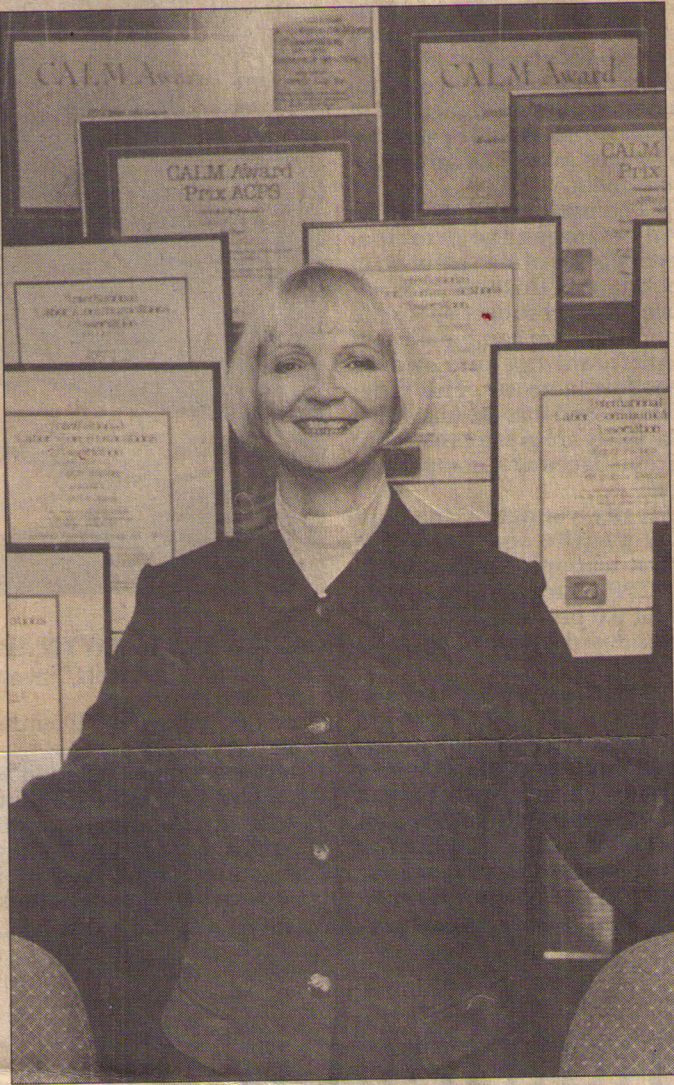


Journalistic labour of love



The Office and Professional Employees' International Union Local 378 has won major labour journalism awards every year since communications director Paula Stromberg joined the union office in 1986.

"We put a human face on issues," Stromberg says. "The year we won best photo was for a [photo of a] woman who'd lost two husbands in on-the-job accidents and was laying flowers with grandchildren on the crosses for that day of mourning."

Local 378 represents workers at the Insurance Corporation of B.C., BC Hydro and Avis, among others.

"I like writing about the things people are doing and creating a sense of community among the union members. It's like weaving all the threads together to put out a town newspaper," says Stromberg who joined OPEIU after 10 years in writing, editing and media relations.

She produces a newsletter for 10,000 local members as

well as a news magazine for 25,000 union members across Canada. That won the Canadian Association of Labour Media's best over-all national union publication award in 1995.

Stromberg says the awards, which have included best editorial, opinion piece, photo, feature article and best over-all publication, arise from strong union staff: "You can't win awards writing about nothing."

"There are often such serious issues to be conveyed," she says.

"Personal harassment is one, for instance. Many people focus on just explaining what it is but we interviewed a couple of people who had a hard time."

A special report on the 1996 provincial election won one of the local's two 1997 International Labour Communications Association awards in editorial excellence.

The ILCA awards is the largest labour press competition in North America.

Jenny Lee