



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF CUPW 730 / MAY 2021

# INSIDE OUT





**INSIDEOUT** is the monthly publication of the Edmonton Local of CUPW.

This newsletter aspires to educate and inform members and affiliates about our union's activities, opportunities, and challenges, as well as to raise awareness regarding all things labour.

Opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the official views of the Local.

The Communications Committee (responsible for this publication) is always interested in submissions of original articles, photographs, or illustrations. Prospective material must always concern CUPW or the labour movement, but submissions of general interest to the membership will also be considered.

We will also publish Letters to the Editor should you feel an issue requires further discussion. All submissions are subject to editing for brevity, clarity, etc.

To make a submission, or to get involved, contact the Communications Committee at [communications730@gmail.com](mailto:communications730@gmail.com).

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**EMPOWER ORGANIZE RESIST**

## MAY 2021

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# ★★ (NEAR) HISTORIC ELECTION WIN TO REFORM CUPW ★★ ★

Transcribed from the YouTube address, [here](#).

**C**omrades & friends, despite the pandemic, and other restrictions, the Edmonton local more than tripled voter turnout over our last election round, as well as achieved near historic numbers for total participation and support for a single candidate. In the elections between our oldest local records and now, average participation was around 425 voters with candidates typically needing 220 votes to win. The highest recorded turnout was 779 votes out of around 2200 members in 2007.

By comparison, our April 2021 election had the 2nd highest total on record with 715 voters. As a result, I am deeply honoured to be re-elected as your President with 459 votes, and am just as pleased to see my running mate, Chris Pilgrim, winning 2nd VP with 376 votes. This level of engagement during these very difficult times is a remarkable achievement signaling to Canada Post that our local is still solidly behind our leadership team's mandate to collectively empower our workfloors.

When I re-offered for President, I argued this election was not just about

choosing our local leaders going into negotiations, but a referendum on what our union should be. Many of us feel the consequences of CUPW's steady decline over the past 30 years, as our jobs only get worse and our wages fall further behind the rising cost of living. Whenever we dare to reclaim our dignity, our constitutional right to strike is crushed and we are legislated back to work. If we are committed to breaking this vicious cycle, CUPW must completely reform itself to prioritize mass activist education that both empowers our workfloors to directly confront management abuse as well as builds

the capacity to face down inevitable government repression.

We all love the stories of CUPW defying Turdeau's legislation in 1978 to win us the considerable standards we enjoy today but have lost the courage to write our own chapter. We must be honest with ourselves: a better life can never be won through passivity and proceduralism. Governments and the 1% have their boot firmly on the neck of the working class, and until a union somewhere in this country organizes to expose just how naked the emperor truly is, workers will never experience meaningful change for the better. I believe CUPW is the union best positioned to take this stand, and I believe that when we do, every other

dissatisfied union will be inspired to rise up with us.

The road ahead is a difficult one but our local is committed to supporting anyone who believes our union and labour movement needs to be reformed to reclaim our proper role as the vanguard of a humane and progressive society. No more bringing grievances to a gunfight, no more trading our militancy for legal advice, no more selling our agency to politicians. We must admit where we have failed as a movement and fully embrace the historic principle of true unionism that has always pushed our workers' movements forward: that is, if deliberately organized and mobilized,

our solidarity is the mightiest force on earth capable of creating any change.

Comrades and friends, thank you so much for your overwhelming support to continue as your President. For the next three years, my team and I will remain steadfast in our commitment to dismantling all forms of gatekeeping in CUPW, strengthening every aspect of our local, and reforming our entire union to be the fighting force we need it to be to win.

In gratitude and solidarity,

Roland Schmidt  
President (re-elect), CUPW 730





# LOCAL ELECTIONS

## ELECTIONS 2021 RESULTS: ELECTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

By the Elections Committee

**K**athleen Mpulubusi and Karry Biri spent all day on March 17th putting together the mail-in voting packages for our affiliate offices. There were 65 packages in total, all prepared with voting instructions, candidate material, membership cards, ballots, and brown and white envelopes. These voting packages were sent out on March 22nd.

This year, it was decided that instead of having to sign on a separate sheet, members just had to identify that they were voting by writing their name on the white envelope – which housed the brown envelope that contained their ballots. We would then verify whether the member was a member in good standing (MIGS). If they were, their ballots went into the bucket with the rest of the votes, which were all opened together.

This process seemed to work better than our past approaches as we saw an increase in votes from the affiliates. Of the 65 packages that were sent out, 35 were returned to the post office. One package was dropped off at our Local office, but we decided we could not count those ballots because they

did not follow the instructions. This has happened in the past and those votes were also not counted.

Of the 35 packages returned, there were 180 eligible voters. Some votes were from people who were not eligible to vote because they are RAND members, which refers to people who have not signed a union membership card for whatever reason. RAND members still pay dues and receive union representation, but they are not MIGS. RAND members who tried to vote will receive a letter letting them know about their status and how to become MIGS.

The following affiliates did not return their voting package: Alberta Beach, Bashaw, Bon Accord, Chavin, Devon, Edberg, Ft. Assiniboine, Galahad, Gwynne, Holden, Irma, Kitscoty, Lamont/Star/St. Michael, Mannville, Mundare, Paradise Valley, Ryley, Smoky Lake, Tofield, and Wabamum. Jasper did not receive their package and it is still in transit. Fort Saskatchewan did return their voting package, but they did not use the return envelope provided.

There were also mail-in ballots provided to members who were on

high risk leave or who were unable to come to the office to vote. This accounted for 55 voters total. Karry called all of them and either spoke with the members or left a message to call back. In the end, 25 members received mail-in ballot packages and 13 of them were returned. Each package contained the voting instructions, a brown envelope, a white envelope, and a return envelope. One was returned to the office directly, but like the affiliate package, it was not counted.

In total there were 715 voters. Some voters only returned the ballot for president, which is why there is a discrepancy between the totals for President (709) and 2nd Vice-President (701). Of that, 180 were from affiliates; 308 were from the EMPP; 39 from Rosedale; 32 from EDDD; 29 from Depot 2; 20 from Mayfield; 20 from WMS; 13 from Delton; 10 from Sherwood Park; 4 from St. Albert; 3 from Retail; and 57 from unknown locations.

We would like to say thank you to the Committee and the volunteers. The election could not have run as smoothly as it did without you.



## AN INTRODUCTION: 2<sup>ND</sup> VICE-PRESIDENT CHRIS PILGRIM

**F**irst off, if you are one of the 715 members that made it out to vote in this last election; regardless of who you voted for, thank you!

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Chris Pilgrim and I was recently elected to the Local Executive as the 2nd Vice-President, representing our members in the Edmonton Mail Processing Plant (EMPP). In my 14-years with the post office, I have had jobs working inside and outside, so I have an idea as to the work floor struggles most of you are facing.

During my tenure as 2nd VP, I would like to achieve the following things: recruiting reliable Shop Stewards for every section on every shift at the EMPP; better communication between Stewards for a more holistic view of what is happening on our work floors; more support and mentoring between Stewards to share skills and boost confidence; continually improve communications from our work floors to myself and the Local office (if we're not informed, we won't know how to help); and asserting a more meaningful health and safety protocol to push back against CPC's current draconian protocol.

I can't do any of this on my own. It will take a concerted effort by activists of all walks of life. Increasing the size of our activist network will help amplify

our collective voice. This is the only way we will be able to reach the goals that we set for ourselves. The tools we have at our disposal for reaching these goals are organizing our work floors, educating our membership, and using the grievance process to the best of our ability – in conjunction with our Right to Complain (Article 9.07).

A major part of organizing is the ability to communicate and get accurate information out to our



members as quickly as possible. When Roland asked me if I could help improve the online presence of our Local, I jumped at the opportunity to rebrand and relaunch our website. Since then, Roland and I have laid the groundwork for this invaluable asset to be a repository of local news and resources available to our members from any smartphone, desktop, or tablet. I look forward to

continuing to develop and improve this asset for many years to come.

Before the pandemic hit, our Local was very active in offering education to the members. I hope to get back to offering these educationals soon, even if class sizes are limited or if they must be digital. For many, these classes are the first step in knowing their rights and realizing that they are not powerless because knowledge truly is power.

The grievance process is a last line of defence of a member's rights, as it's a reactionary process by design. It's reserved for after the Corporation has trampled a member's rights, and it tends to disenfranchise the membership with the 'obey now, grieve later' attitude that typically only benefits the Corporation. The Corporation gets the immediate results they are after, while satisfaction for the member might come after years of waiting. This is not to say the process doesn't have its merits, but it's not a strategy by itself – only a tool in our belt.

I realize I have my work cut out for me, especially with the upcoming contract negotiations and the challenges of organizing during a pandemic. Still, I look forward to the opportunity to serve the members of this Local to the best of my ability and being a strong voice for the EMPP on the Local Executive. I also look forward to speaking with my sisters, brothers, and cousins on the work floor of the EMPP to get a better understanding of what challenges are in our path and where to focus my efforts, and I will work hard to achieve those goals.

Again, thank you for your support.



# REPORT FROM THE GRIEVANCE OFFICE

***A shop steward is your best ally in a 24 interview, and you have a right to request an off-cycle payment if the CPC mismanages your pay.***

*By Elizabeth Smallwood, CUPW 730 Grievance Officer*

**R**ecently, there have been a lot of pay issues being reported to the grievance office. While the grievance procedure can work for this, when it comes to issues that require immediate attention – like when you're dealing with someone's livelihood – it is best to try to deal with these issues quickly on the work floor. This is especially the case when the member might be experiencing financial hardship because of the mistake.

Usually when the Corporation has made a big mistake with someone's pay they will fix it. In many cases,

management has been fixing pay errors by putting the correction on the member's next pay cheque.

When it comes to pay errors, here are some things you should know. First, it is your right to be paid accurately. Second, management can and should request an off-cycle payment if you're experiencing financial hardship because of the pay discrepancy. Finally, if you find that your pay is incorrect, write a statement of what is missing and find a Shop Steward to witness you giving it to your supervisor and, if necessary, requesting an off-cycle pay cheque.

I have also received some questions regarding the roles of Shop Stewards in meetings with management. As a Shop Steward in these meetings, you do have rights. You can object to the 24 Notice if it is wrong, too vague, referencing past situations that are more than 12-months old, or if it has

passed the time limits for investigation. You also have the responsibility to keep the employer on track if they are trying to talk about things that are not listed on the notice. It is important to state and make notes about any objections so that they can be referenced later.

Management might try to tell you to be quiet, not ask questions, not object to the interview, or even tell you that you are only there to take notes. This is not true. You have as much right to speak up and object during a 24 interview as management does. In fact, the Shop Steward is on the same level as management.

For more information on the rights and responsibilities of Shop Stewards, please check articles 9.04, 9.05, and 9.06 of the urban operations Collective Agreement and Article 9.04 of the RSMC Collective Agreement. ✈️



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021

*By Kathleen Mpulubusi, CUPW 730 Women's Committee Chair, Shop Steward*

**E**ven during the COVID-19 pandemic, the spirit of protest and speaking up about issues is alive and well. The glaring inequalities that the pandemic has exposed, particularly for women, minority groups, and the work that they do, is clear and it calls for systemic change. Service, care, and delivery work which was dismissed as unskilled and unimportant pre-COVID, has been shown to be vital and as necessary as any other work that keeps our communities and society functioning.

It is in this spirit that the annual International Women's Day event for 2021 was organized. The theme this year was "No Going Back – Women Fight For a Better Future." Instead of a group march, we organized simultaneous and socially distanced and masked solidarity pickets at hospitals and long-term care centres to recognize the primarily women and other minority workers, as well as the generally disrespected but vital work that they do. The Edmonton Local was well represented at the different pickets at the major hospitals.

To properly and justly recover from the pandemic, there needs to be investment in the long-neglected social infrastructure of the community – child and elder care, strong public schools, and post-secondary institutions. Recovering from this pandemic has made it even more clear that we need to build from the bottom up, not wait for a slow trickle from above. ✈️



# DAY OF MOURNING 2021

Greg Mady (President of the Edmonton & District Labour Council)

*Because of COVID-19, you might think that work-related deaths increased in 2020. The truth is that the numbers decreased. This is not because COVID-19 isn't killing workers, it's because of poor contact tracing by the provincial government and employers actively fighting against presumptive coverage for COVID-19 deaths.*

Every year on April 28th, we take a moment to remember workers who were killed in the preceding year as a result of their jobs. For many, this may seem to be the opportunity to see the very real human cost of COVID-19 on working people – the people who have worked tirelessly throughout this pandemic to keep our economy strong and allow others to stay safely at home without losing any of the luxuries they've come to expect.


Given this, you would expect that there would be an increase in the amount of workers who were killed last year as a result of their jobs. In fact, it is slightly less. Is this because COVID-19 isn't the crisis we are being told it is? Absolutely not. It's because COVID-19 doesn't have presumptive coverage by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and the only numbers we are allowed to see are deaths covered by WCB.

If any of you have dealt with the employer on a WCB claim, you have had the pleasure of finding out how they fight any claim to ensure their premiums don't increase. Without adequately funded and staffed contact tracing from our provincial government, it is almost impossible to prove that COVID-19 was contracted at work. Because of this, employers across the province and country have pushed back to say that COVID-19 deaths were not a result of the person being required to work on the front lines throughout a pandemic. While this undoubtedly exposed workers to an increased risk of contracting COVID-19, employers claim it was a result of their choices on their personal time and therefore not a work-related illness.

Is this a surprise? Absolutely not. We have seen this before when employers fought against workers by claiming that asbestos poisoning wasn't a result of working around asbestos. The good

news is that as a result of that, there was enough organized push back to say that if you contract mesothelioma (asbestos cancer), it is assumed you got it at work. This is called presumptive coverage, which means these bodies side with the worker unless the employer can concretely prove otherwise. This is how ECB and Employment Insurance used to be set up and fundamentally how it should always be. But we all know that employers never give us rights and that we must fight for them.

The long-standing slogan of the Day of Mourning is "Grieve for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." This year more than ever we need to live this motto and fight to get workers the recognition and rights they deserve. The very real human cost of COVID-19 needs to be brought to light and workers need to push back and say we will not be sacrificed for the economy.

Please join us on April 28th to safely honour the officially acknowledged brothers, sisters, cousins, and comrades we lost in 2020. This will be a digital ceremony and video presentation where we pay tribute to the many more workers who paid the human cost of COVID-19. You can join this ceremony by using the following link: [www.edmontonlabour.ca/day\\_of\\_mourning\\_2021](http://www.edmontonlabour.ca/day_of_mourning_2021). 



# CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

By Karry Biri, CUPW 730 Secretary-Treasurer

*Mental health crises are a normal part of our lives, and increasingly so in a pandemic. This year's Canadian Mental Health Week encourages us to expand our emotional literacy and reach out when we need support.*

I have heard the expression "we may all be in the same storm, but we are not all in the same boat," and this rings so true for where we now find ourselves, over a year into a global pandemic. Our lengthy struggle with COVID-19 has brought many discussions about mental health to the forefront of our lives.

I am certain that most of us have worries and concerns in regard to COVID-19 and its variants, but my concerns may not be the same as yours and vice versa. This does not mean, however, that my concerns are more valid than yours; your concerns are valid to you and are just as important. During this time of uncertainty, we definitely need to be more patient with, and supportive of, each other.

This year's well-timed Mental Health Week is May 3-9th, and the theme is understanding our emotions. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) suggests that recognizing, labelling, and accepting our feelings is a way to protect and promote good mental health. They explain that by putting our emotions into words, "we

are actually constructing and making meaning of our emotions... Without words for emotions, our feelings might seem unclear to us."

What follows is some general information from the CMHA about mental health week as well as some contact information. If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out to someone – CUPW also has Social Stewards for this reason.

## CMHA Mental Health Week 2021 – Information Summary

Every year since 1951, CMHA has hosted Mental Health Week in the first full week in May. Now in its 70th year, the core objective of this week is to promote mental health as something we can promote and protect, not just something we can lose. Their goal is to shift societal beliefs and perceptions about mental health and help promote behaviours and attitudes that foster well-being, support good mental health, and create a culture of understanding and acceptance.

While one-in-5 Canadians experience mental illness or a mental health issue in any given year, 5-in-5 of us have mental health. Our mental health is something we can all protect and nurture, whether or not we have a diagnosed mental illness. People are experiencing unprecedented stress and feelings of anxiety because of COVID-19. Forty-percent of Canadians say their mental health has deteriorated since the onset of the pandemic.

It is important to understand how we feel and to put those emotions into

words. Recognizing, understanding, labelling, and expressing our feelings is known as "emotional literacy." Learning emotional literacy helps us better manage and regulate our emotions. Putting feelings into words is called affect labelling, and when we put our emotions into words, we are constructing and making meaning of our emotions. Affect labelling has been compared to the effect of hitting the brakes when driving a car: when you put your feelings into words, you are putting the brakes on your emotional responses.

While negative emotional states, such as sadness, are not usually considered desirable in Western society, these emotions are needed to help us adapt. Expressing so-called negative emotions can have a positive impact on our relationships. It can also increase support from others, build trust in new relationships, and deepen intimacy.

Feeling sad, angry, and anxious at times is part of being human and ignoring those feelings doesn't make them go away. Bottling up emotions magnifies them or forces them out in unhealthy ways. Focusing on intense emotions will not make them worse. One of the best ways to quiet our emotions is to give them a voice.

If you are overwhelmed and your emotions are persistent and interfering with your daily life, it is important to seek mental health support. Visit [www.mentalhealthweek.ca](http://www.mentalhealthweek.ca) for information, helpful articles, and free downloadable communications tools to help you celebrate CMHA Mental Health Week. 





# AFTER A NURSE IS FIRED, TRURO LONG-TERM CARE WORKERS GO FOR UNION

By Lisa Cameron on behalf of the Halifax Workers' Action Centre

From rankandfile.ca, 3/26/2021

**W**orkers at Wynn Park Villa, a long-term care home in Truro, Nova Scotia, are getting close to winning major workplace improvements.

Less than a month since the abrupt termination of Tevin Crawford, a former long-term care nurse at the facility, the workers of Wynn Park Villa successfully applied to certify their union with CUPE

on March 19. Today, March 26, an in-person vote is being held.

## How it started

On February 17, a Wynn Park care unit raised health, safety, and confidentiality concerns with management through an open letter. The workers felt that the nursing station was insecure, exposing residents to potential injury and threatening the security of patient files.

Sheila Peck, Wynn Park Villa's Administrator, dismissed their

concerns at a meeting a week later. Citing cost issues and a possible fire hazard, she argued no change could be made.

It was during this meeting that Crawford expressed his view, "If we were unionized, we wouldn't be having this problem."

Despite his excellent performance record and positive relationship with management, Crawford was fired two days later. His termination letter was vague and indicated no performance issues.

## Support for Crawford

"In my opinion, this was a clear case of anti-union animus," says Danny Cavanaugh, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.

"The timing is too suspicious, especially considering Tevin's excellent work history," says Cavanaugh.

"I have no doubt that he was being retaliated against for making a pro-union statement, which is his right under federal and provincial legislation."

On March 2, Rankandfile.ca broke the story about Crawford's termination, spurring significant criticism of the care facility and attracting public support for Crawford and his co-workers.

Several former and current employees of Wynn Park Villa also came forward, sharing similar experiences and sending messages of solidarity to the workers now taking steps towards unionizing.

## Wynn Park Villa's response

Following the article's publication, Wynn Park Villa provided staff with a letter discouraging workers from engaging in organizing efforts.

"The letter is riddled with language used by bosses who are trying to shut down a union drive," says Asaf Rashid, lawyer and member of the Halifax Workers' Action Centre.

"First of all, the employer defensively repeats that they care about the workers and their opinions. However, the very situation that prompted Tevin's dismissal makes clear that this is not the case. When workers came forward with a health and safety complaint, Wynn Park dismissed it right away. Then, when Tevin expressed a pro-union view, which was his right, he was fired almost immediately."

***"Crawford expressed his view: 'If we were unionized, we wouldn't be having this problem.'... [he] was fired two days later."***

The letter also raises the question of union dues.

"Almost every employer uses union dues to scare workers out of joining together," says Rashid. "The truth is, union dues are how workers pool together resources to win the changes they most want to see at work, including pay increases, better benefits, job security and more."

## "Typical of anti-union bosses"

Rashid also says the letter references Crawford without naming him.

"It accuses Tevin of misunderstanding the nature of his termination, alluding

to underlying performance issues despite the fact that none were ever raised with him. This indicates that the truth lies somewhere else, and they would rather not speak about it," says Rashid.

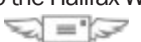
"Wynn Park is trying really hard to make it sound like these workers are going to lose out if they unionize, which is typical of anti-union bosses," says Rashid.

"In fact, the opposite is true. Unionized workers enjoy a democratic process through which they can negotiate the terms of their employment as legal equals with their boss. This ensures that every worker voice is heard."

Over the past two decades, long-term care workers in Nova Scotia have won incredible gains through unionizing, including substantial wage increases, pensions, sick leave, better benefits, maternity leave top-ups, job security, long-term disability plans, and more.

## Support Wynn Park Villa workers

No doubt, the collective strength of the workers at Wynn Park Villa has scared management.

Workers with questions about their right to form a union are encouraged to reach out to the Halifax Workers' Action Centre. 



# THE FIGHT TO ORGANIZE AMAZON IS JUST GETTING STARTED

By Alex N. Press  
From Jacobinmag.com

*The cameras and news trucks may be leaving town. But at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, where the company won a closely watched unionization vote last week, the fight isn't over. And at Amazon's other warehouses, it's just getting started.*

At the press conference held by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) the day the result was announced in the Amazon union election in Bessemer, Alabama, one of the warehouse workers said, "I have to go to work tomorrow."

What he meant was that it doesn't make sense to discuss whether this is the end of the fight. The same workers in Bessemer who were building a union are still doing so. The vote breakdown was 1798 against unionizing and 738 in favor. Of the roughly 500 challenged ballots, RWDSU president Stuart Appelbaum says over 400 were challenged by Amazon, meaning it's more accurate to say that over 1,000 workers voted to unionize. Those workers got a front-row view of the explosive power of capital, and now they clock into work with that knowledge.

Union fights don't end when the cameras go away. The Bessemer organizing committee rallied on

Sunday and is continuing to fight. RWDSU has filed objections to Amazon's actions during the election and believes a rerun election is likely. It is hard to win a rerun after workers have been exposed to the boss's scare tactics, though not impossible. One worker at a different Amazon warehouse who contacted me last week didn't even mention Bessemer — he wanted to discuss a completely different matter pertaining to his own workplace. As Darryl Richardson, the Amazon worker who started the union drive — and had previously been part of an organizing drive at a Mercedes seat supplier in Tuscaloosa — said, "the fight isn't over, 1 more round."

For the labor movement, Bessemer offers a few lessons. For one, the campaign underlines the urgent need to change the laws on the books. Amazon had months of constant access to workers, which it used to create anxiety and frustration and fear and confusion among workers and then tie that to unionizing, convincing them that collectively improving their working conditions wasn't worth all the grief. One management-side attorney told the Huffington Post that Amazon likely spent millions of dollars on its anti-union campaign.

That this is standard practice is why millions of people who want to join a union do not do so. Were the PRO Act in effect, the outcome in Bessemer would have been very different: the workers would already be negotiating their first contract. The laws must change if workers' fortunes are ever to improve. This, argues Appelbaum, is the biggest lesson of the Bessemer campaign. The events that followed from the workers there deciding to organize should serve as an example of how power in the United States is radically consolidated in the hands of property owners, and how employers

will do everything they can to stop workers from winning a better life.

There is also the matter of the media. The campaign in Bessemer got more attention than any union drive in recent memory; the New York Times even had a live tally of the vote. The reasons are obvious: Amazon is one of the most powerful corporations on the planet, so when workers, especially workers in the South, take the company on, it's big news. The intense media coverage no doubt contributed to the excitement of the campaign. But no amount of coverage can substitute for strong worker organization on the shop floor. Any suggestion that this loss means organized labor should focus less on building worker power in Amazon warehouses and more on putting public pressure on the company is conceding just as the fight is getting started.

"I believe in organizing and in reaching a majority in the workplace, as demonstrated in elections. I believe that if you want to build a movement, you need to engage workers, not corporations," says Appelbaum. As he points out, RWDSU was organizing an Amazon warehouse in New York City when the company sought to locate its HQ2 site there. Despite the public and political pressure on the company, he says "it didn't make a difference" in getting Amazon to recognize the union.

The questions we face are ones that have dogged workers since the earliest years of modern trade unionism. How do you organize shops with high turnover? What do you do when a company dilutes workers' leverage by building in redundancies at a well-organized shop? What about when they close that shop? How do you convince a coworker whose every movement is being monitored to fight back? How do you get them to come to



The sun still rises on the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. (Elijah Nouvelage/Getty Images)

a meeting when all they want to do after a shift is sleep?

Amazon, in its quest to perfect the annihilation of space by time, runs an extraordinarily dehumanizing workplace. Its highly surveilled warehouses have rates of serious injury that are nearly double the industry average. Its last-mile delivery operation squeezes other, unionized drivers by pushing its own workforce to the limit. Amazon Flex and Amazon Delivery Service Partners drivers are denied employee status and do not even have time to use the bathroom. The company's Mechanical Turk

program is a dystopian nightmare. Even Amazon's white-collar workplace practices are startling: Amazon Air pilots, who transport the company's air cargo, are overworked and underpaid. At the company's Seattle headquarters, white-collar workers are known to cry at their desks, and have filed complaints about lacking sufficient time to use the bathroom there, too.

But atrocious working conditions and totalitarian control within the workplace are hardly unprecedented. Steel mills and auto plants were often intolerable, dangerous jobs until they

were organized. Workers failed to organize shop after shop, until they didn't. There are important differences among these industries: as Rich Yeselson points out, while 1930s General Motors had a comparable number of workers spread across a similar number of facilities as Amazon does today, 25 percent of those workers were in the Flint plant, which meant workers could gain incredible leverage by organizing one facility. Amazon, excluding the fifty thousand, largely white-collar, workers at its headquarters, lacks a similarly strategic site. But while this is a challenge, there is nothing inherent in the work itself, nor any trick in the company's playbook, that workers haven't seen before.

Amazon is swallowing the world at a pace that is almost impossible to comprehend, and the organization of its workers grows more pressing by the day. Unionizing it will be an uphill battle, but the labor movement in the United States has never had favorable odds. You learn from the setbacks, and then, you keep moving. 🗳️

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex N. Press is a staff writer at Jacobin. Her writing has appeared in the Washington Post, Vox, the Nation, and n+1, among other places.







Photo of an inflatable pig with pockets full of money. Taken at the CESSCO picket line on April 7th, 2021.

Boilermakers Lodge 146 has been locked out since June 2020 and CESSCO has been using scabs and collecting financial assistance from the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

# TAKING THE FIGHT TO THE STREET

*Because there's never a shortage of reasons*



On March 27th, 2021, after a series of anti-Asian attacks in North America, a coalition made up of the Asian, Black, Indigenous, Muslim, LGBTQ2+ communities held solidarity rallies in Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg. In Edmonton, around 200 people gathered across from Wong's Benevolent Association and walked to Churchill Square. For more information and to find out ways you can help, please visit [www.act2endracism.ca](http://www.act2endracism.ca).



## RAMADAN MUBARAK!

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Ramadan starts following the sighting of the crescent moon over Mecca. This means that in 2021, Ramadan began on April 12th and will end on May 11th – the sighting of the next crescent moon.

Ramadan is a period of fasting (from sunrise to sunset), prayer, reflection, and community. Eid al-Fitr (“the Festival of Breaking the Fast”) follows Ramadan. This festival can last up to three days and it is a time of great feasts, gift giving, and spending time with loved ones.

Ramadan Mubarak!

## SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

In Canada, April is Sikh Heritage Month. This became law on April 30th, 2019, and it was designed to recognize the contributions Sikh Canadians have made to Canada's social, economic, political, and cultural fabric. Sikh Heritage Month provides us with an opportunity to reflect on, celebrate, and educate future generations on the important roles Sikh Canadians have played and continue to play in communities across the country.



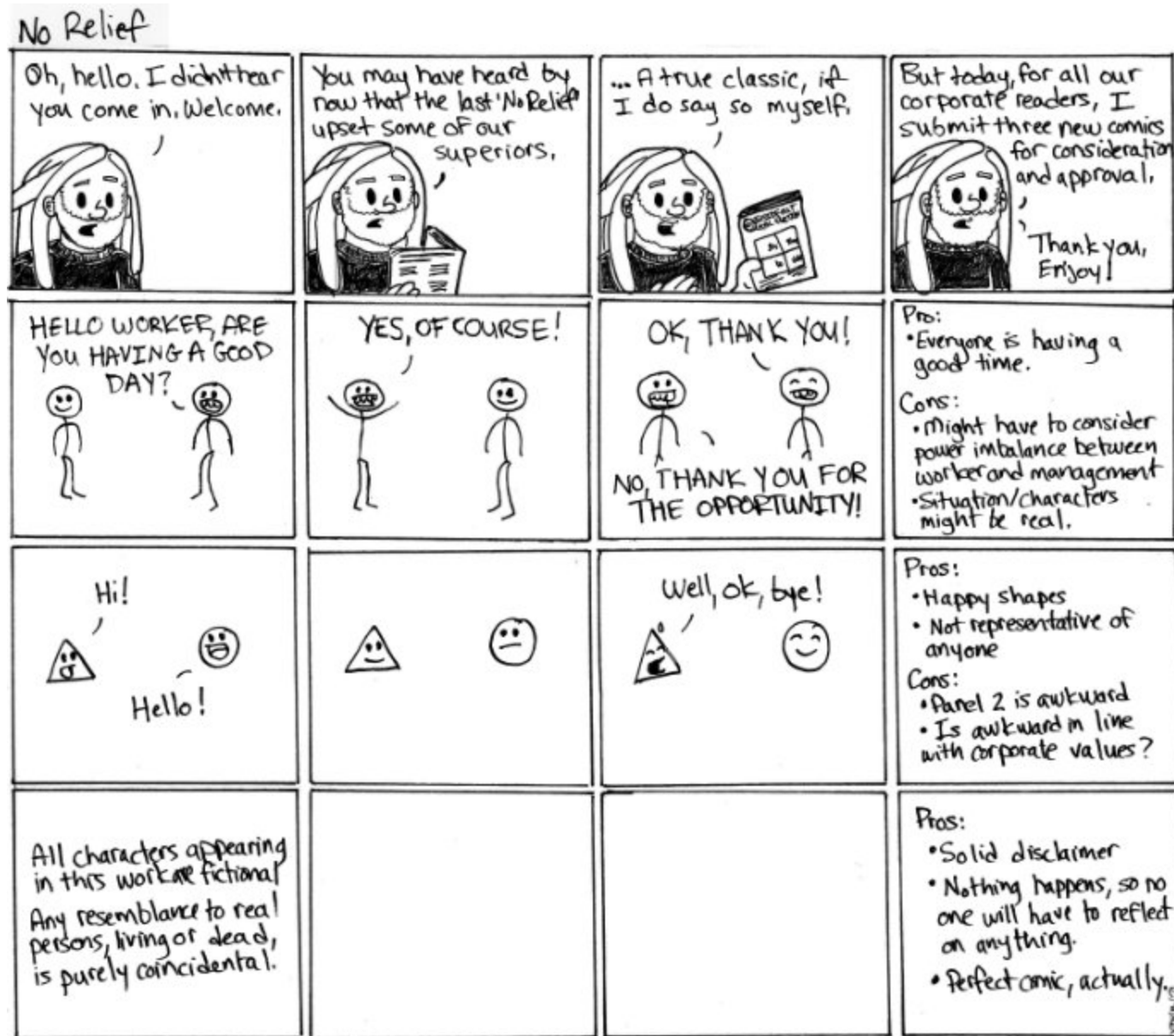
## ON THE COVER

### May Day/International Worker's Day

It was decided at a Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions convention held in October, 1884, that May 1st, 1886, would be the day that an 8-hour workday would become standard. As that day approached, unions prepared for a general strike in support of this demand. This culminated in Chicago with the Haymarket Affair on May 4th, 1886. Police moved in to disperse a rally held in support of striking workers. An unknown person threw a bomb, killing 4 workers, 7 police officers, and injuring dozens of others.

Eight anarchists were convicted of conspiracy and 7 were sentenced to death. On November 11th, 1887, four men – Engel, Fischer, Parson, and Spies – were hanged. According to witnesses, Spies' final words were, “The time will come when our silence will become more powerful than the voices you strangle today.”

In the years that followed, May 1st was adopted to continue the push for an 8-hour workday. It eventually became known as International Workers' Day, May Day, or Labour Day, and it continues to be a celebration of labour and the working class.



Kyle Turner, 2021

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CONTINUES**