



**INSIDE OUT
FALL 2019**



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

FALL 2019 // CONTENTS

4. **Agitate, Educate, Organize //**
Roland Schmidt
7. **From the Editor //** Kyle Turner
8. **Updates from Stations and Depots //**
Kristine Bowman
9. **By the Numbers //** Kathleen Mpulubusi
10. **The Strain of Compressed Flyers //**
David Griffiths
12. **Photo Submissions**
14. **Leadership is Not Going to Help Us //**
Organizing.Work
19. **The Steep Cost of Over-Burdening //**
Kathleen Mpulubusi
20. **Gender-Inclusive Unionism //**
Natasha Fryzuk
22. **Crossword Puzzle //** Nathen

Contact CUPW Edmonton

Phone: (780) 423-9000
Toll-free: 1-877-423-CUPW (2879)
Fax: (780) 423-2883

Visit us at the office at
18121 107 Ave, Edmonton, AB T5S 1K4
or online at www.cupwedm.net



CUPW Edmonton Local 730 Executive Committee

Full-Time Officers

President	Roland Schmidt	union@cupwedm.net
Secretary-Treasurer	Todd Brooks	treasurer@cupwedm.net
Grievance Officer	Carl Hentzelt	grievance@cupwedm.net
Health and Safety Officer	Rashpal Sehmy	health.safety@cupwedm.net

Chief Stewards

Stations and Depots	Kristine Bowman	k.l.bowman87@gmail.com
Transportation	Cathy Danard	cathyldanard@gmail.com
EMPP Shift 1	Sanjay Malhotra	sanjaymalhotra1@hotmail.com
EMPP Shift 2	Cheryl Chow	
EMPP Shift 3	Vimal Sharma	
RSMC	Elizabeth Tjostheim	lillagail86@gmail.com
Wickets and Affiliates	Karry Biri	
Maintenance	Vacant	

Table Officers

Vice-President	Parminder Pannu	parminderpannu8@gmail.com
Education Officer	Devon Rundvall	730education@gmail.com
Recording Secretary	Kathleen Mpulubusi	
Editor	Kyle Turner	editor@cupwedm.net
Organizing Officer	Gursharan Gill	gill_71@yahoo.ca
Route Verification Officer	Jen Reimer	cupwedmroutever@gmail.com

AGITATE, EDUCATE, ORGANIZE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT THE SEPTEMBER 7TH GENERAL MEMBERS MEETING

Since being elected this past June, I'm proud to say that our members have been extremely supportive of my mandate to help organize the work floors of our local. By the time you read this, I'll have made 53 work floor visits where I've been honest with members that our traditional, grievance-based forms of activism can't be our only way to fight the employer if our goal is to create meaningful change.

I've also asked members to consider what we might be able to accomplish if we embrace our collective power to assert what is right – whether it's covered in our Collective Agreement or not. This appeal has been met by 335 members applying to take our "Taking Back the Work Floor" course. In under three months, we've conducted nine of these courses, training 175 members while retaining 144 of them (60 from C&D, 52 from the EMPP, and 33 RSMCs) to coordinate work floor activities.

By running these courses, we've created work floor pressure that wouldn't have occurred otherwise. Rosedale carriers conducted a mass flyer refusal and laughed off suspension threats; EDDD carriers have forced CPC, on at least five occasions, to extend compressed flyer delivery to multiple days; RSMCs in Mayfield and Rosedale successfully demanded that CPC properly compensate them for guaranteed hours that previously went unpaid; on August 29th, RSMCs at Delton marched on their superintendent to draw attention to the behaviour of a bully boss – and to quote a sister there, "he's been as sweet as pie ever since."

Recently, the EMPP has also gotten in on the action. Both the MLOCR and Parcels sections on shift 2 separately challenged their shift superintendent to provide more staffing, which was immediately provided after months of CPC squeezing more work out of fewer employees. Shift 3 parcels shouted down a management whiteboard scheme to single out 'less productive workers'.



Members lined up down the hall in order to attend the GMM.

Our most prominent initiative, however, the was city-wide campaign against CPC carrier restructure fraud. Depot 2 was targeted by CPC to lose as many as eight routes until we submitted an 800 name strong petition, complete with a set of demands for fair work value, that was hand delivered to the CPC CEO.

A Broken System

Even though our organizing efforts at Depot 2 saved five jobs that wouldn't have been saved otherwise, the three positions that were cut prompted activists to organize a mass meeting in early August that was attended by 110 members. There, members excitedly discussed what we could do to escalate the fight back against CPC. Understandably, our spirits were dampened by the dark clouds gathering over every instance of workers rising up: back-to-work legislation.

Instead of just surrendering, members emphatically supported a strategy to build our strength through the continued recruiting and training of activists as well as launching a referendum to ask our entire local where they stood in regards to fighting the legislation. I've since visited three facilities to present

this referendum and I will be continuing to do so for the rest of September.

The problem is obvious: no matter what we do, the government will always legislate us back to work if we represent a threat. The question that will be posed to members is simple: if you knew that the National union office would protect you from the fines of the legislation and if you knew that a solid majority of the Edmonton local would support you, would you be willing to defy back-to-work legislation?

There is no wrong answer to this – whatever feedback we receive from the members will inform our plan going forward. Are we ready to fight back against broken restructures and EMPP under-staffing, or do we continue building our strength to go on the offensive as soon as arbitration ends? Either way, back-to-work legislation will always be waiting for us down the road and no proper counter-strategy can be made unless we know the true feelings of our members. Once I'm finished making the rounds, the results of this referendum, broken down by facility, shift, and wave, will be published in our newsletter.

Our local should be very proud of the work we've been doing to build solidarity and organizing capacity. We're honestly engaging members over what they felt was a poorly conducted strike and a deeply unpopular move to completely surrender to arbitration. We've established an effective and inspiring activist training program that has also been adopted by our comrades in the Alberta Union of Public Employees (AUPE), a 95,000 member outfit gearing up to fight the Kenney government.

Other CUPW locals throughout the country are asking for us to send facilitators to teach them how to organize. Dave Lambert, our Regional Education and Organizing Officer, and I have been refining a proposal that will ask our whole region to follow Edmonton's lead and roll out mass activist training classes. Members always ask, "what is our union doing for us?" and I can say with confidence and certainty that we are going into every facility and telling our members that the only hope we have is to collectively stand together and fight back from the floor – and our call for this is being answered.

The Choice is Yours

Today, I will be making a notice of motion to re-allocate \$60,000 from the previous year's unused budget funds to run many more organizer and Shop Steward training courses for the 160 members on the waiting list. Also today, a motion to reduce our union dues will be debated. This motion is the embodiment of the shortsightedness I have fought against in this union for the past 15-years. Do we invest in a new strategy that will actually empower us to fight CPC, or do we pretend that by organizing less, with fewer resources, we will somehow convince CPC to change their ways? Make no mistake, the motion being presented today to reduce our union dues represents a battle for the soul of our local.

The timing of this dues reduction is also very questionable. Now that we're finally having regular work floor visits and meetings, now that we finally have members applying en mass to learn how to fight CPC, now that we're finally pushing back across our local, a motion is presented that, if passed, will completely undercut all the strength and solidarity we've built since I became president just three months ago.

Imagine how much further along we'd be in our fight against CPC if everyone in this local was trying to amplify the work we're doing instead of undermining it! Making us poorer could never make us stronger – saving \$12/month to help our members at the expense of collective training is cutting off our nose to spite our face. A 4% pay increase would give members an extra \$2000/year; that's \$1850 more per year than this proposed dues reduction, but it's impossible for us to win a raise like that without training and mobilizing our members.

I'm hoping that everyone who's heartened by the new approach of our local will stand with me today to send a clear message to those that would threaten what we're trying to build. If you're unwilling to walk the new path we're making, stand aside for those that will.

With this GMM, our local is at a crossroads. Some believe that by clinging to only traditional methods

of grievances and consultations we can eventually expect different results. Some believe it is more important to score cheap political points by falsely promising that your lives will somehow get better by paying lower dues. Fortunately, many in this local are waking up to the reality that our union understood long ago: the struggle continues, and our only hope of winning the struggle is by organizing our work floors.

Summary of the September 7th GMM

I'm happy to share with you that at the September 7th GMM, we had one of the most well attended GMMs I've seen in the past 15 years of this local. Of note, while our meetings usually only draw between 30-40 members, this meeting had 40 first-time attendees! Most of the 116 present were there to support the organizing strategy that our local has committed to since I was elected President this past June.

During my report, I detailed how in under 100 days we've trained over 150 members to coordinate collective action from the work floor, and as a result postal workers all over the city are fighting back against fraudulent restructures, short staffing, bully bosses, and unsafe conditions.

In an effort to further build upon this momentum, I proposed a motion at this GMM to re-allocate unused funds from the previous budget years to run eight more organizer training courses, as well as two basic Shop Steward and two advance Shop Steward educationals for the 160 backlogged applicants. I can't stress enough how unprecedented it is to have such a huge portion of our membership energized to help grow our union!

This motion will be voted on at our next GMM – Sunday, October 6th, at 6 pm – and it will chart the course for our next 100 days as the federal election kicks off and our contract arbitration winds down, both of which could be greatly influenced by our capacity to mobilize. My hope is that all those witnessing the radical transformation of our local can be counter on to once again reinforce our organizing mandate.

Austerity Unionism?

As encouraging as our new direction for the local has been for many of our members, one of our biggest challenges has not come from Canada Post but from within our own ranks.

To be clear, CUPW is a political organization much like a political party, which internal debate and disagreement. Members have the right to share any perspective as long as it doesn't violate our Constitution. But that also means every perspective is open to criticism.

I feel it's very important that I broadcast the fact that, broadly speaking, there are two drastically different political perspectives fighting for influence in our local. I believe this competition and the resulting discussion are ultimately healthy for the development of the political maturity of our organization. That said, let me contribute to the discussion on why the motion proposed at our September 7th GMM to reduce dues is a harmful prospect for the members of the Edmonton local.

What would you say if an NDP government suddenly advocated scrapping public health care to hand out \$500 cheques? Would that seem against the principles of an NDP government? The motion proposed at the GMM was not much different, as members who have served for years (currently or previously) on our own union's Executive tried to justify cutting the dues of our members by \$12 per month. What they didn't tell you was that this reduction would result in a loss of \$300,000 for the local, which is over one-third of our operating budget.

When they spoke on the motion, they claimed they wanted to help our members, but they failed to mention the part where our local would have had to completely cut every committee budget, every educational course, cancel all future Steward training, remove our ability to fund any events (such as the BBQ that happened on September 12th at the EMPP), as well as layoff one full-time officer position in order to pay for this dues reduction.

How would these cuts help empower our members

FROM THE EDITOR

By Kyle Turner, Editor

It's been almost a year since the rotating strikes threw off the schedule of the InsideOut and I thought this was going to be a short, quick issue that would allow me to get back on track.

But that was not the case. After receiving much positive feedback about the last issue, I ended up receiving not only more but also more varied submissions. (That's right, there's a crossword puzzle!)

I have to chalk up this renewed interest to the work floor organizing that we have been promoting and, dare I say, successfully engaging in.

The vibe is drastically different from when I started working for Canada Post in 2015. It's closer to what I imagined it would have been like to be here for the 2011 forceback refusals.

It's closer to what I imagined being a member of a unionized workforce should be. It gives me hope.


But what it doesn't do is give me much room to talk about the issue itself. The technology just isn't there for this publication to not exist in 4-page increments.

Because of this, I can't really introduce the new section for management that I had planned. Oh well. Maybe there will be space in the next issue.

I can, however, share some comments management has made about the InsideOut!

I am paraphrasing here, but this one comes in two parts. The first is, "Lies, lies, lies." The second is, "letter carriers are not overburdened."

If you hear any glowing reviews like this from management, please send me an e-mail. I don't need to know who said it or where it was said, but I would love to hear all about it.

Anyway, thank you for the continued interest and support. I hope you find this issue as enjoyable as you found the last! 

to fight CPC or protect them when attacked? Simple: they wouldn't. Fortunately, this austerity motion that would have bankrupted the organizing capacity of our local was completely obliterated by a count of 107 to 9 – to the cheering delight of the hall.


The message sent at this GMM was crystal clear: the membership wants to concentrate its efforts on further training activists and building work floor power.

Get on board or get left behind.

The Struggle Continues

Over the next month, my visit count to Edmonton facilities will reach 75, including trips to our affiliates in Nisku, Camrose, Wetaskiwin, Spruce Grove, Fort Saskatchewan, and Westlock. During this time, I'll have also conducted more than 125 work floor meetings (most depots have two shifts). I share this with you to explain that it's by consistently getting out to members that I've learned just how disheartened they feel about being legislated back to work and just how cynical they are toward our traditional reliance on grievance-based activism.

When I made my first tour of the local, members angrily asked me: what's the union doing for me? I answered them honestly: the union has no power to create lasting, meaningful change beyond our own ability to collectively mobilize. I then gave examples of how we've done just that. When I made my second tour, almost 300 members signed up for our organizer training courses.

Now, on my third tour, members are openly discussing the possibility of defying back-to-work legislation. Postal workers desperately want change, and now is the time to finally deliver it. 



By Roland Schmidt, Local 730 President.

UPDATES FROM STATIONS AND DEPOTS

CPC'S CONTINUED HEALTH AND SAFETY HYPOCRISY

Greetings fellow union members!

For those of you who are not aware, I have been elected as the new Chief Shop Steward of Stations and Depots. At the time I write this, I have been in this position for less than a week but my schedule is already exploding with meetings and my phone is exploding with email notifications. Congratulatory messages have also been pouring in, and I would like you to know that your support has been much appreciated – even in this short span of time!

Thus far, I have attended two sets of grievance hearings and I would like to inform you of some of my initial thoughts and experiences that have made a deep impression on me.

First, in the course of a grievance discussion, it was brought up that a member didn't show "as much remorse" or "apologize as sincerely" as expected by CPC. I struggle to understand how you quantify something so subjective, but ok. Fine.

The grievances and discussions continued and it comes to light that a supervisor has crossed a boundary and one of the reparations requested was an apology. Management was quick to state that an apology from their side would not happen. Period. End of sentence. Full stop.

I have really big feelings about this and I vented them right there in the hearing. I argued that it's not morally correct that we are expected – even demanded – to apologize, demonstrate remorse, or give respect when we do wrong but we cannot expect the same of management.

I stated, "that, right there, is a big part of what is wrong with our work dynamic between management and employees."

Respect is earned, not automatically given simply because you have a title. How can I respect someone


The grievances and discussions continued and it comes to light that a supervisor has crossed a boundary and one of the reparations requested was an apology. Management was quick to state that an apology from their side would not happen. Period. End of sentence. Full stop.

who will never admit, apologize for, or grow from their mistakes? Management sure makes enough of them.

Second, a heavy situation was also discussed in which special leave was denied for an employee, even though they qualify for this leave under Article 21.03 of the urban Collective Agreement. Instead of being able to take this special leave to provide care for a loved one with a terminal condition, CPC told them to use vacation time, to use the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), to consider going on short-term disability, or to go on compassionate care leave (paid at a reduced rate by Employment Insurance).

This is very short-sighted on CPC's part as it stands to create financial hardship down the line, not to mention the fact that vacation time is to be used to rest and recover.

This was truly an emergency, short-notice scenario that fit Article 21.03 perfectly and it was still denied.

CPC has a massive campaign for health and safety, but can we really take this seriously when they're not including our financial, emotional, and mental health too? 

By Kristine Bowman, Chief Shop Steward Stations and Depots, and EDDD letter carrier

BY THE NUMBERS

REPORT FROM THE ROUTE MEASUREMENT COMMITTEE

By Kathleen Mpulubusi


Just as the Route Measurement Committee was able to breathe after dealing with last year's hectic schedule, CPC rolled out the restructure schedule for 2019-2020. As of now, there are 4 letter carrier depot restructures and 3 RSMC restructures planned.

This year, the Committee has been working with the RSMCs under the guidance of Elizabeth Tjostheim, Karry Biri, and Gwen Kroetsch, as well as with help from other RSMCs, to develop procedures for reviewing RSMC routes and consulting with CPC regarding implementation.

Because of these efforts, we now have a comprehensive agenda for consultation (based on the letter carrier agenda) and checklists for review of new routes. We are also training RSMCs in depots as we review new routes so that we can have a network of people that are knowledgeable about routes and can help their fellow RSMCs.

The RSMCs have limited access to information under their Collective Agreement, so it is difficult to review routes. However, we have had success in consulting with CPC to make sure implementations go smoothly and that corrections are made when necessary.

The Depot 2 restructure is complete. Unfortunately, there was a loss of 3 full-time routes. With the Organizing Committee and Route Measurement Committee working together with strong support from Depot 2, carriers managed to pressure CPC into not cutting 8 routes as they initially planned. Again, CPC's route measurement officers would not verify the parcel values, allowing these the Corporation to be less accountable.

Going forward, the major issue for these restructures is to keep the pressure on CPC. We need to force them to be accountable and to build routes with values that accurately reflect the time it actually takes to do the work – and not the amount of time a number cruncher in Ottawa wishes we would do it in. 

Letter Carrier Schedule

Depot	Prep	Volume Count	Build	Implementation
Whitemud South (4 & 8)	12 Aug. 2019	9 Sep-23 Sep 2019	14 Oct-8 Nov. 2019	31 Jan. 2020
Fort Saskatchewan	30 Dec. 2019	20 Jan-31 Jan 2020	24 Feb-6 Mar. 2020	15 June 2020
Depot 9	13 Jan- Feb 21 2020	24 Feb-6 Mar. 2020	30 Mar - 15 May 2020	20 Jul. 2020
Depot 3	13 Jan- 6 Mar 2020	9 Mar - 20 Mar. 2020	13 Apr - 15 May 2020	20 Jul. 2020
Depot 6 (Mayfield)	10 Feb- 20 Mar 2020	23 Mar. - 3 Apr. 2020	27 Apr. - 5 Jun. 2020	17 Aug. 2020

RSMC Schedule

Depot	Start	End	Implementation
Sherwood Park	6 Oct. 2019	31 Jan. 2020	16 Mar. 2020
St. Albert	16 Oct. 2019	20 Feb. 2020	25 Apr. 2020
Whitemud South Depot 4 & 8	1 Jan. 2020	23 Jul. 2020	21 Sept. 2020

CUPW Local 730 Women's Committee Presents

EQUINOX 2019 OCTOBER 18TH TO 20TH

Want to speak up but you're feeling unsure or lacking confidence? This weekend is for you!

We will be presenting the course "Reclaiming our Power," which is an educational developed for union women by CUPW.

Learn to be assertive and more confident when dealing with management and co-workers. Feel empowered. Meet with union sisters.

WOMEN MAKE THE UNION STRONG!

Where: Bennett Centre, 9703 94 street, Edmonton.

When: 6 pm Friday, October 18th to 12 pm Sunday, October 20th.

Includes: Accommodation Friday and Saturday night, Friday night reception, Saturday meals, and Sunday breakfast.

Registration and Cost:

Early bird deadline - September 16th. \$25.

Final deadline - October 1st. \$30.

For further information contact
Kathleen Mpulubusi (kmpulu@gmail.com)

THE STRAIN OF COMPRESSED FLYERS

AND HOW TO PREVENT FLYER COMPRESSION FROM OCCURRING

Background

I do not enjoy delivering flyers. I dislike them from the tedious preparation through to the extra weight in my satchel, especially when customers explain how little they enjoy receiving them.

I like them even less when they are compressed – that is, when we are given fewer days to deliver than our Collective Agreement demands.

This has motivated me to complain at length to my co-workers, my family, my friends; people at a social event who thought they could get an answer to a simple question about flyers are now desperately looking for a polite exit. Most of all, I complain about flyers to my supervisors, and I suspect this is why people at EDDD asked me to stop my useless complaining and join the Workplace Hazard Prevention Program (WHPP) committee, which was formed to give recommendations on how to protect our workers from the overburdening that comes with compressed flyers.

At EDDD, this committee consisted of Devon Rundvall (letter carrier and Education Officer), Doug White (EDDD Superintendent), Ernie (depot support), and me (David Griffiths, letter carrier). I expressed my skepticism during our first meeting, but Doug assured me that he would take this committee very seriously.

We will never know if he truly meant that, but we have seen changes on the work floor since our investigation.

Ernie spent months collecting information on every flyer that was received in such a way as to cause compression. I witnessed supervisors extend delivery dates on many flyers and generally show more compassion to carriers impacted by this. This small change was already more than I expected to see come from this Committee.

In August, the Committee said, “David, you have done almost nothing and we think you should write up a list of recommendations based on the collected data.”

These recommendations are what I am sharing with you here.

Introduction

The compression of flyers creates an unnecessary strain on letter carriers across the country. These delays also impact our customers and tarnish our reputation with the companies that send them.

Over our investigation, we have seen that these flyer compressions can be avoided with simple refinements to the current systems we use. By improving the training of staff and providing clear guidelines for employees to follow, compressed flyers can be significantly reduced in all work centres.

In the following, I share five causes of flyer compression and suggestions for how to deal with it.

Recommendations

First, we have the stress caused by supervisors. In the latest restructures, we have seen walks built with 30% coverage. This means that a compressed flyer may add hours to a person’s delivery day for two days in a row, interfering with both their safety and work-life balance. The compression of flyers can be a very stressful situation for a letter carrier, so it is important that supervisors recognize the physical and mental strain caused by flyer compression. Supervisors must be compassionate towards the employees and give them the time and support they need to deal with the extra workload.

Second, there is the staff that works at the admail help desk. When a flyer arrives late, depot support staff are supposed to contact the admail help desk

in order to extend the flyer delivery dates. The staff at the help desk must be trained to extend delivery dates in order to be compliant with our Collective Agreement. There should be no inquiries as to if there are dates for an offer or event on the flyer and there should be no mention of a responsibility to fulfill the contract with the customer. With minimal training, the staff at the admail help desk would be able to stop this incorrect flyer compression.

Third, there is the low priority of admail in being shipped out of the processing plant. Over the course of three months, almost all flyer delays originated within our processing plants. Neighbourhood mail was often held due to full trucks or accidentally being left behind, impacting carriers across Alberta.

We need to implement procedures that will address these issues within the processing centres. This may require extra staff or increased duty time to allow all neighbourhood mail to be loaded into trucks. Management may also require training on how to properly clear neighbourhood mail from the work floor.

Inside processing centres, neighbourhood mail is given the lowest priority when deciding what to load onto a truck and what to leave behind. This can result in flyers arriving after their delivery start date has already passed. Due to the important of this revenue stream, an additional truck should deliver the product on time to ensure our ability to honour our commitment to the customer while still providing a safe delivery schedule for letter carriers.

Fourth, there is the lack of information given to relief workers covering depot support positions. Depot support staff are often on permanent partial disability (PPD) assignments and may miss work due to health issues. This can result in OA relief workers covering their positions, sometimes for many months. These staff are often without clear directions and guidelines for these positions.


Creating an official guide for these positions would allow staff to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the tools available to aid in

their work. These procedures should include clear instructions on how to use our systems to manually change flyer delivery dates.

Finally, while investigating these flyer delays, we discovered that it's not always clear who to contact in order to determine the cause of the delay. Having specific staff on each work floor who are clearly accountable for the proper movement of neighbourhood mail products could help resolve this issue. These staff members should be both workers on the floor and management, working together to ensure the proper delivery of neighbourhood mail. This sort of delegation of duties would allow us the ability to easily contact workers in any facility and easily resolve any problems that arise.

Conclusion

Flyer compression is an unnecessary and avoidable strain on our workforce and it must stop. While a lot of instances of flyer compression occur in the processing plant, I do not wish to admonish plant workers. They have a difficult job in a challenging workplace. It is my hope that this recommendation will result in increased time allowances for plant workers.

If Canada Post is committed to honouring its commitments to both customers and staff, implementing these recommendations would improve its ability to do both. Strong and happy staff will allow Canada Post to do the high quality work that will protect this important revenue stream in perpetuity. 

By David Griffiths, letter carrier and WHPP Committee member

PHOTO SUBMISSIONS



Members attend August 1st mass meeting to discuss action at Depot 2.



August 1st mass meeting.



Members lined up for the September 12th barbecue at the EMPP.



August 21st Taking Back the Work Floor class.



August 22nd TAKING Back the Work Floor class.



A packed room during the September 7th GMM.

Top: A

B

LEADERSHIP IS NOT GOING TO HELP US

FILM REVIEW OF MEMORY AND MUSCLE (1995)

On the surface, this is a review of a classic documentary about a massive, illegal 1965 strike by Canadian postal workers – written by a postal worker, who was himself involved in the rotating strikes at Canada Post last year. But deeper than that, it's a reflection on how militancy is kept alive in a union. The answer, the author says, is not by electing or trusting a particular union leadership, because they always tend to act as a conservative force. Instead, militancy has to be built up and kept alive by rank-and-filers themselves, through their own activity. (Organizing Work)

Memory and Muscle is a documentary about the 1965 postal worker strike that was published by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) in 1995, on the 30th anniversary of the strike. It consists of a series of interviews with postal workers who were involved in that strike, and provides historical context as well as the reasons why striking was seen as the only solution – despite it being generally unheard of in the public sector at this time. It also documents the failure of past postal worker associations and the rise of CUPW through the work of a militant work floor that defied its leadership.

The first time I watched Memory and Muscle, I was in training to be a shop steward. I could feel my blood pressure rising as I booed and hissed at the behaviour of management and the government toward the postal workers. The thought of how people have used the position of shop steward as a way to get into management blew my mind: how could anyone do that after what we've been through?

While I maintain that position, I realize, after going through a job action, that I missed the broader point of the documentary. The point is not that management is bad – I mean, of course it is – but that we need to learn how to deal with our own union leadership and empower the rank-and-file members if we are to achieve our demands.

My own experience

I learned this firsthand: from October 22nd until November 27th, 2018, I was engaged in a series of rotating strikes against the Canada Post Corporation (CPC) as a member of CUPW. Things seemed to be going in our favour. The ratio of honks to middle fingers directed at our picket lines was uplifting. Things

had changed since the last job action in 2011 when rotating strikes quickly led to a lockout by CPC. This was followed by back-to-work legislation. But that legislation had since been deemed unconstitutional. We had a new Prime Minister who said he respected the collective bargaining process. He was even photographed with a sign clearly indicating his love for postal workers (“I <3 Posties!”).

But perhaps we misread the rebus: once again, CUPW was legislated back to work. Further job actions were to be met with daily fines: \$1,000 for rank-and-file members, \$50,000 for union representatives, and \$100,000 for CUPW itself.

In the lead-up to this legislation being passed, CUPW leadership kept acting as though it had a plan. Up until the last minute, those of us involved with organizing the strikes and the picket lines were eagerly looking at our phones and awaiting the message that this time we would defy the legislation. Those of us with union positions were told to resign from them so that the fines wouldn't be as severe if we did defy, so we kept thinking it would be a possibility.

The picket line dwindled as the deadline inched closer. People began crossing the line with their vehicles in order to secure a parking spot. Others even tried to enter the depot before the strike was over. To the credit of management, however, they did keep the doors locked until the legislation was official.

We kept waiting and checking, but the word never came from the union. CUPW, with its history of militant action, folded under the pressure. Management unlocked the doors. We put our tails between our legs and went back to work with slightly more disappointment and disbelief than usual. Some

people thanked those of us who had been involved with organizing. Others knew all along, of course, that it was pointless to try anything – though only one person approached us to say as much.

During our early stages of organizing the floor, this same person made it clear to us that it failed before and it would fail again. (When I was trying to build a phone tree, he told me not to bother taking down his information because he was just going to be a scab.) He made me angry, but hindsight tells me it was mostly because he was right. He wasn't right in criticizing us for thinking that we could better our conditions through collective action. But it seems we were wrong for believing our union leadership had a plan and that they would be willing to do what was necessary to achieve our demands.

This push, it seems, was something that had to come from us – the workers on the floors and in the streets. A lesson we once learned and have since forgotten, but is still conveniently contained in a documentary. Let's take a look at how Memory and Muscle gets this point across.

Setting the scene: four catalysts for the 1965 strike

According to the film, there were four things that contributed to the deterioration of conditions in the post office and led to the postal worker strike of 1965. First, non-unionized, part-time employees were hired. These employees were paid less than full-time employees and they were mostly women; and because they were mostly women, the existing associations viewed them as taking “men's jobs” and so did not support them. These women were sexually abused and harassed by management and many were afraid to complain because they could be fired without question or recourse. Because they were so cheap, however, more and more of them were being hired.

Second, the postal clerk and letter carrier associations that came before CUPW were not useful or helpful. The Federal Association of Letter Carriers had formed in 1891 and the Canadian Postal Employees Association in 1911, but despite this long history there were no collective agreements and workers couldn't file grievances. These associations could

make requests of the employer, but they would typically back down once the employer said the request would cost too much. According to the postal workers interviewed in Memory and Muscle, these associations did not have strong member support, and relatively few postal workers actually attended their meetings, as those meetings were more likely to be about the colour of uniform ties than anything useful to the workers. This allowed a relatively small group of people to take control, and they didn't want to rock the boat because the associations were viewed as more of a social club and stepping-stone to a management position.

Third, management implemented a new plan that tried to squeeze more work out of the same number of employees: this saw letter carriers working 12-hour days and sorters having to sort 25 letters per minute or face reprimand. This led to a number of incidents of exhaustion, fainting, and even heart attacks. To deal with this, workers went around their associations and formed a committee that went to the national office in Ottawa to address these conditions. Showing the power of issuing a demand over making a request, they let the government know they would not be returning to work in the same conditions. The Deputy Minister responded that the system could be changed from coast-to-coast in 48-hours. The committee responded by saying the Deputy Minister had 24-hours.

The fourth issue contributing to the strike was the low rate of pay postal workers received. According to one postal worker, letter carriers realized there was a problem when the welfare cheques they were delivering were worth more than what postal workers were making (\$4,380 per year, which is approximately \$34,143 CAD today). With a newfound respect for militancy and the knowledge of how useless their existing associations were, postal clerks and letter carriers formed the ad hoc Postal Workers Brotherhood and demanded an annual wage increase of \$660. The government responded with a raise of between \$300 and \$360, despite having just given its own Members of Parliament a raise of \$8,000.

Choosing the unknown

The negotiation process was denounced as a sham by Willie Houle, one of the main organizers out of Montreal, because it became clear that was never really any negotiating taking place. The association leadership said the workers were asking for too much and, aside from that, you couldn't strike the government. The National Executive also claimed the workers wouldn't support a strike. The newly-formed Brotherhood itself claimed a strike would be irresponsible.

The problem was that postal workers remembered the strike of 1924 when they were crushed. Supervisors and the Postmaster had been scabs and their continued presence in management roles in the post office were a reminder of that earlier defeat. But workers did just experience a successful victory in demanding their working conditions be improved. Association leadership was still useless, but the rank and file's militancy at least had accomplished something.

Things hadn't improved enough, of course. According to one postal worker interviewed, workers were faced with continuing to work under terrible conditions or choosing the unknown and going on strike – not even knowing if they would have a job to return to. After weighing these options, postal workers chose the unknown. Postal workers in Vancouver and Montreal walked out. They were eventually followed by Hamilton and Toronto. Eighty other centres eventually joined as clerks and letter carriers managed to show great levels of solidarity despite not being organized as a union. (In Toronto, however, the president of the letter carriers said the striking carriers should be thrown in jail, while the president of the clerks was photographed crossing the picket line.)

To deal with the striking postal workers, the government appointed Justice J.C. Anderson. Anderson decided that the postal workers would receive a raise of \$360 with the potential for more upon further review. When asked if they were willing to go back, postal workers said that they were not interested in a review and that the strike would continue.

The government took a hard line with Anderson's decision. The Brotherhood also agreed that the workers should return to work. In Montreal, the postal workers refused, stating that they were still on strike for \$660 – even after being threatened with being fired. Rumours began to spread after a telegram was received in Toronto that claimed the rank-and-file leadership in Montreal had agreed to go back to work.

It was later discovered that this telegram was fraudulent, but some workers had already agreed to go back. Even with this setback, the strike continued until postal workers were offered a raise of \$550. After this, workers voted out the leadership of their associations and formed new unions. The clerks created CUPW while letter carriers formed the Letter Carriers Union of Canada. (In 1989, the Canadian Labour Relations Board forced the majority of postal workers to become members of one union and after a vote, CUPW was chosen as the main bargaining agent.)

This hurts

Re-watching *Memory and Muscle* hurt. The conditions in the post office today are painfully similar to those of 1965. The 2011 legislation contained reduced wages for employees hired after 2013. Health and safety was a major part of the strike of 2018, as CPC acknowledged there was an injury crisis in the post office and the statistics revealed that postal workers have the highest rate of injury of all federal employees – five times higher than dockworkers, who claim the second highest rate of injury.

CUPW pointed out in negotiations that the rate of injury is tied to what CPC dubbed “modern post,” the method of delivery that was pushed through after 2011. This contained a number of changes, but the sticking point is letter carriers now having to juggle three bundles of mail instead of just one. Routes were also made longer because now some of the mail is sorted by machine. In negotiations, CPC claimed it would cost too much to switch back.

Even though the corporation claims to care deeply about our health and safety (their slogan “Make

it Safe, Make it Home” can be found all over the workplaces), it seems some cost-benefit analysis was done. This analysis must have concluded that the injury rate was worth not giving us safe work. We already knew negotiations were a sham, though, so this was no surprise.

The real lesson from *Memory and Muscle*, which I shamefully missed during the first time I watched it, was how we are to deal with our own leadership. The film really drives this point home as it shows that workers defied their own leadership three times by ignoring the warnings from the association for clerks, the association for letter carriers, and even the Brotherhood.

As we stood outside on a cold Tuesday morning for what would be our last picket shift for a rotating strike that had gone on longer – and I would say more successfully – than we thought it would, we were certain our national union leadership would tell us we would be defying legislation. We had momentum and, whether they truly supported the actions or not, members tended to follow directions from the national office. After being legislated back to work a handful of times since the 1980s, and with the recent Supreme Court victory declaring the last legislation unconstitutional, it was inconceivable that our leadership hadn’t planned for this outcome all along.

A bulletin was released shortly before the legislation came into effect. It stated that by Christmas there would be at least 315 disabling injuries to postal workers; 250,000 hours worked without pay for Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMCs); thousands of hours of forced overtime for urban postal workers; and the continuation of RSMCs being treated with “equity but not equality.” While the bulletin was partially right for blaming the back-to-work legislation for allowing this to continue, choosing the known and not defying the legislation also puts the responsibility on CUPW.

The rumour eventually spread that National would be willing to defy if the members took the first step and refused to return to work. While I wish that was what happened, it was disappointing to hear: this is a top-down organization and nothing we did in the lead-up was done to empower the rank-and-file to make this call.

What happened was, in the end, the logical conclusion of this type of unionism: disconnected bureaucrats who view the workers as game pieces to move around. The workers weren’t engaged. We were waiting to be told what to do. There was a plan, don’t worry. We were waiting for our elected union leaders to save us. For better or worse, we would have respected the authority of the national office if we had been told to defy. Workers were tired and wanted the ordeal to be over, and they would have grumbled, but with a clear plan and better communication, the outcome would have been different.

Our leaders rested on their laurels. They inherited a militant union but because they were either unwilling or unable, they have chosen time and time again to not be a living example of that tradition. Somewhere along the way, we forgot this important lesson from *Memory and Muscle*: our official leadership is not going to help us.


Keeping militancy alive

If we want not only the next round of negotiations but also our work floor to be different, and if we want to live up to CUPW’s militant history, we are going to have to organize differently. Negotiations are currently out of CUPW’s hands as arbitration has begun. In three months or so, we’ll know what the damage is. Or maybe the results will be fine enough and we’ll hear that it’s not as bad as it could have been. Will the new negotiation tactic be to aim for ‘good enough’ from arbitration? Where will we be then?

Since the back-to-work legislation came into effect, the refrain from the national office has been that the fight is not over and that all options are still on the table. But if the word comes down, will postal workers listen? Why should we listen to orders from an executive that continues to let us down? It has become clear that they think the rules and the law are going to protect us and show that we were right, but years will have passed by then. We’ll have ratified a contract and conditions will have further deteriorated and it will be too late.

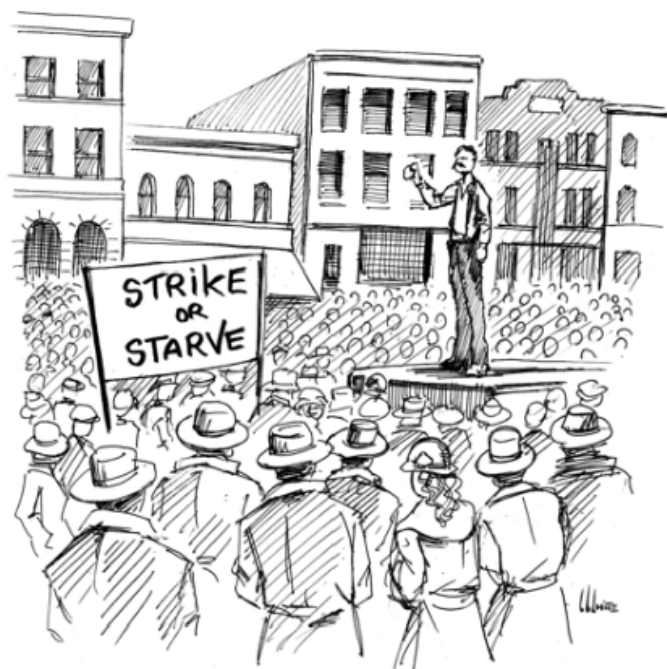
I feel like we have been duped enough. I don't think this was done maliciously. I believe these people comprising the national leadership are doing their best and doing what they think is right. But I also believe they have become too far removed and that they have lost sight of how CUPW achieved its goals in the past, how it became a bastion of militancy in the Canadian labour movement, as shown in Memory and Muscle and in the successful strikes that followed (such as the strike of 1981, which won improved maternity leave benefits and set the standard for workers all over Canada).

On the plus side, the broader community has been showing support for postal workers consistently since the legislation. Concerned citizens as well as members of the labour movement have been shutting down letter carrier depots and processing plants. Members of the Industrial Workers of the World have been prominent in this movement, as their flags can be seen consistently in photos of these community cross pickets. In Hamilton, these cross pickets seem to pop up weekly. In Edmonton, community pickets have even sprung up at the airport to cut off access to Canada Post's loading docks. Similar community militancy has occurred in Vancouver, Windsor, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, and Sydney.

We seem to have lost the spirit of 1965. But it still exists. It is being tended to by the community. I just hope we can find our way back to it. 

Reprinted with permission from Organizing Work. For more organizing news, information, and stories, check out Organizing Work online at organizing.work.

A Labour Minute



Winnipeg General Strike

On May 15, 1919, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council called a general strike to demand collective bargaining, improved wages and better working conditions. By 11 AM, more than 30,000 workers had joined the strike, shutting down many of the city's services.

Some of Winnipeg's influential manufacturers, bankers and politicians formed the "Citizens' Committee of 1,000" and discredited the strikers by labelling them "alien scum" and Bolsheviks. Fearing the strike could spread to other cities, the federal government quickly sided with the Citizens' Committee.

On June 17, 12 labour leaders were arrested. A crowd gathered in protest on June 21. The Royal Northwest Mounted Police charged into the crowd, beat the strikers with clubs and fired weapons. Two strikers were killed and more than 30 injured.

The committee called an end to the strike on June 25. Seven of the strike leaders were convicted of conspiracy to overthrow the government. Many of the strikers were not allowed to return to their jobs and it would be another three decades before Canadian workers were granted collective bargaining rights.



THE STEEP COST OF OVER-BURDENING

AND HOW WE END UP WORKING FOR FREE AFTER A RESTRUCTURE

Summertime and post office life is easy, right? Lower volumes of mail, decent weather – life is good. But how good is it *really*?

Unfortunately, it's not as good as one might think.

Since the “Slaughter at Delton” last year when we lost 9.5 routes, our parcels have become unmanageable, the routes are longer, and even in the summer it can be difficult to finish a route in 8 hours. CPC has claimed, however, that our parcels are accurate and, besides, they generously built the routes to be between 470 and 475-minutes instead of the full 480-minutes – so we should have time!

At Delton this past July, however, the CPC Route Measurement Officers tracked data from our PDTs over two weeks, from July 8th to 19th. The data collected from the PDTs included numbers of parcels, packets, signature items, customs, and priority items.

In the following, I will focus on the parcel numbers, as the indexed parcel average can be found in Box A of the Special Allowance form of a route's Route Kit.

For most of the routes at Delton, the data collected from PDTs were higher than the value in the Special Allowance, even during what should have been a lull in volume. On average, the Special Allowance value was 5.06 parcels lower than what was captured by the data.

At 5.06 parcels per route per day with 82 routes, this means there are 410 parcels per day being delivered without recognized daily time values. Weekly, then, we have 410 parcels multiplied by 5 days, which equals 2,050 parcels per week. Yearly, we end up with 2,050 parcels multiplied by 52 weeks, which equals 106,600 parcels per year delivered by carriers at Delton with no time values given to do it.


Prior to the 2018 restructure, Delton had 89 full-time and 2 part-time routes. After the restructure, Delton has 79 full-time and 3 part-time routes – a net loss of 9.5 routes. What does this mean? The math shows us that 9.5 routes by 8 hours equals 76-hours per day lost. Multiply that by 5-days per week, we see a loss of 380 working hours per week. Multiply that by 52 and we end up with a loss of 19,760 working hours per year. At an average wage of \$22.50 per hour, that's a loss of \$444,600 for workers.

For each route remaining at Delton (80.5), this means that 0.94 hours per day have been added on to each route. Returning to \$22.50 as an average wage, this means that each person is doing \$21.24 of free work every day that is not accounted for. This becomes \$106 per week – \$424 per month, and \$5,512 per year.

At Depot 2 where 3 full-time routes were cut, the losses are not as large thanks to the efforts of work floor organizing and the Route Measurement Committee, but the same trend of unpaid work is the same. With restructures scheduled for Whitemud South, Rosedale, Mayfield, and Fort Saskatchewan, how much more blood will be taken from the stone?

But we continue to push through and make the routes work.

Why?

It's time to stop doing favours for CPC. 

By Kathleen Mpulubusi, Shop Steward, Delton Letter Carrier, and member of the Route Measurement Committee

GENDER-INCLUSIVE UNIONISM

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEVAN RITCHIE



Devan getting ready to take the Local 846 Trans flag for its first outing at the 2019 Vancouver Trans March.

In May of this year, CUPW's National Convention hosted its first ever non-binary caucus and passed a resolution that, wherever possible, gender neutral language will now be used in our constitution.

I've been struggling for a while with the question of how to make our historical union terms of "sister" and "brother" more inclusive to all genders. As labour writer Nora Loreto asserts:

"There's no doubt that the terms "brother" and "sister" are exclusive. Trans, non-binary, and gender-fluid members who are fighting for visibility, rights, and space are erased and marginalized when a meeting chairperson has no way to acknowledge them at a microphone, or worse, misgenders them. The trouble is, there are few options that could be subbed in for these words and maintain the same reference to a familial network. This means that labour activists need to consider upending the use of these terms entirely." [1]

The Non-Binary Caucus grew from a loose plan made by two Vancouver Local 846 members, Devan Ritchie and Stefanie Neumann, to break from the convention's tradition of splitting the group into a

women's and men's caucus and instead go to a pub. When word about the plan reached national, they offered Devan and Stefanie the chance to make the gathering official.

Devan is a letter carrier in North Fraser, one of our country's three Separate Sort and Delivery (SSD) depots.

What follows are some excerpts from my recent conversation with the Devan who graciously took time out of their weekend facilitator workshop to engage in a little shop talk, discuss inclusive language, and delve deeper into the non-binary caucus.

Natasha: Do you and Stefanie work together? What were the steps you took to make the vision of this caucus a reality?

Devan: Stef is an MSC 5 ton driver and the pacific region delegate to the CUPW National Human Rights Committee. We know each other through mutual friends, union committee work, and Stefanie has also facilitated a course or two I've participated in. Stef is my mentor.

At a GMM [where binary pronouns were being used] the question of 'okay where do I fit into that?' came up. From going to these educationals, that question evolved into creating general policy for more equity within the union - it's important for me to have a voice for those who don't. Word reached National quickly - we had less than a week to organize the caucus. We did it over a few beers and phone calls with the national secretary treasurer.

We invited Adrian Smith, a lawyer and activist who identifies as nonbinary and works with The Canadian Labour Congress, to present. Then on their recommendation we invited Akio Maroon, an activist with Black Lives Matter who pushes boundaries of traditional versions of gender, to participate.

Another thing I wonder about is the term “gender-neutral” vs “gender-inclusive.”

Within our union there’s a focus on the history of struggle and a history of using “brother” and “sister” as a covert way to address each other - so it evolved out of a time where those words were all we had.

Questioning how we evolve [the language] again and using the term “cousin” occurred through a human rights course with Canadian Labour Congress. The BC Federation of Labour uses “friend.”

Both “gender-neutral” and “gender-inclusive” lead toward being the same thing: on a binary scale “neutral” is in the middle, while “inclusive” suggests more of a sliding scale.

The resolution created at the conference was that we find ways to be more inclusive with rather than to completely change our language.

At the convention and since then in your depot and local, have you noticed any shift in language? What resistance have you met with? Has anyone been retaliatory?

When we have these conversations, it makes people think. Just saying your pronouns in case someone needs to hear it creates space for being inclusive to as many people as possible.

In all my life I’ve never felt more welcome than I do within my local. I haven’t met with any resistance. The brothers are amazing and supportive. The local has been the most solid group ever - the whole executive has advocated for rights. We have gender-neutral bathrooms.[On my workfloor I have a solid brother and a steward who’s got my back. There is respect and with that comes a lot of confidence. Stefanie says it’s the ripple effect - it goes out there and spreads.

In a recent union chat group I awkwardly used the term “non binary siblings...”

If you don’t have a term for it, that was pretty great allyship. Yes, it’s difficult when the sibling terms we have are binary. Its very inspiring for me to be part of



Devan after speaking to the Convention about the resolution on gender-inclusive language. Behind are supporters and members standing in solidarity.

having these conversations and building a language that works for everyone. Making those mistakes with pronouns happens - we’re all human. It’s a process of learning new things. If I’m working with someone from another culture, being open minded and maybe reading an article on my own is considerate.

With mistaken pronouns, we can stop and apologize and then move forward. There’s always gonna be people who are uncomfortable with change and diversity. I’m 37 and finally comfortable. Now it’s really just about making space for others.

Kind of off-topic: is delivering mail in Vancouver as nice as an Edmonton letter carrier might imagine? I feel like you probably have a whole different bag of hazards and hassles than we in the prairies can imagine!

Heading into the fall and winter and it’s a different climate. A lot of rain and darkness. In Vancouver when we have a snowstorm, the city shuts down. It’s a wet damp cold and you’re walking down the road covered.

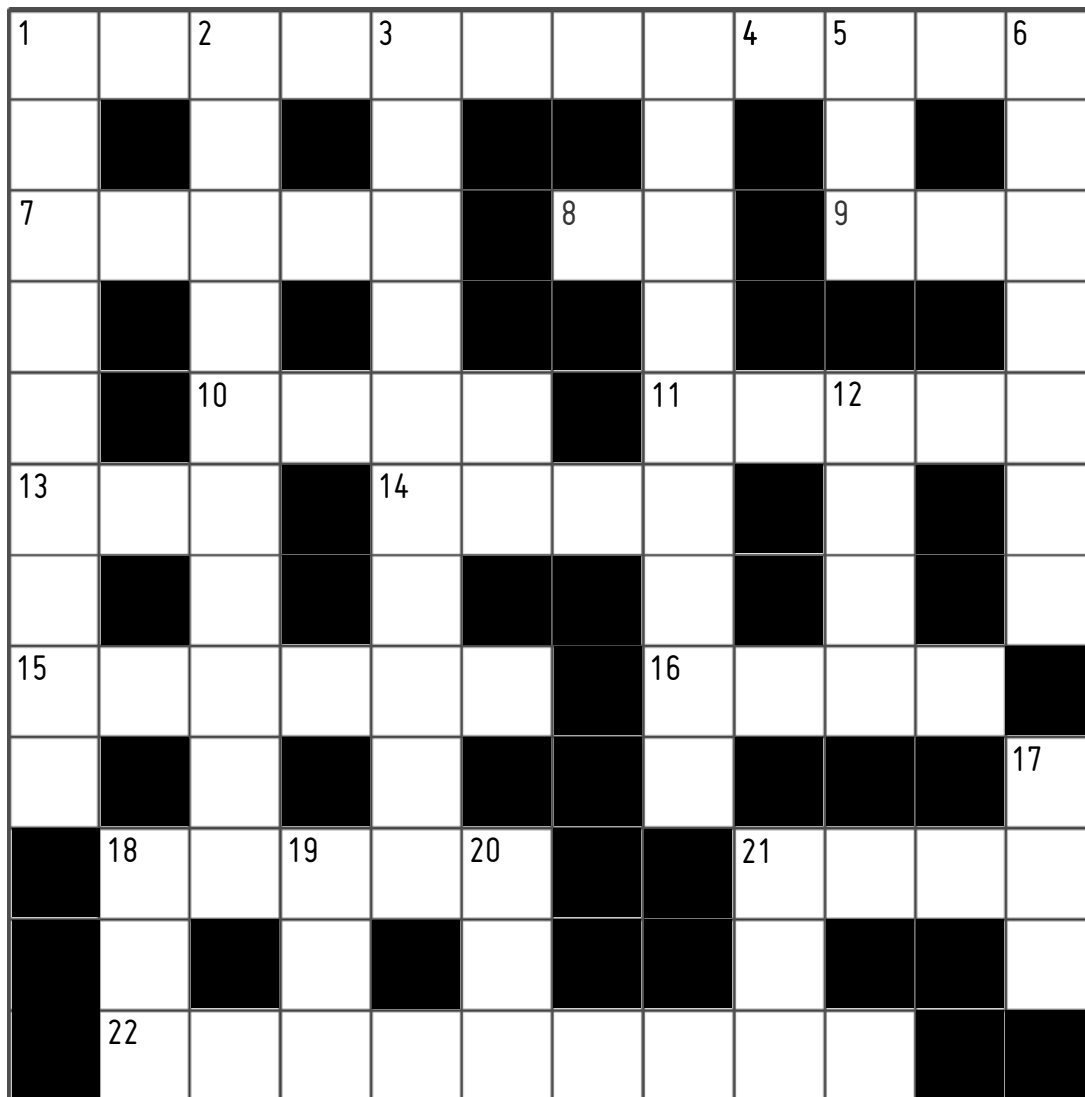
And it’s hilly! Good days and bad days.

By Natasha Fryzuk, EDDD letter carrier

[1] Nora Loreto. *This Magazine*. “Should Unions Still Call Workers “Brothers” and “Sisters”?” December 5, 2016.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Submitted by Nathen (EDDD)

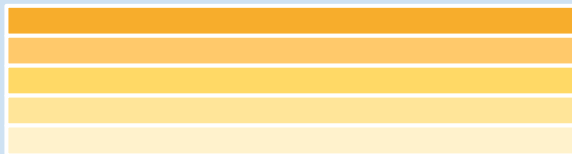


- 1 The youngest of the Canadian provinces
Joined Confederation at midnight 31 March 1949
- 7 Disembodied spirit of a deceased person
- 8 Before noon
- 9 One Big Union was a labour organization founded
in Calgary in June 1919
- 10 _____ maker; skilled tradesperson
- 11 1900 km long (approx.), the Great Barrier Reef
of Australia is made of these
- 13 often called "the wobblies", was formed in the USA
in 1905
- 14 mythical god of thunder and strength
- 15 thin twisted cord of cotton, flax, or other fibrous
substance
- 16 cost of living allowance
- 18 a cereal grass widely cultivated for its commercially
important grain
- 21 a worker who continues working while others are on
strike
- 22 type of leave

- 1 to confer with another or others in order to come to terms
- 2 the principal founder and first leader of the
Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which was
formed in 1932
- 3 cross country walk organized to bring unemployed
demonstrators to parliament in the summer of 1935
- 4 Government by the people usually through elected
representatives
- 5 gone by; in the past
- 6 recognized as the founding father of socialized medicine
- 12 metis leader, founder of Manitoba and leading figure in
the Red River Rebellion (1869-70) and
Northwest Rebellion (1885)
- 17 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation created in 1936
- 18 Western Federation of Miners, a labour union that
moved into Canada in the 1890's and attempted to
organize miners in Alberta and British Columbia
- 19 to chew and swallow
- 20 to beat severely
- 21 to sit (past)

Answers will appear in next issue.

SOLIDARITY STYLE



**UNION MADE AND PRINTED IN CANADA.
\$30 - REGULAR PRICE/\$40 - COMRADE PRICE**

To place an order: leave a message with the CUPW 730 office at (780) 423-9000 (ext 6) or email info@cupwedm.net with your full name, size choice, and contact information. All regular proceeds go to printing more shirts. All extra 'comrade' proceeds go to the CUPW 730 Goods & Welfare Committee which helps members in financial hardship. We will be in touch as our stock is replenished.



THE UNION

Attend the Next General Members Meeting:

**October 6th, 2018 at 6 pm.
Delton Community League
12325 88th Street, Edmonton, AB**

MAKES US STRONG