

Pres. Nixon - 100% increase
Congressmen - 50% increase
Postal Employee's - 0%

STRIKE
NIXON

InsideOut

July 2018
cupwedm.net



InsideOut

Empower // Organize // Resist

InsideOut is the monthly publication of the Edmonton Local of CUPW. The main purpose of this paper is to educate and inform members of the activities of and opportunities in their union, as well as raise awareness of anything else pertaining to the labour movement. Opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the official views of the Local.

The InsideOut Committee is always interested in submissions of original articles, photographs, or illustrations to be considered for publication in our next issue. Prospective material should always concern CUPW or the labour movement.

Submissions should be e-mailed to the Editor no later than the 15th of each month.

Kyle Turner, Editor
editor@cupwedm.net

July 2018// Contents

4. Photo Submission // Cheryl Chow
5. President's Report // Nancy Dodsworth
6. The Rules of Engagement // Aaron Taylor
7. Organize. Empower. Resist. // Roland Schmidt
13. Summary of Arbitrator Flynn's Decision on RSMC Pay Equity // RSMC Pay Equity Committee
14. No Longer a "Competitive Advantage" // RSMC Pay Equity Committee
15. CPC Still Has "No Position" on RSMC Pay Equity Issues // RSMC Pay Equity Committee
16. Summer - Time to Reach Out to Our Communities // Mike Palacek
17. Authority Meant Nothing: A Foreword // Kyle Turner
18. When the Mailmen Rebelled // Paul Prescod
21. In My View // Andie Wirsch
22. No Relief // Kyle Turner
23. From the Grievance Office // Carl Hentzelt

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Our office hours are Monday through Friday from 8 am until 5 pm.
Part-time administrative assistant Trish Schlag answers the phone from 9 am until 2 pm and can also be reached by e-mail at info@cupwedm.net.

CUPW Edmonton Local 730 Executive Committee

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President
Secretary-Treasurer
Grievance Officer
Health and Safety Officer

Nancy Dodsworth
Todd Brooks
Carl Hentzelt
Rashpal Sehmy

union@cupwedm.net
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Transportation
EMPP Shift 1
EMPP Shift 2
EMPP Shift 3
RSMC
Wickets and Affiliates
Maintenance

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Photo Submissions



Pictured: Members of CUPW Edmonton Local 730 at the 2018 Edmonton Pride Parade. Submitted by Cheryl Chow.

President's Report

Saturday Office Hours

Due to the increasing number of our members who have been trying to contact us over the weekend when our office has been traditionally closed, your Full-Time Officers have come forward with a plan to offer Saturday office hours for a four month trial basis. We would like to expand our service to our Edmonton Local members and we have all agreed that we are willing to try this out for all of you.

Every month, two of our Full-Time Officers – Grievance, Health & Safety, Secretary-Treasurer, and President – will be available on Saturdays to book appointments to meet with you or take your phone calls. To accommodate this change in schedule, we will also have to move one of our rotation days off to a day during the week as our schedules permit. Please do call ahead if you need to meet with one of us during the work week so that we can ensure that we are available for you then too.

Starting in June, Carl (Grievance Officer) and Nancy (President) will be covering the Saturday openings. In July, Todd (Secretary-Treasurer) and Rashpal (Health & Safety Officer) will be covering Saturdays. We hope to continue on this rotation through August and September.

We are happy to be able to offer you this extra service and we are looking forward to seeing what we can do with it. To ensure the Officer you would like to meet with is in the office on the day you would like to meet, please do book ahead.

President Nancy Dodsworth
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*By Nancy Dodsworth, President
CUPW Edmonton Local.*

Upcoming Events

Sunday, July 8th Resolution Writing Workshop #2
Union Office - 18121 107 Ave, 3 pm to 4:30 pm

Organizing Committee Meeting
Union Office, 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

General Members Meeting
Central Lions Recreation Centre, 11113 113 St,
6 pm to 8 pm

Saturday, July 14th Pension Course
CUPE Office - 10989 124 St., 8:30 am to 3:30 pm
Application must be received by July 7th

The Rules of Engagement

Monday. Just a little taste of Christmas throughout the year. The long suck at the beginning of the week after two days of rest. Heaviest day for parcels. Heaviest day for mail. This Monday in particular wasn't any busier than any other. The parcels were stacked on our C52s and the IDCs were crowding the aisles until nothing was left but what amounted to a narrow goat path running the length of the depot.

Joe* walked over and wanted to talk. "Hey, you got a minute?" he said. "What's up?" I responded. Joe continued, "I got a couple parcels that are overweight."

We went over to check them out. Sure enough, they were oversized and looked like they would take up the entire cargo portion of my own vehicle, let alone the back of his truck.

"Have you weighed them?" I said. Joe barked a short laugh. "We don't have a scale." "We're in the parcel business and we don't have a scale? Seriously? Okay, is there an overweight sticker?"

"Right here," Joe said.

"Then what's the issue?" I asked. "The supervisor is saying I have to take them out and to get help if I need it," Joe said. I took a deep breath and centred myself: "No, that's wrong. The Collective Agreement is pretty clear on this. The Union is pretty clear on this. Article 24.05, restrictions on lifting – 'No individual employee will be required to lift by hand any object in excess of twenty two point seven (22.7) kilograms.' That's 50 pounds."

"Yeah, but they're saying I can get help. In fact, the supervisor even offered to help me with it." By this time, Joe's supervisor had come over and looked over the parcels. One weighed in at just under 50 pounds, the other was just over. One had to go. One had to stay.

"I'm not lifting it," said Joe.

"You have to take it out," said the supervisor. "Look, call me and I'll even meet you on your route and we can lift it together."

"The Collective Agreement is pretty clear on this," I said. "Look, Joe, you have to take the one out, so accept the offer of help. But the other? No. It shouldn't even be here. I'd send it back." The supervisor was getting anxious. Maybe a little frustrated. He had other things to do. So did I. So did Joe. But the Contract was being discussed, so everything else had to wait.

"It has to go," said the supervisor. "It's here. We might as well take it. The customer is expecting it. I'll help you," said the supervisor.

"Fifty pounds is fifty pounds," I said. "Joe doesn't have to take it."

"Then I'll do it," said the supervisor. "That's on you, but I wouldn't," I said. "It shouldn't even be here. That much weight is a health and safety issue, even with two people."

"Yes, yes, yes," said the supervisor, "but it has to go."

"Ok, so if Joe takes this one and it's 50 pounds, where does it stop? Are we going to start delivering refrigerators next? Engine blocks?" I asked.

"That's a little extreme..." responded the supervisor.

"Is it?" I said, "It isn't too far a jump from one to the other. We have to draw a line somewhere and the Collective Agreement says that line is 50 pounds. I'd send it back."

At the end of the day, the RSMC didn't take either parcel out. The supervisor delivered both. Imagine for a moment you're a new Canadian and that you don't read English very well. Or you're a new employee and you've never read the Collective Agreement at all. Or maybe you don't have a Shop Steward present.

It isn't enough to just dig in your heels and say no. You have to understand what the rules of engagement are and how to apply them. The other side of this is not being assertive. There is no reason to pick a fight and get aggressive or confrontational. That just causes more problems.

The Collective Agreement is the document we have with the Employer that dictates how we do things and it is up to us to make certain we know what's in it. What if Joe had taken out both parcels and hurt his back? How much can he load into his vehicle before he damages the axle? If we allow 50 pounds, what's to stop us from delivering 100-pound or 250-pound parcels?

We all want to go home at the end of the day. The only way to do that is to read, understand, and apply the Collective Agreement – our rules of engagement.



By Aaron Taylor, Chief Shop Steward of RSMCs and RSMC at Whitemud South.

**Names have been changed to protect identities of parties involved*

Organize. Empower. Resist.

Creating a Foundation for Positive Change

For the past few weeks, I've had the opportunity to visit each of the Edmonton depots. This tour was primarily to support a campaign of RSMC activist and Shop Steward recruitment, but it also served as an excuse to meet with letter carriers on both waves. In some of the depots, when timing allowed, we would hold parking lot or floor meetings; barring that, we drifted the rows for one-on-ones with those still left.

Our script was always the same: share how well we are positioned in negotiations due to the increasing success and profitability of the parcel market, remind everyone that Harper's back-to-work legislation was ruled unconstitutional, and insist that our efficacy as a union to enforce acceptable workplace standards or bargaining table gains are directly proportional to how organized and educated our membership is. Organizing and educating are essential ingredients for worker empowerment but a lot of our members seemed genuinely perplexed when I would explain that the union office is unable to satisfactorily solve most of the problems we face on the work floor and that we have to rely on ourselves.

Maybe this confusion is an expression of how Canadian workers are not as class conscious as most others in the world. Maybe it's a failure of our union leadership to advocate and explain the need for work floor empowerment. Maybe our members genuinely don't understand just how terrible their jobs would be without union representation. Regardless of how this disconnect came to be, our Local is in a precarious position of having very few of its members politically active or aware of what is happening in the Local. But no one is going to fix this for us.

A compelling example of this crisis that I've been discussing with my co-workers is a letter carrier restructure that finished in early June in the Delton depot. Long story short, the Corporation, in my opinion, knowingly suppressed parcel numbers despite the constant press releases about record profits and year-after-year increases in parcel volumes.

The end result? Delton will lose nine routes and more work will be expected to be done by fewer workers – more overtime, more injuries, more carriers in the low wage bracket quitting a job that, frankly, isn't worth the pay. I watched Management try and explain this to an incensed wave of carriers at a staff talk. Not only

were they unable to give coherent answers as to why the Corporation was doing what it was doing, but they often contradicted themselves in the same sentence: "It's just speculation that parcels volumes have increased... Our route measurement team acknowledges that we may have messed up on the parcel count." Personally, I try to focus more of my disgruntlement at the company and not those just "carrying out orders", but watching the degree with which Delton Management was contorting to try (and miserably fail at) justifying the extremely questionable methods of the Corporation was disgusting.

As irresponsible as the Corporation's handling of the Delton restructure was, our membership still hasn't embraced the reality that no external force can come in and save them from miscarriages like this. Our Local has one of the best trained and most vibrant Route Measurement Committees in the country with some legitimate geniuses spinning number magic that simple minds like mine could never comprehend. They went into this count and systematically showed exactly where the company was ignoring numbers and insisted that fixes be made. The result is that the Corporation now acknowledges they may have missed some numbers, but there is nothing binding them to make any changes to reinstate the routes they axed.

In fact, bidding on the new, crappier routes will have been finished by the time you read this. Our Union route measurement team entered the ring and fought with more heart than imagined. But their hands were tied behind their back. Far from being the saviours, they became yet another set of victims of the Corporation. Just like the carriers. Now what?

“As irresponsible as the Corporation's handling of the Delton restructure was, our membership still hasn't embraced the reality that no external force can come in and save them from miscarriages like this.”

The problem faced by the workers at Delton may be centred around their restructure but it is emblematic of the same struggle that postal workers face in every section regardless of their classification: this company will never prioritize your well-being or livelihood over their own agenda to bleed as much work out of you for as little as possible.

Delton understands this now. For any postal worker who still thinks this Corporation genuinely cares about you, I encourage you to recall previous rounds of bargaining. Or if this is your first round, pay close attention to just how eager the Corporation will be to insist how you shouldn't be rewarded for all the wealth your labour has contributed to the unprecedented success of this company. I've been told we retain only about 20% of our newly trained carriers after a year of service. Clearly, the stress of this job does not outweigh the benefit. I suggest that unless we, as workers, let Management at every level know just how unacceptable their methods are, our jobs will not substantially change for the better, nor will any of our festering problems be meaningfully resolved.

“The problem faced by the workers at Delton may be centred around their restructure but it is emblematic of the same struggle that postal workers face in every section regardless of their classification: this company will never prioritize your well-being or livelihood over their own agenda to bleed as much work out of you for as little as possible.”

Of course, all this reads as big talk and chest thumping unless you've had the pleasure of participating in a successful work floor campaign. It's a sad state that the only example in recent postal worker memory where direct action made immediate, lasting improvements to unacceptable working conditions was the 2011 forceback refusal campaign. But it speaks to the potential that our Local has to take power into our own hands to correct an injustice. No matter the problem we face, it could be easily solved by buying into and utilizing similar methods of simple work floor coordination and activist training.

If at any point in this article you found yourself feeling angry, please consider that you are not alone in your discontent and that when the call is put out to try and find a collective solution to the latest bullshit, the addition of your voice may be the tipping point in us reaching a critical mass.

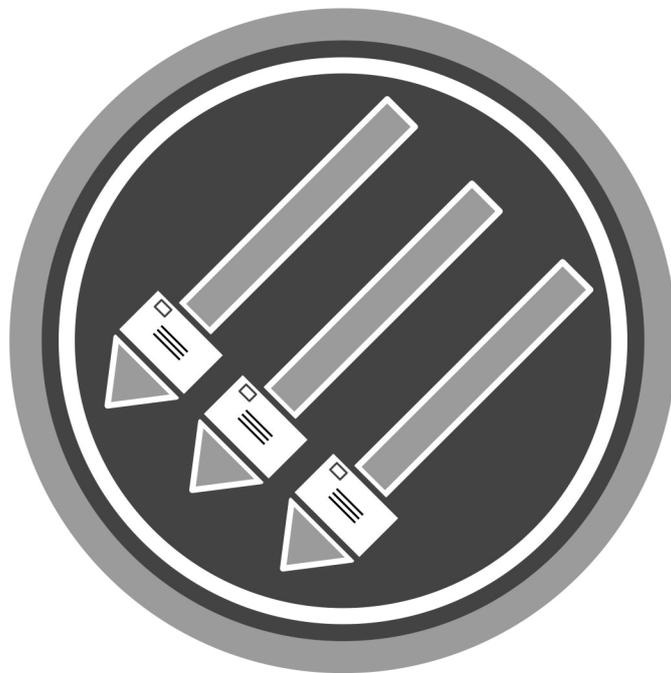
The Organizing Committee just finished with a mass Steward recruitment campaign among RSMCs which will be followed by other activist training opportunities and campaigns that specifically affect them (like being pressured to work stat holidays without receiving their hourly pay). Currently, the Committee is looking to rent a hall (date to be determined) to host a mass meeting for all Delton letter carriers to discuss how we will push back against their hatchet job of a restructure. There are no shortage of problems in this Local, no matter what section you belong to, but unless you join volunteers like us in confronting them, the Corporation will continue to assume it can get away with whatever it wants.

If you are interested in pushing back against some bogus company directive and you want to learn how to rally your co-workers, the Organizing Committee is for you.



By Roland Schmidt, Organizing Officer, Shop Steward, and letter carrier at Rosedale.

Organizing Committee General Meeting



**Calling all activists from
every depot and section!**

- ★ Activist recruitment and training
- ★ Workfloor campaign development
- ★ Strategic analysis and perspectives

**Union Office - 18121 107ave
Sunday, July 8, 4:30 - 5:30pm**

UNION EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES!



Intro to CUPW and Unionism

Perfect for newer members, or for those just wanting to learn more about our union's democratic structure, how we function, our inspiring history and what basic rights are as a postal worker.

Taking Back the Workfloor

For those somewhat aware of their rights and those eager to make a difference in the workplace. Learn how to organize and develop workfloor strategies to fight back against the employer.

Basic Steward Training

The shop steward is a leader and advocate on the workfloor that is the first line of defense against bad bosses. Learn how to assert and support the rights won for all postal workers.

For questions or interest in any of these courses, please email **organize730@gmail.com** with the following info:

- full name
- phone #
- job title
- work location
- course(s) to take



Education Opportunity Pension Course

Saturday July 14th, 2018
8:30am – 3:30pm

**Course will be held at the C.U.P.E Office,
10989 – 124St. (wheelchair accessible)**

**All applications are welcome but preference will be
given to those closest to retirement.**

Lunch will be provided

**Ajay Sharma
Education Officer
CUPW Edmonton Local 730**

**** Application on the Back of this Notice****
Applications must be into the Local Union
Office by: July 7, 2018



Summary of Arbitrator Flynn's Decision on RSMC Pay Equity

June 4, 2018

In her 176 page decision, Arbitrator Flynn accepted the “derived hourly rate” methodology proposed by CUPW and rejected the point of call approach proposed by Canada Post Corporation.

She stated: “the Tribunal comes to the conclusion that the Corporation’s methodology must be rejected. It is not reasonably accurate nor is it reliable. Rather, it is fundamentally flawed and, consequently, produces so-called compensation results that do not correspond to the employees’ respective realities in light of all the evidence that was adduced in this case.”

Due to the complexity of the case, Arbitrator Flynn has referred the decision on the amount of compensation back to the parties. She has given the parties until August 31, 2018 to come to an agreement or she will decide.

Her report states the following:

Wages: She agrees to use the Route Measurement System (RMS) to determine the “derived hourly job rate”. She has not set the amount of compensation but has referred this back to the parties. She agrees that variables (personal contact items and lock changes) should be included in both the assessment of direct wages and in the evaluation of the pension benefits.

Variables (lock changes and PCIs): She states there should be “an adjustment to RMS hours to reflect the time required to complete them...”

Pension status of Personal Contact Items and Lock Changes: She states: “if the parties cannot agree on a time value for PCIs and lock changes, or another way to remunerate them other than variable pay compatible with the Pension Plan provisions, or obtain the necessary permission, the Tribunal will have the power to amend the

collective agreement accordingly. Otherwise, the objective of the Act could not be attained, and discrimination would be allowed to flourish, which is incompatible with a broad and liberal interpretation of the legislation.”

Post-Retirement Benefits: Eligibility to start January 1, 2016.

Vehicle Expenses: Flynn agrees with the union that vehicle expenses are not included as RSMC compensation.

Paid Meal Period and Rest Periods: She rejects the union position that, for the purpose of comparison, letter carrier wages should be adjusted to reflect the paid meal period and rest periods.

Life Insurance and Death Benefit, Retiree Dental and Other Health Related Benefits for Retirees, Disability Insurance, Vacation Leave, Marriage, Birth, Adoption and Special Leave, Pre-retirement Leave, BC Provincial Health Care Premium, Displacement Lump Sum, and Isolated Post Allowance: She refers these issues to the parties.

Glove Allowance: Integrate the glove allowance (\$20.00) into RSMC compensation.

Care and Nurturing Leave and Sick Leave Without Pay: She rejects the union’s position.

Injury on Duty Leave: She rejects the union’s position.

New Route Measurement System: She says she does not have the jurisdiction to award this.

By Cathy Kennedy, Nancy Beauchamp, and Barb McMillan of the Pay Equity Committee.

No Longer a “Competitive Advantage”

June 6, 2018

In a previous round of bargaining, Canada Post Corporation’s Chief Negotiator for the RSMC unit called the RSMCs a ‘competitive advantage,’ referring to the cost savings Canada Post realized from the wage gap between RSMCs and Urban unit letter carriers. Now Canada Post must eat those words.

Arbitrator Rules RSMCs have been Paid Unequally for Work of Equal Value

Last Thursday, Arbitrator Flynn released her 176-page decision from the 21-month pay equity process for RSMCs (Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers). The pay equity process was agreed to by CUPW and Canada Post Corporation (CPC) as part of settling our last round of negotiations in 2016.

Complex Decision, with Fundamental Wins

Flynn agreed with CUPW’s methodology that gives a derived hourly rate for RSMCs, and rejected CPC’s methodology, which was based on cost per points of call. It was a key element for us to show that the RSMCs have an hourly rate, and that the wage gap can be assessed based on that.

What Happens Now

There is still work to do in implementing the various elements of the award. In her decision, the arbitrator instructs the parties (CUPW and CPC) to reach agreement on several aspects of RSMC compensation, both for the retroactive portion (back to January 1, 2016) and going forward. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement by August 31, 2018, Flynn will set aside days for arbitration during the fall of 2018.

The three major items to be addressed are:

1. Wages: Though the arbitrator determined that there is a wage gap based on Route Measurement System (RMS) hours, she has instructed the parties to assess the accuracy of RMS hours.

2. Benefits: The parties must determine how RSMCs should be compensated for the difference in benefits; life insurance and death benefit; post-retirement health plan; post-retirement dental plan; post-retirement term life and death benefit; isolated post allowance; BC medical premium; annual leave; special leave; and pre-retirement leave. CUPW’s position is that the employees should be entitled to the benefits, but CPC favours cash payments.

3. The arbitrator ruled that RSMCs should be given time values for PCIs and lock changes and that time should be pensionable. The parties need to agree on the time values.

Already a Victory

For CUPW, this decision means we’re now much closer to our goal of full equality for RSMCs.

For all women working across the country, this result should help establish how a quick and effective pay equity process can be put in place. Many women have waited decades; justice delayed is justice denied.

And RSMCs will no longer be exploited as a ‘competitive advantage.’ It’s a long road to equality, but we keep moving forward.

By Cathy Kennedy, Nancy Beauchamp, and Barb McMillan of the Pay Equity Committee.

CPC Still has “No Position” on RSMC Pay Equity Issues

June 19, 2018

On May 31, 2018 we received the pay equity decision from Arbitrator Flynn. On the same day, Jessica McDonald, Chair of the Board of Directors and Interim President and CEO, issued a statement in which she promised that CPC was “committed to acting swiftly and diligently” with CUPW to resolve the issues.

CUPW provided CPC with our position on every issue in dispute including how we should deal with the retroactive period and going forward in the future. Our approach was in line with the guidance provided in Arbitrator Flynn’s decision. For wages, we stated that the RSMC derived hourly rate should be increased to that of letter carriers. We proposed that the time and compensation for variables be made pensionable. For benefits, we proposed a financial payment for the retroactive period and that RSMCs should receive the benefits going forward.

On June 15, 2018, two weeks after the award was issued, we met with CPC representatives to hear their position on all of the issues. We received nothing. CPC is not prepared to tell us what their position is on wages, variables or benefits. They are not even prepared to tell us when we will receive their positions on the issues. The only exception was the glove allowance. After much discussion the employer agreed that RSMCs should be entitled to the glove allowance but they were not sure how this compensation should be paid.

Pattern of Delay and Obstruction Continues

It is obvious that CPC is acting in the same manner as it did during the pay equity process where it did everything possible to delay the process. Despite Ms. McDonald’s commitment to work “swiftly and diligently”, it is clear that CPC’s strategy is to force all of the issues to arbitration and then delay that process as much as possible. This is the same approach that CPC took during our pay equity process and it is also exactly the same approach that CPC took with the PSAC pay equity complaint and is currently taking with the CPAA pay equity complaint.

The names of the top CPC leadership may change but the employer’s behaviour at the pay equity process shows absolutely no signs of changing in any way.

Arbitrator Flynn Returns as Mediator

In her decision Arbitrator Flynn offered to mediate if it was necessary to help the parties reach an agreement by August 31, 2018. The parties have agreed to involve Ms. Flynn as mediator and she will meet with the parties on June 26, 2018 to assist the parties.

Equality is Coming

We are determined to achieving full equality for RSMCs during the pay equity process and through our collective agreement negotiations. The arbitration award of Arbitrator Flynn was a major step forward but it is clear that CPC remains committed to delay, obstruct and deny RSMCs justice for as long as possible.

By Cathy Kennedy, Nancy Beauchamp, and Barb McMillan of the Pay Equity Committee.

Summer – Time to Reach Out to Our Communities

More than ever, we have momentum on our campaigns, and a window of opportunity to translate this momentum in to bargaining support, which may become critical in weeks to come.

Summer brings opportunities for Locals to get involved in events and spread our campaign messages: participating in community fairs, movie nights, parades and barbecues are just a few examples of positive and energetic places for actions – and to have a little fun with our neighbours while drumming up support.

Postal Banking and Service Expansion

Our Postal Banking campaign has created a lot of awareness of the potential of postal banking, and a national discussion that has reached Parliament Hill and even the new interim CEO of Canada Post Corporation. People know of all the problems that postal banking could help solve, and what a success it has been around the world. We have to keep pushing until the Federal Government recognizes the same thing and Canada Post acts on it.

The public supports the addition of services, including financial services, at post offices, and the Federal Government's 2016 postal service review resulted in recommendations for Canada Post to explore service expansion and innovation.

Door-to-Door Delivery

We made Door-to-Door delivery an election issue in 2015 and saved millions of homes from converted to CMB delivery. But over 840,000 points of call are still living with the door-to-door cuts, and in those communities, we have to keep pushing so MPs are fully aware that their constituents won't consider the promise kept until the service is restored.

Delivering Community Power

The urgent need to confront climate change is more important than ever and more people realize it's time for the federal government to use Crown Corporations to take action to reduce the public sector's environmental impact.

Launched in February 2016, Delivering Community Power proposes ways to use Canada Post to address climate change while taking on social inequalities at the same time. We have a new Coordinator getting ready to relaunch the proposal. Watch for a relaunch soon and ways to get involved.

Collective Bargaining

Meanwhile, our negotiations are intensifying with Canada Post. As time goes by, it's more and more important to show Canada Post Corporation our strength – for our campaigns, but also for better working conditions and in our struggle to address our problems in the workplace.

Only when the employer cannot ignore our collective power – and the depth of our public support – will they move significantly from their positions and let our priorities set the agenda.

It Starts With Showing Up

We have to show our friends, neighbours and our politicians that we're committed to our work and public support is strong. It's a great time to get involved with your local, while we're so close to making major progress and we have a lot on the table in bargaining. Make sure to stay in touch with your local about what's going on in your area, and please offer some of your time and energy to help with events.

By Mike Palacek, CUPW National President



**Support
Postal
Banking**

A bank for everyone

Authority Meant Nothing

A Foreword

There is an image that haunts me. It appears in search engines every time I try to find a CUPW logo or graphic. It's a political cartoon that has CUPW written on the side of a dinosaur. The dinosaur is saying, "I know! I'll just go on strike!" Underneath, there is text that reads, "So much for that asteroid theory..."

This cartoon originally appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, but it now appears on a blog that likes to talk about how Canada Post is losing a billion dollars per year and that Canada Post and its union need to be put out to pasture.

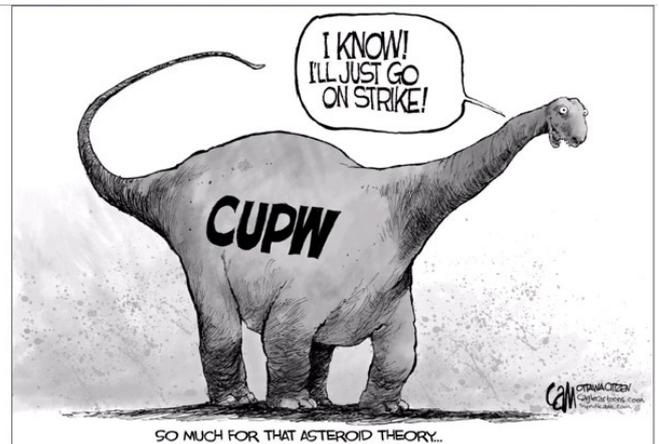
We know this is a misinformed analysis. But it still bothers me. One reason why is because it's so well done and I'm jealous of the artist's skill. I wish I could capture an idea so clearly and simply in that single-panel, political cartoon style, but I am resigned to drawing myself over multiple panels being equal parts confused and annoyed.)

A second reason why I'm bothered is because of just how wrong this comic and this broader way of thinking is. I don't imagine the joke needs to be explained. The point is that going on strike is an outdated response to the greed of employers. If we dig deeper, maybe we'll also discover that the very idea of a union is also outdated. This is surely the broader narrative that this comic is tapping into: things have changed and it's time to move on.

But how much have they really changed? Let's consider two examples. First, there is the rise of what is known as the "gig economy," where maybe through an app on your phone you go somewhere and perform a task. You are coordinated by someone, but you're not really an employee. If something happens to you while you're working, no one is necessarily on the hook. No one owes you or your family anything.

Second, there is the wealth of Jeff Bezos, who is the founder, chairman, and CEO of Amazon. Bezos is the world's wealthiest person with his net worth of \$112 billion. But where does this wealth come from? As of 2017, Amazon had 566,000 employees and around two dozen subsidiaries. Workers at Amazon warehouses in Italy and Germany have gone on strike to secure better working conditions and better pay; and in the UK, there are reports of Amazon employees urinating in bottles in order to keep up with increasingly high production targets.

These are examples of the changing times that we live in, but how are these any different from early capitalism and the horrors of the industrial revolution? The boss becomes wealthy off our labour and we are mangled by machines and, conveniently, it's no one's fault but our



own because we knew what we were getting ourselves into. In the end, if we weren't lucky enough to be born into a wealthy family, we as workers still only have our labour.

This puts us in a powerful position. With our labour, we can keep producing and continue making our bosses wealthy or we can stop production and hit our bosses in their wallets. If our workplace becomes a nightmare, what can we do to make our bosses hear our complaints? Is the answer to keep our heads down and just keep working? Where does this leave us?

A supervisor stopped me recently and asked about how contract negotiations were going. They said that CUPW has taken too many losses recently and that we need a win because losses for CUPW leads to losses for the supervisors. I said, "So you need us to go on strike, then?" The answer was no, because that doesn't work. What we need to do is accept the first contract because it only gets worse after that, as shown by the 2012 contract.

If we do that, do you think the boss will at least provide us with the bottles we'll be pissing in?

Maybe striking isn't the answer. Maybe we just need to be more creative. What follows is an article about the United States Postal Service showing their creativity by engaging in a wildcat ("illegal") strike in 1970 where they defied the government (as federal employees they were not allowed to strike) and even the leaders of their own union. This might seem like a very different time and place, but the author brings in contemporary labour struggles to show how this postal strike contains important lessons for today.

By Kyle Turner, Editor, Shop Steward, and letter carrier at Rosedale.

When the Mailmen Rebelled

In 1970, postal workers went on strike and provoked a national crisis for the United States government. Their rebellion holds lessons for labor for today.

For eight days in March 1970 the country was rocked by an unprecedented and shocking national strike by postal service workers. Starting in New York City, the strike spread quickly and affected thirteen states, two hundred cities and towns, two hundred thousand workers, and 671 stations across the country. This action by seemingly docile and harmless federal workers provoked a crisis so severe that President Nixon sent twenty-two thousand National Guard troops to New York City to somehow move the mail and restore order.

Time magazine concluded that the strike "...underscores the helplessness of government in the face of organized, even if nonviolent, lawlessness." It went on to warn that it "could set a pattern of ruinous civil service strikes." In his speech authorizing the deployment of National Guard, Nixon went as far as to claim that, "What is at issue is the survival of a government based upon law."

The government was indeed helpless, and the postal workers achieved an overwhelming victory amid a broader political climate of protest and working-class militancy around the country. A look back at the strike is instructive for grasping the current eruption of teacher strikes, as well as the dilemmas of dealing with hostile labor law.

Roots of a Strike

Like many strikes that seem spontaneous, conditions for strong workplace action had actually been building among postal workers for some time. For one thing, the pay was abysmal. Starting salaries were \$6,176/year, and workers topped out at \$8,442/year only after twenty-one years of service. Many letter carriers had to work multiple jobs to get by or were eligible for welfare. By 1970, the annual starting salary for postal workers was 27 percent lower than for New York City sanitation workers and less than 50 percent of police and transport worker salaries.

Postal workers had no collective bargaining rights and had to rely on lobbying Congress to pass legislation giving them a pay raise. These lobbying efforts, cynically referred to as "collective begging" by some, yielded fewer and fewer results throughout the 1960s. Workers were particularly angered when Congress voted to give itself a 47 percent raise while denying them a much more modest one.

Mail sorters had to work in outdated facilities without heating or air conditioning, referred to by many as "dungeons." Management constantly harassed employees as mail volume steadily increased throughout the 1960s. William Burrus, who would eventually become president of the American Postal Workers Union, characterized the postal service as a "quasi-military place of work."

Although banned from striking as federal workers, small numbers of postal employees began pushing the limits of the law a few years before 1970. As early as 1966, there was evidence of a worker slowdown causing a breakdown at a Chicago post office, the world's largest. In 1969 both the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) and the National Postal Union (NPU) passed convention resolutions to explore overturning the no-strike law. Over five thousand postal workers in Manhattan and the Bronx took part in a demonstration on June 20, 1969. United Federation of Postal Clerks legislative director Patrick Nolan told Congress that postal union leaders were "sitting atop a live volcano."

The dynamic really changed on July 1, 1969, when letter carriers and postal clerks in the Bronx staged a sick-out. When they were suspended, sixteen additional letter carriers, in the Throggs Neck Branch, also called in sick. This bold action electrified members of New York's NALC Branch 36. It was there that rank-and-file member Vincent Sombrotto, who would eventually lead the great strike in 1970, got involved in the union.

At a special Branch 36 letter carriers union meeting, Sombrotto motioned to pay the suspended workers two-thirds of their salary. In a foreshadowing of things to come, all the rank-and-file members voted for the motion while the entire leadership voted against. The vote was narrowly lost, but it provided a basis for Sombrotto to develop a cadre of workers who were determined to take action. After these “mini-wildcats” a Rank-and-File Caucus was formed within the union to maintain organization among the members. Eventually they prevailed and the suspended workers were paid.

In December 1969, NALC president James Radamacher broke ranks with the other postal unions to make a deal with President Nixon for a 5.4 percent wage increase, tied to a plan to corporatize the post office. It was then that NALC Branch 36 members seriously began to talk about a strike.

The Strike Begins

A strike vote was scheduled for March 17, 1970. Over 2,600 members showed up to a rowdy and electrifying meeting. In a room swirling with chaos, Vince Sombrotto took control of the microphone and led the strike vote. It passed by a margin of five hundred.

The grievances voiced by members of NALC Branch 36 in New York were felt by postal workers across the country, who quickly responded to their daring act. In Chicago, around three thousand members of the mostly African-American Chicago NALC branch packed the union hall and voted to strike while chanting “Postal power!” The strike spread like wildfire, engulfing thirteen states and causing a major crisis for the federal government.

The wildcat strike put union leaders on the defensive and they now scrambled to keep up with events. Elated workers were testing their power in uncharted territory. William Burrus, a rank-and-file postal worker in Cleveland at the time, called it a “carnival-like atmosphere.” Sombrotto described the “euphoria of being up against the greatest government in the world and they couldn’t do anything about it.”

There was no coordination or central planning by the union. Strikers used personal phone calls, newspaper coverage, face-to-face meetings, and portable radios to get the latest updates from around the country. And the Rank-and-File Caucus put together a platform of demands that included a full government pension, retirement after twenty years, life insurance, area wages, and the right-to-strike.

“There’s Only One Thing Worse Than a Wildcat Strike”

The effects of the strike were immediately felt by a wide range of people and institutions. A New York nursing home manager said, “I don’t think people realized how much the post office really meant until the strike.” Census questionnaires had been scheduled to go out to every family that week and had to be delayed. It was the effect on the centers of economic power, however, that really concerned the government. Checks, stock certificates and bonds could not be delivered on Wall Street. New York Stock Exchange officials considered a market shutdown.

Postal union leaders, facing enormous pressure from the government to get their members back to work, tried to negotiate a settlement acceptable to their uncontrollable members. Labor Secretary George Shultz argued to NALC president James Radamacher, “There’s only one thing worse than a wildcat strike – a wildcat that succeeds.” But postal workers rejected Radamacher’s deal, which offered pay raises only after they returned to work.

Beyond the immediate economic impact of the strike, there was the subversive effect of having government employees openly defying the law and getting away with it. John Griner, who was head of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), had to intervene personally to prevent some of his locals from striking. *Time* magazine claimed the strike “demonstrates the deterioration of discipline that has become a major challenge to US society in recent years.”

On March 23, 1970 President Nixon declared a state of emergency and ordered twenty-two thousand federal troops to move the mail in New York City. The troops did little to help Nixon, as they were woefully unprepared to operate a complex postal system. Many postal workers were also in the National Guard. Soldiers openly fraternized with the workers, and some even helped in sabotaging mail processing.

Eventually, the government had to concede an overwhelming victory to the postal workers. Employees were granted an overall 14 percent wage increase, collective bargaining rights, and a formal seniority system. Instead of taking twenty-one years to reach top salary, workers could now reach the top salary after eight years of service. Though the government had been pushing for the postal service to be turned into a private corporation, the Postal Reorganization Act kept it government-owned. No workers were fined or jailed.

Significantly, the Rank-and-File Caucus remained active and made substantial inroads in reforming the union. In 1978, strike leader Vince Sombrotto was elected president of the Letter Carriers.

A Climate of Dissent

The Great Postal Strike of 1970 fed off a broader political climate that was rife with dissent and working-class militancy. Many strike participants cited the era's broader social movements, as well as more localized labor struggles, as inspiration for their actions. As Sombrotto put it, "authority meant nothing" to many people in the country at this time.

The movement against the Vietnam War had, of course, been gaining momentum throughout the 1960s, reaching its peak in 1970. Massive demonstrations organized by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam ("the "New Mobe") showed the extent to which people were willing to openly defy their government. A fascinating appeal from "New Mobe" about the postal strike showed the potential for struggles to converge in that moment: "It is a mockery of all human decency that a nation which spends \$30 billion on an illegal and immoral war refuses to find a pittance to provide a living wage to underpaid letter carriers. As concerned citizens we demand that you cancel war expenditures and turn from life destroying to life fulfilling efforts."

Another manifestation of militant defiance that influenced workers was the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. The strike had significant participation from black workers, since the postal service has historically been a vital source of stable employment for black communities. In 1970 around 20 percent of the postal workforce was black. In major cities like Detroit, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh 50-70 percent of the workers on strike were black. Many of them were young and recently returned from Vietnam. Black workers were especially militant during the strike, as 91,000 of the 92,265 black postal service employees were in the lowest pay grades.

The era also saw an ongoing wave of rank-and-file rebellions in private- and public-sector unions across the country. Teachers, sanitation workers, and transportation workers in New York City all had gone out on illegal strikes before the postal walkout. Public-sector workers across the country were proving that with enough solidarity it was possible to break the law and win. Wildcat strikes were also taking place in industries like mining, trucking, auto, steel, and communications. The postal strike conformed to the general historical pattern of mass strikes coming in waves, rather than incrementally.

Then and Now

Today, teachers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, and elsewhere are showing us again that it's possible for workers to defy the law, as well as their own union leadership, and win. There are many striking similarities between the (largely) successful actions teachers are taking and the Great Postal Strike of 1970.

The postal strike worked due to broad solidarity that cut through craft divisions. Letter carriers, clerks, mail handlers, and truck drivers all joined in. In many places, there was strong interracial cooperation on the picket lines. It's not surprising that the strike failed to take off in historically Jim Crow locals in the South. Postal workers also enjoyed wide public support throughout the walkout.

Equally important was the structural power that postal workers were able to leverage. Beyond the strike's disruption of everyday life, its ability to shut down Wall Street was what pushed the federal government to take the situation seriously. It's no coincidence that when Nixon sent federal troops, he prioritized New York City.

As West Virginia teachers showed, the existence of strong workplace leaders makes a huge difference. The postal strike vote, and its spread to other locals, happened because of the organizing done through the Rank and File Caucus. Without credible and daring rank-and-file leaders like Vince Sombrotto, the strike's gains would not have been consolidated into overall union democratization and reform.

1970 also showed how the broader political environment makes a difference. Working people can take advantage of volatile political moments to dramatically shift the balance of power. When teachers today reference the Bernie Sanders campaign or general anti-Trump feeling, they are tapping into a broader political sentiment that creates space for their actions. Once the first strike was initiated and proved successful, the militant feeling showed itself to be contagious.

The Great Postal Strike of 1970 was an explosive episode in our history. It serves as a reminder of the stunning achievements that mass workplace action can win. Postal workers learned through this struggle that their most important weapons were collective action and an engaged rank-and-file, not smart lobbying tactics or relationships with the right politicians. Teachers and other long-embattled workforces are learning these same lessons again today.

By Paul Prescod. Originally published by Jacobin magazine at <http://jacobinmag.com>. Reprinted in full with permission.



In My View

Reflections on the 2018 Edmonton Pride Parade

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the involvement of CUPW in the 2018 Edmonton Pride Parade. In association with the Alberta Federation of Labour, CUPW parade participants marched along Whyte Avenue and 104 street. Among us were the United Nurses of Alberta and Friends of Medicare. For some, this proudly meant their first time participating in a parade or even their first time at Edmonton's Pride Parade or any Pride Parade. Your encouragement has me focused to work in coordination again next year and new ideas are springing up from others interested in doing the same.

I believe that a sign reading "Workers for Fairness" demonstrates one further reason to take part in the Pride Parade. In my opinion, we spend much of our time at work by choice – why not choose to do our part to emphasize a peaceful and accepting work environment?

When bad, tough, or confusing things happen to you in the workplace, remember your value as a person. You matter. If you're working hard, remind yourself so. If you've erred, correct it. Request training as needed or seek assistance from peers. If you appreciate others, tell them. If something doesn't seem right, inquire. Allow yourself to be heard. Speak with your Stewards, Union Executives, Local Joint Health & Safety Committee, co-workers, family and friends. Trying does count, in my view. Encourage each other with a focus on respect, kindness, fairness growth, and positive change. Be your best self!

What does my participation in the 2018 Edmonton Pride Parade mean to me? This is a deep-seated question and I'm pleased to share my answer with you. For me, being involved with Pride means embracing the

opportunity to promote acceptance within work, home, and our community; as well as creating better solidarity, drawing on strengths within myself and others (all of us), learning from and teaching others to work safely and bravely, and bringing people together to celebrate our life's hard work! Celebrating our humanness, supporting brothers, sisters, family, and friends in the LGBTQ+ community is important to me: being who we each are, as we are.

By Andie Wirsch, Shop Steward, Member of the Human Rights Committee, and letter carrier at Depot 2.

Photo taken by Janelle Morin.



No Relief



From the Grievance Office

Well it's been another month and I'm slowly making the office my own. I've begun contacting members regarding their grievances, whether or not these grievances are being recommended for arbitration. Some of my next projects will be training others to cover the office for those times I am away or on vacation, as well as mentoring others on grievance hearings.

On that note, if you are a Shop Steward and interested in participating in a first-level grievance hearing, please contact me. I won't be able to include everyone, but I will be looking at trying to involve more people to spread the knowledge of how grievances are dealt with. For now, I'm limiting this to Shop Stewards as those are our front-line activists, but if you are not a Shop Steward and you are interested anyway, let me know and I'll see what we can work out.

Now let's discuss some issues in the workplace. For letter carriers, especially those in depots that have been converted to CMBs: do you work overtime too much? Not many people are aware, but we have Appendix LL as a means of mitigating the overtime if you are finding it hard to find the right work-life balance. This clause applies if you work "more than one (1) hour of overtime per day, on at least three (3) days per week, over a period of twenty (20) working days (excluding December), the employee shall have the option to request assistance." The way it works is you would be able to get help equal to the average number of overtime hours worked per day over the period of 20 working days. The downside is that you will not be eligible to receive overtime under clause 17.04 as you will be considered to have declined on the equal opportunity list. If overtime is causing you physical, mental, or emotional hardship, though, that might be a small price to pay. Talk to a Shop Steward if you want to go this route and you need assistance.

For the plant workers: back-filling continues to be a problem. The Corporation continues to state that it has the right to manage. This is true. Where there is work to be done, it must be done. However, if you are being pulled from your regular rotation of duties to do other work and someone else is being put in to do the work that you were scheduled for, that is back-filling. For members and Stewards alike, please remember to submit all the relevant backup information when sending in grievances on this issue. Sometimes all I receive is the back-fill investigation form which doesn't provide me with any contact information to reach you with. For back-fill issues, please include your duty roster (show what you were scheduled for) and who was re-assigned to your

duty and a copy of their duty roster as well (to show it wasn't part of their normal duties). Something else that might not seem obvious is to ask for a copy of the casuals list for the day. The reason for this is if you are being back-filled, why didn't they send a temporary worker instead of moving you?

We have also gained some ground in the plant. Management has agreed to hold the first-level hearings on a regular schedule for all three shifts. Now we will be able to prepare properly for these meetings and not be scrambling at the last minute when we are asked to come to a meeting on little or no notice. This has also made it so that we can have all three shift Chief Shop Stewards participating in their respective first-level hearings. This may not sound like much, but it is important to have your Chief Steward in touch with the grievances on their shift – this wasn't always the case before.

For RSMCs, we have had several grievances come in from different depots regarding contractors being brought in for stat holidays and for RSMCs not being paid overtime for working on a stat holiday. Aaron Taylor (Chief Steward for RSMCs) and I have been working closely on these files. Aaron is very passionate about representing the members and has made great contributions at first-level hearings on these issues. We know how hard you work and we want to see you be paid properly for any extra time you have put in. Thank you for all that you do and we will continue to fight the battle with Management for you.

In the meantime, I do get a lot of inquiries by phone and by e-mail and I respond to each and everyone. If I don't have an answer, I look it up and get back to people. Thank you for all your patience with me while I've transitioned into the Grievance Office. If you have any questions or if you need help with something, please reach out. I will be happy to help you in any way that I can.



By Carl Hentzelt, Grievance Officer.

THE UNION

Attend the Next General Members Meeting:

**July 8th, 2018 at 6 pm.
Central Lions Recreation Centre,
11113 113 st, Edmonton, AB**

MAKES US STRONG