got most of the credit for disrupting the program. Vickery wanted to junk it. The ultimate solution was to give Clara an exam and get rid of her through the examination process."

So in May, 1975 Vickery rushed through preparations for a city-wide civil service exam tailored to weed out Fraser.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the exam.

A former Civil Service Department Examination Analyst, John Moore, was directed to develop this test for "Education and Training Coordinator," a position held by Fraser, Rheubottom, and three employees in other city departments. Moore testified that the haste surrounding this test was very unusual because so few positions were affected, and the necessary preliminary work of classifying all city jobs in this category had not been done. Equally unusual was the refusal to allow Moore to bring in U.S. Civil Service Commission experts to help

## The Fraser/City Light Story Needs Telling!



1. Endorse Clara Fraser's case.
2. Donate generously to the Fraser Case Information Fund.
3. Help with the organizing work to build a national campaign.

Yes, I endorse Clara Fraser's case and will donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Information Fund. Contact me to help on the case.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Fraser Case Information Fund, c/o United Feminist Front, 6019 South Redwing, Seattle, WA 98118. Phone (206) 632-7449 or 723-8923.

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