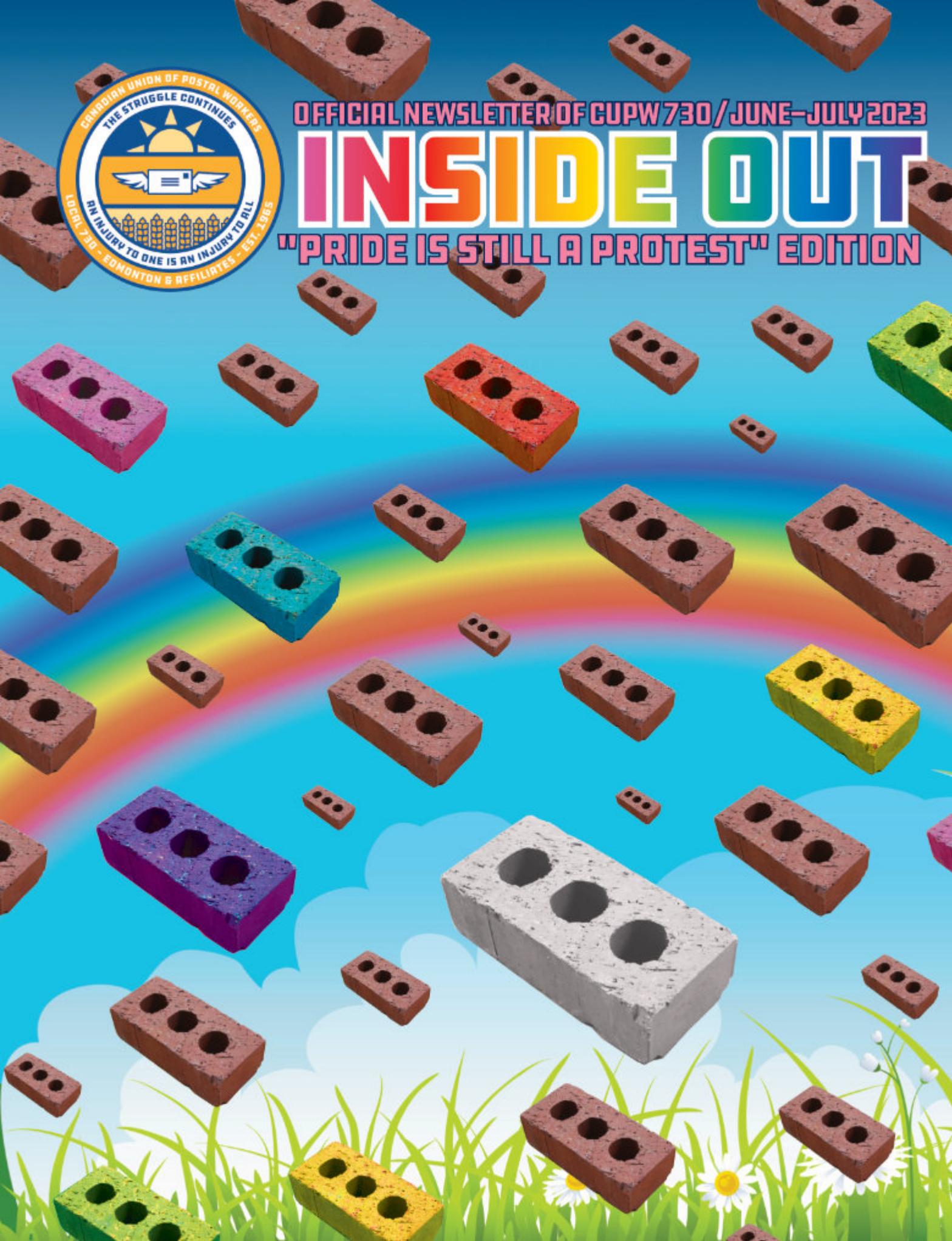




OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF CUPW 730 / JUNE-JULY 2023

INSIDE OUT

"PRIDE IS STILL A PROTEST" EDITION



INSIDE OUT 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.

All submissions for publication are subject to the approval of the Local President, and may be edited for brevity, clarity, etc.

To make a submission, or to get involved, contact the Communications Committee at communications730@gmail.com.

Communications Committee members:

Kyle Turner Raina Dakus
Wendy Crispin Natasha Fryzuk
Ryan Malmo-Harper

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LOCAL EXECUTIVE FULL-TIME OFFICERS



PRESIDENT
Devon Rundvall
union@cupwedm.net



SECRETARY-TREASURER
Karry Biri
Treasurer@cupwedm.net



GRIEVANCE
Elizabeth Smallwood
Grievance@cupwedm.net



HEALTH & SAFETY
Rashpal Sehmy
Health.Safety@cupwedm.net

LOCAL EXECUTIVE TABLE OFFICERS



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
Kyle Turner
communications730@gmail.com



1ST VICE-PRESIDENT ORGANIZING
James Ball
organize730@gmail.com



2ND VICE-PRESIDENT EMP
Parminder Pannu
empp730@gmail.com



3RD VICE-PRESIDENT COLLECTIONS
Peter Hall
depots730@gmail.com



4TH VICE-PRESIDENT RSMC
Osamah Abdullah
rsmc730@gmail.com



5TH VICE-PRESIDENT AUXILIARY
Kathleen Mpulubusi
gmrw730@gmail.com

ADDRESS

18121 107 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB
T5S 1K4

HOURS

Monday to Friday
7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed weekends

CONTACT

Office: (780) 423-9000
1 (877) 423-CUPW
Fax: (780) 423-2883

PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY 2023

Friends and Comrades,

I was hoping that this President's Report was going to be filled with reports of change. As you know, this last month CUPW officers and delegates attended the Alberta Federation of Labour conference in Calgary. Following this, our officers and delegates flew to Toronto for the CUPW National Convention. I was hoping to report back from both of these events with news of change. Unfortunately, both these events were a disappointment.

We went into the AFL conference pretty hopeful that our candidate, Greg Mady, would be able to unseat the incumbent, Gil McGowan. Coming from CUPW, who prides itself as being a rank and file union, the AFL conference is a bit of a culture shock. There seemed to be a complete disconnect between the Federation and the average Alberta worker. Yes, there were a couple informative discussions, namely a presentation on the real causes of inflation in Canada (surprise it's not worker's wages). However, the remainder of the AFL conference seemed to be a mix of a promotion of the Alberta NDP and an incredibly tacky campaign drive for Gil McGowan.

Greg did a great job in the limited time that he did have on the mic. Clearly prescribing what the Alberta labour movement needs is a recalibration. We have forgotten that our strength rests in

the hands of workers, not in the hands of a few staff at the AFL or various Union offices. Greg briefly laid out his plan to change the focus of the AFL from press releases to empowering the affiliate unions to push education and organizing from the floor up. He made it clear that we need to be focusing less on whether

“Solidarity isn't everyone singing a union song off key together. It's not refusing to be critical of leadership. And it sure as hell isn't everyone agreeing and getting along. Solidarity is what I saw on the floor of the EMPP on the 16th. It's workers standing together as a group to confront a crooked manager.”

or not we have a friendly provincial government, and more on meeting our members where they are at.

Gil's approach was very different, and in my opinion, gross. The entire event seemed to focus around Gil and his plan to get an Alberta NDP government elected. Sure, he would throw in a few catchy phrases including “Building Worker Power”, but it seemed obvious

that they were nothing beyond platitudes.

Unfortunately for the workers of Alberta, the delegates of the AFL re-elected Gil McGowan. Gil has been in the position for nearly two decades. Before that he was a staffer and a reporter...in short, Gil is not a worker. I'm a firm believer that workers should be leading workers. When you have a leadership that is dissociated from the membership, the organization drifts away from its purpose. I believe Gil was reelected for a few reasons that I'll get into after discussing the CUPW elections as I believe the reasons for the outcomes were similar.

Following the AFL, we attended our CUPW National Convention. Over 600 delegates from every local across the country were there to elect our National and Regional officers, as well as debate and pass changes to our Union's constitution in the form of resolutions.

Similar to the AFL, there were a number of challenges to the incumbent officers. Regarding the National officers, there was a dark cloud hanging over the elections in the form of the reports of the National Executive Committee. According to three of the officers' reports, the NEC has not been functioning well; a lot of political infighting that leaves the members at a loss without a solid leadership team in Ottawa.

Unfortunately, the debate was focused more on personal differences and revealing some serious allegations of very poor decisions from the NEC. One of the more disturbing revelations was that there was a National bulletin ready for release calling for national support for our 40 members that confronted management here in Edmonton on Feb. 16th. The bulletin was quashed by the National President. Although transparency is important, I would have much rather listened to the Presidential candidate's plans to win for the next four years.

There seemed to be a lot of performances that week, just like at the AFL. Whereas at the AFL we were subjected to a candidate desperately trying to convince the room that it's about workers, at the CUPW National Convention, much of the performances were focused on various equity groups. Stories of how these groups have been slighted by both the employer, our union, and individual officers within the union; please hear me when I say that these stories need to be heard. These injustices need to be addressed and reconciled. I would have liked to hear more about the strategies to win as a union and even the working class in general.

In both events, it was clear that it wasn't a discussion of ideas. It was 100% political. The vast majority of delegates walked in on day one knowing who they were voting for. I believe in most cases they had been told who to vote for by their leaders. I had many discussions about why an individual was voting for the established incumbent. Every single time the answer would be either, “I was told to vote for them”, or some version of “Well it's the devil you know”.

Regarding those voting because they were told to by their local or regional leadership, I can almost give them a pass. It is more a sign of the immaturity

of our organization that our members have not developed the ability to think critically.

However, I wretched at the complacent attitude of, “Well, they have been there for 4 or 12 or 18 years. I think we need to trust that they know what they are doing.”. What part of the last 10 years has been good for workers? We need change. Both in Alberta and CUPW. We are in a very precarious position in the world right now and we need leadership willing to admit that change needs to happen. For the good of us all, not just their own political camp.

These political camps were most apparent in discussing resolutions. We would have long debates about trivial resolutions, not because anyone cared if we should continue debate, or have snacks at GMMs but because of the political divide in the room. The most prominent one for me was the debate on remote work. Boy oh boy were people speaking passionately about this one. Their heart and soul on the floor over the constitution. The room was divided on political grounds and it manifested itself on whether or not we can use zoom to have a meeting.

It was not a shock to see, but every time it's a disappointment. We need to change that room. The only way that happens is through rank and file members getting involved.

Nationwide, we need to engage with our members and welcome them to take hold of this union. We have a chance to do this with the “Building Worker Power” campaign. Thankfully the National leadership has committed to continue with the campaign. It will be up to the Locals and Regions to hold them to that commitment.

The Edmonton Local is committed to seeing it through. We need to prepare ourselves for negotiations starting in the

fall. We need to prepare our members for the inevitable strike next year. The more prepared we can be across the country will translate directly to our success at the bargaining table.

We need to resist the push, both in and outside our union, to become more of a service union. Our local is committed to educating and organizing our members for the coming year. Through this we will be able to empower our coworkers to take this fight on. It won't be easy and it won't be done for us.

We need a systematic change in the western world. Are you and I responsible for all of that change? No, of course not. But we are responsible for what's in front of us. We are responsible for our Local, our facility, our workforce, and our coworker standing beside us. Let's stop pretending like someone else is going to fix this for us. Let's put our petty bullshit aside and start acting like we believe in true worker solidarity.



DEVON RUNDVALL (HE/HIM)



**PRESIDENT
LOCAL 730 / EDMONTON & AFFILIATES
CANADIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS**

ABOUT THE COVER:

PRIDE MONTH AND THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE



It's hard to miss the fact that we are currently celebrating Pride Month in Alberta. Anyone can see the rainbows everywhere, the slogans, the expressions of "Love is Love." Pride is a celebration of life, but also a celebration of visibility, of freedom, of... well, still being living.

Pride started as a protest. It has its origin in the Stonewall riots in Greenwich Village, NYC in 1969, which then became a catalyst for the LGBT+ rights movement. Part of the legend of this event – and a point still debated – is the question of who threw the first brick that sparked the uprising. Most accounts attribute that act to Marsha P. Johnson, a trans woman of colour. There are many detailed historical accounts of this event and the activists involved; suffice to the current essay, is that the brick itself has become a part of legend, a symbol of "acting up," of LGBT+ people standing up for themselves.

Since those days, many gains have been made in the human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, including marriage rights, protections from job and housing discrimination, and protections from healthcare discrimination. However – as is the case with only too many equity-seeking communities – these gains are hard won, and always under threat of retraction.

The rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in North America and the Western world are primarily under threat from so-called "social conservative" and Christian fundamentalist groups. Having lost the fight against same-sex marriage in the US Supreme Court (and the fundraising rage farm that sprang therefrom), their think tanks turned to the next solution in search of a problem: the transgender community. In the past few years, the attack has evolved from restroom panic, to drag story time protests, hundreds of

laws impeding access to gender-affirming care, and outlawing the dignity of recognition or participation in sports, lawmaking, and other spaces.

The justifications are the same groundless rhetoric that was being used against gays and lesbians in the 70s and 80s: "grooming the children," "creeping on your women," "forcing perversion on

"We are past the point where we will be able to retain and regain ground by the civil discourse [the patriarchy demands]...As unionists, equity and dignity for all our equity-seeking workers is a non-optional element of solidarity."

decent people." It is worth noting, these are almost word for word the same lies used against Black liberation a generation before and closely related to the "decay of society" nonsense used against women's suffrage, a generation before that. Even though we see this playing out most horrifically in the US and UK, this retrograde of humanity is making its way into the Canadian politic as well.

All this to say, I highlighted the motif of the brick for a reason. The "demands" of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, like any marginalized group, are pretty simple at their heart: to love genuinely, to live freely, to not be excluded, to not be impeded. To work in safety for a fair wage, to have shelter, food, and a chance at happiness. In short: to live with full human rights. However, to those in the

great patriarchy, to whom equality feels like oppression; to those who were accustomed to and demanded our invisibility, who now grumble that we are "forcing it down their throats (a deliberately despicable, pseudo-violent turn of phrase)": we are past the point where we will be able to retain and regain ground by the civil discourse they demand.

As unionists, equity and dignity for our 2SLGBTQIA+ workers, and all our equity-seeking workers, is a non-optional element of solidarity. Our private biases cannot be allowed to lure us into the culture war that is designed to fracture and divide us. Turn your face to the class war instead, and let Pride Month remind you that we need not just allies, but accomplices, in the fight.

Pride and Solidarity.

Wendy Crispin (they/them)
Human Rights Committee



WORKER SOLIDARITY

LABOUR VICTORY AND STRUGGLE, AT HOME AND ABROAD



Air Line Pilots Association - The WestJet ALPA Master Executive Council has an agreement in principle with the corporation that will lead to a 24% pay raise over four years. Pilots will also receive a 15.5% increase for this year, retroactive to January 1st. The contract has not yet been ratified as June 9th is the last day for members to vote.

United Food and Commercial Workers - Over 300 members of Local 500 who work at the Violà by IGA centre in Quebec have ratified two first-time contracts. Members will receive \$.60 raises for every 1,000 hours worked and will have access to a dental plan which is fully paid by the employer and reimburses 80% of dental fees.

United Steelworkers - Terrace Plaza Starbucks workers in Edmonton have voted to unionize with USW and have become members of Local 1-207. USW now represents Starbucks employees in Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Calgary, Victoria, Surrey, Langley, and Vancouver.

Actors' Equity Association - Dancers at the Star Garden Topless Dive Bar in North Hollywood have voted unanimously to join the AEA. The push for unionization started in March 2022 after the dancers felt unsafe after security failed to protect them from threatening patron behaviour. 15-months and a lockout later, these new union members are now the only unionized strippers in the United States.

Writers Guild of America - The WGA strike began on May 2nd, 2023, and this labour dispute is between the WGA and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). Some of the main issues in this struggle are residuals from streaming services as well as the use of artificial intelligence for writing. The WGA represents 11,500 writers in the United States.

Ontario Federation of Labour – The OFL has been organizing rallies under the banner of Enough is Enough, which is targeting the provincial government of Doug Ford with regards to the cost of living crisis. On Saturday, June 3rd, around 10,000 protestors marched in Toronto alone while events were also happening across the province. 

JUNE IS NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MONTH JUNE 21 IS NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY AND SUMMER SOLSTICE

In Canada, June is National Indigenous History Month. The House of Commons designated June as National Aboriginal History Month in 2009 before changing the name to National Indigenous History Month in 2017, and this was done in order to offer an opportunity to learn about the unique cultures, traditions, and experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

National Indigenous Peoples Day is June 21st and it was first announced in 1996 (then as National Aboriginal Day). Working with Indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada chose June 21st, which is the Summer solstice, for National Indigenous Peoples Day. For generations, many Indigenous peoples and communities have celebrated their culture and heritage on this day because of its significance of being the longest day of the year.

For more information about National Indigenous History Month events happening in and around Edmonton, please visit <https://bit.ly/3MI781q>.



Blood To Me by Theresa Williams

PLEA FOR AN ORGANIZED WORKFLOOR: KNOWLEDGE IS NOT POWER

By Kyle Turner

It was my intention to write about some recent consultations that our Local office had with management, but then I started thinking too much about how to frame it. I wanted to say something more than just that these meetings are pointless because that's too glib, no matter how true I think it is. I also think it's not completely true, but it is true if we don't have the capacity to act to backup our demands.

So please join me, if you will, as I try to unpack myself and what has turned into some thoughts about power, knowledge, and consultations.

Knowledge is Power

The phrase knowledge is power has been around for centuries. At this point, there's seems to be uncertainty about who actually said it. It could have been Francis Bacon, it could have been Thomas Jefferson. It could have been Thomas Hobbes. Ultimately, it doesn't matter. I first saw it when I was 10-years-old in the introduction screens for Mortal Kombat 3 back in 1995, in the slightly modified form of "there is no knowledge that is not power." It's in the zeitgeist.

So, knowledge is power – what does this mean? With knowledge or education, a person has more power to

accomplish their goals or to affect change. From here, this can go in a number of directions. Bacon was a scientist. Hobbes went on to write one of the texts that aspiring political theorists must read. The idea, I think

“What we needed was power, and by confronting management twice over the course of 24-hours and showing that we were willing to stand by our knowledge, we showed power.”

Our power, history has shown, comes from our willingness to engage in Collective Action.”

we can say, is that there is some real truth out there and grasping it gives us power and sets us free.

I want to take you back to the first consultation I attended. It was for peak season. Our CUPW representatives showed up and were fully aware of their arguments and management's arguments, and they also knew the Collective Agreement inside and out.

Management mostly showed up. One of the managers wasn't present and the managers who were there didn't know where he was. They had a document

that was clearly from the previous year and just had a few of the dates changed, but not enough of the dates to make sense for the coming year. When management was asked who wrote the document we were looking at, they didn't have an answer.

Power is Knowledge

It was impressive to see our representatives speak honestly and with knowledge and untangle any argument these managers tried to make. But the whole time I struggled with my pessimism, which told me that the knowledge of our representatives would always need power on the workforce to back it up. Without this, I couldn't see the point of the consultation – especially knowing that management would use consultation to tell us that they met with our union and that our union was fine with the changes, even though that wouldn't be true.

I would suggest that to understand the interplay between knowledge and power, we should flip the saying and go with power is knowledge. I would not be the first person to suggest this, and I'm sure the first person who read “knowledge is power” immediately adjusted their glasses and suggested the opposite was true.

In 2018 and 2019, we received a flyer in the depots that was supposed to be delivered full-coverage even though it

did not meet the requirements as per the Corporation's own rules as laid out in the Corporate Manual System (CMS).

When we brought this to the attention of various levels of management, we saw that power was knowledge. They had a number of reasons why we had to deliver it as requested: the CMS we were looking at was not up to date; the company putting out the flyer was kind of owned by the City, so it somehow met the requirements; and they checked with management higher ups and they said it was fine for us to deliver.

Power is Power

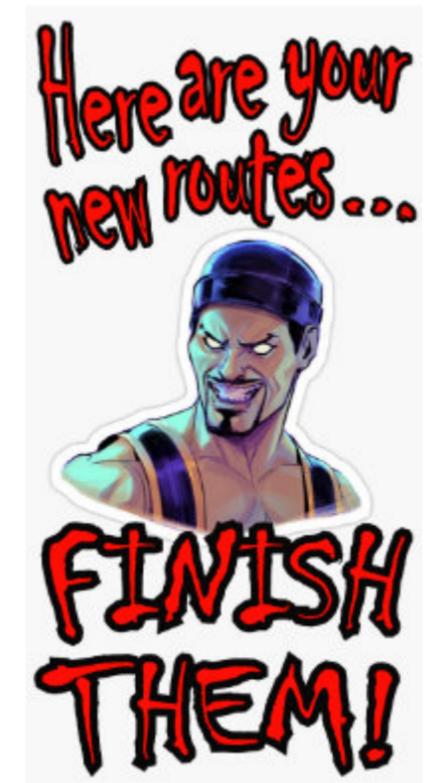
These are all great non-answers. But they count as answers because if you follow through and go against management, you get disciplined. Indeed, 6 of the people who refused to deliver that flyer as instructed received 1-day suspensions. However, the word travelled and letter carriers as far away as Lethbridge were told to ignore the delivery control slip note that the flyer was to go to all points of call.

In this case, knowledge was not enough. What we needed was power, and by confronting management twice over the course of 24-hours and showing that we were willing to stand by our knowledge, we showed power. Our power takes so many more steps and more risk than the power of management. Management has power by virtue of law and the Corporation's internal systems. If you've ever filed a grievance or attended a grievance hearing, you'll know that, almost every single time, whatever management does is justified and not a violation.

But let's get back to the consultations that set me down this path. We had 3 meetings with management about bully supervisors and management. Workers shared dozens of examples of racism, sexism, and bullying on the workforce. Near the end of the third meeting, a Manager said that they

would still be issuing 24s and following the Collective Agreement. I looked across the room in confusion. I could see the same look on the other members' faces.

One member spoke up and said that at no point did anyone say to not issue 24s or follow the Collective Agreement. We had no idea why the Manager felt that this was what we were saying. We got up and walked out of the meeting. Hours of trying to operate in good faith, shown to be a



waste of time.

We were discussing patterns of behaviour and they decided to ignore anything beyond individual events, completely separate from anything else. With one particular depot, which you can read more about in Nancy Dodsworth's article in the last issue: when it comes to our concerns, we're told to get over it and move on.

Conclusion

Our power, history has shown, comes from our willingness to engage in Collective Action. It's not guaranteed by law or through the structure of the Corporation. I wrote about this in the last issue, but the law can be used to discipline us when we exercise our rights if the Corporation feels that it was an illegal work stoppage.

Our power also requires more work and greater risk, as we need to be prepared for discipline from the employer. Even when knowledge is on our side, if those with power don't like it, then punishment is almost inevitable.

In all the consultations I've been in, I think I've seen management agree that they were wrong once and that they would change their plan because of it. When we are in consultations and the employer says, “No,” or shows that they are not listening, we're only halfway there if we're not prepared for action. ✈️



KYLE TURNER (HE/HIM)



**COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
LOCAL 730 / EDMONTON & AFFILIATES
CANADIAN UNION OF POSTAL WORKERS**

“BACK TO THE TABLE” SAYS PSAC MEMBER

By Deanna Allain
Member of the Union of Taxation
Employees Local 00014 (PSAC)

Originally published on Rankandfile.ca
5/9/2023

As a young worker new to the workforce, I never imagined I would be lucky enough to be a union member, and I certainly never expected to experience a strike firsthand, let alone a general strike, 155,000-members strong. I don't take that for granted; within my first year on contract, I signed up as a steward, supporting members in the grievance process and supporting my local with policy research and analysis.

As labour organizers know very well, it's often up to an all-hands-on-deck approach to pull off major actions like picket lines in a very limited time. We were less than a day from striking and still hadn't been given information on our picket shifts, training for picket captains, or a valid login for the check-in app. So, the executive of the UTE Local 00014 did what it took to get it done.

In a matter of hours, we compiled a picket captain schedule, developed and ran a training session, and even created our own paper backup systems, knowing that technology can fail and that not all members would be able to use the digital system.

On the picket line, members were patient, helpful, and encouraging, doing what they could to keep spirits high despite the rain, wind, and cold. I was fortunate to connect with PSAC Ontario staff who supported grassroots organizing and encouraged us on the executive to operate by consensus in Hamilton, and involving pick captains to address concerns and set a game plan for bigger actions. As the only local running the Hamilton-area picket, the sky was the limit in terms of UTE 00014's picket locations, escalation strategy, and plans to collaborate with

other locals for bigger actions.

On the line

By Monday, we had a burn barrel on the picket line, and by Wednesday, we were running a priority picket on the Burlington Canal Lift Bridge, holding up boats much like historic PSAC pickets in 1991 and 2004. Hamilton is a labour city, with no shortage of organizers, and I am so grateful for the folks from other unions who stepped up and showed up when I needed guidance and support to lead with fellow PSAC members.

I've always experienced organizing as a

“It's not always the contract that measures the success of a strike...”

...Workers deserve better and we're fully prepared to go back on the picket line and get it done.”

community activity. At the start of the strike, I first found it to be a pretty isolating process, with many late nights and very early mornings navigating email lists, schedules, maps, and estimating things like porta potties and busses.

Gradually, a community formed itself and I found myself in an amazing support system of members, leaders, and picket captains jumping in to answer questions, helping wherever needed, and even build our own whisper network on the picket line to organize overnight job actions.

Picket lines don't have to be hundreds of members strong to be effective. We had 10 to 20 members who personally committed to secret picket hours, often around 12:00am or 3:00am, allowing us

to organize strategic job escalation without the risk of word spreading past the membership and losing an element of surprise. Through this strike escalation, we were able to bridge members into learning how to liaise with police, media, bridge management, and communicating with members to maintain a safe and effective action.

The strike end

My experience with this strike was empowering and unexpectedly unique. I felt safely bubbled from a lot of toxic union politics and bureaucracy, and when those challenges did present themselves, I felt and actively heard from members and mentors that they were prepared to intervene if it became too much.

Recently, it seems union leaders have a bad habit of cutting the rank and file members off at our knees, and right when we're on the cusp of incredible and history-making levels of mobilization.

UTE was left out on the picket line on May 1 after a tentative agreement was reached with the Treasury Board and 120,000 PSAC members went back to work. We were left out knowing we wouldn't be getting the deal we deserve as we watched our brothers, sisters, and friends in other components return to work just as angry as when they started, but a little more defeated. It should be a strong reminder of who holds the power in the labour movement. UTE had a tentative agreement on May 4.

Rank and file power

PSAC members voted to strike, organized to picket, mobilized to shut things down, and we can vote to send our bargaining teams back to the table to get us a deal that sets a better standard for labour unions across Canada.

It's not always the contract that measures the success of a strike. For me,



seeing and supporting members in becoming picket captains and organizers, developing their own roles, skills, and capacity to drive change, is the reason I believe in the movement and I hope the community we built on our picket line sees it that way too.

The great thing about union organizing, much like organizing outside the labour movement, is that everyone offers what

talents they have, and we support each other in growing, developing, and honing skills to best serve each other and the membership. In these past weeks I've done things I never thought I could, simply because I knew it was up to me to step up and I knew there was a team of members, a network of organizers, and a union behind me.

Workers deserve better and we're fully

prepared to go back on the picket line and get it done. Union leaders don't drive the labour movement. All credit belongs with the rank and file members doing the work every day. 🗳️

<https://www.rankandfile.ca/psac-back-to-the-table/>



AFL CONVENTION REPORT

By James Ball

The Convention was informative and contained a great number of professionals speaking on issues from inflation to COVID to Laura Walton from the OSBCU who defied back-to-work legislation.

The Gil Show. The entire Convention was tainted by the feeling that it was all being tuned, spun, to be part of Gil's campaign to be re-elected as the President of the AFL. It wasn't subtle. I think I understand why we don't generally participate at the level we have in this Convention as much of the Convention is much less militant than CUPW.

The primary reason for our involvement is to help Greg Mady, a postal worker and president of the Edmonton and District Labour Council, be elected to the office of the President of the AFL. I support Greg completely. He was the Shop Steward who invited me, repeatedly, to come to a GMM.

Some problems we can learn from. The Convention started each day with a land acknowledgement, but only for the land the Convention was on. As they chose to read it everyday, it would have been better, in my perspective, to read a land acknowledgement from all over Alberta as the members come from all over.

Sketchy things. Gil chose to not allow people to register after the Friday. This was hotly contested by other members of the board and Gil withdrew but also said that he would just bus in more people. This wasn't public knowledge as it was solved behind the scenes, but it's disturbing how much Gil wants this position. He is an 18-year incumbent



with very little actual labour experience. I feel it may have been better to bring it to the floor as a motion so that people could see the pettiness.

Speakers. The speakers I was most interested in were Jacob Dickenscheid (unionized Starbucks) and Laura Walton (president of OSCU) who led her members to defy back-to-work legislation. Other speakers that were of note to me were Gosia Gasperowicz and Dr. Joe Vipond, who spoke extensively on COVID.

Rachel Notley was to speak, but she contracted COVID and sent a video message instead. She used her opportunity to stump for the NDP. Many labour-friendly promises including funded training for trades and the removal of "double breasting" (sites that are both union and non-union) and contract flipping (cancelling a contract and starting a new one with a different company).

The Big Show. I was summoned at short notice to be a scrutineer for the ballots. It wasn't a glory-filled task but an important part of democracy. Sadly, for our goals, and the goals of the greater union movement, Greg Mady received 224 votes and Gil McGowan received 274. The AFL still isn't ready for change, but some of the affiliates could be.

The Secretary-Treasurer was acclaimed to office with no challengers.

Impression of the resolutions. It's important to note that these resolutions

have little effect on our union or anyone else's union. They are mostly mission statements for the AFL. A lot of them, to me, are simple yes votes. Between workers deserve better, and people deserve better, and the UCP sucks, most of the resolutions are unchallenged. Some have challenges over wording, but nothing major. I find a lot of the motions come off as asking or even begging the government rather than demanding – disappointing.

Overall impressions. The Convention was a good experience, and it helps a lot to check the temperature of the overall labour movement in Alberta. That most striking moment for me was when a brother spoke of a potential general strike position because PSAC is the largest strike in Canadian history. All of the CUPW and ATU members rose in applause. The lines were drawn, however, as only 5 rows of delegates stood. A sister from the nurses then came to the microphone to scold us about the recklessness.

It's unfortunate that labour has failed to secure a position where members can't save enough to take a full month off work. Complex factors like government's failure to build affordable houses for decades, labour's failure to secure wage increases for decades, the commodification of housing, and profiteering have eroded our ability to take direct action. I'm of the opinion that it would be better if we do it now, as hard as it is, because if we fail, we will have no choice when we can't heat the homes we are evicted from.

The bad of the Convention was how easily Gil used the entire thing as a grandstand for his own campaign. The challenger, Greg Mady, got about 15-minutes of speaking time. One of our members from Calgary made a motion

to extend the Q&A section, but it was defeated in a standing count by a margin of a handful of votes.

The primary difference between Gil and Greg's campaign is that Gil's plan relies on the good will of an elected NDP party whereas Greg's plan relies on the strength of labour to force any party to do good for them. Begging versus demanding.

Conclusion. The AFL Convention was a worthwhile experience for many of our members. It's an important experience to understand where you stand in the political landscape of the greater labour movement. Unfortunately, the lack of political maturity in a large portion of the membership still requires a specialist whose plan is to influence a friendly government. Having a lobbyist for the greater labour movement of Alberta is a great tool, but it is no substitute for organising and mobilizing the workforce.



HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

By Rashpal Sehmbly

The recent forest fires in the Prairies have created a number of ongoing concerns. First, if you are in an area that has received an evacuation order, management has assured us that you will not lose pay and you will not be forced to use your personal days.

Second, if you are working in an area that has smoke, please pay attention to the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI). The AQHI comes from Environment Canada and it uses a rating from 1 to 10+, with 1 being low risk and 10+ being very high risk.

Local Joint Occupational Health and Safety (LJOHS) committee members or the health and safety representatives will work with Canada Post to ensure the following measures are implemented when the AQHI suggests the risk is too high.

- Determine preventative measures to keep workers safe
- Allow workers the autonomy to decide if it's safe for them to deliver the mail
- Workers who do decide to deliver will be provided additional support, such as face masks, water, throat lozenges, etc.
- Workers who choose not to deliver will be provided with other work, such as inside duties, e-learning, or even contacting other depots to see if they need help

It's important to know that inhaling fine particles can cause a variety of health effects, including respiratory irritation and shortness of breath, and can worsen medical conditions such as asthma and heart disease. Exposure to smoke can cause sore eyes, coughing and a runny nose. If the smoke lasts days or weeks or is very heavy, it can cause lung problems or a long-lasting cough. Exposure to smoke can also make heart and lung problems worse.

Anyone who suffers these ill effects must report this to the employer as a workplace injury and members need to see their doctor and report this to WCB. Please note that this is a work-related issue and not a Short-Term Disability matter.

Don't forget that in addition to these measures, workers also still have the right to refuse unsafe work. Urban members can use Article 33.13 of the Collective Agreement, while RSMCs and private sector members are governed by the health and safety provisions of the Canada Labour Code.

If you do refuse unsafe work, make sure a proper investigation has taken place involving a Shop Steward and an LJOHS representative. If you are aware of anyone who has been charged personal time for refusing unsafe work because of the poor air quality, please contact a Shop Steward or the Grievance Office as soon as possible.

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS 2023

By James Ball

Monday. Monday felt like a very disorganized day for CUPW. When we arrived, there was no seating arrangement for our members. The CLC uses a lottery to assign seating and no one from CUPW was present at that event. It was explained to me that seating has always been assigned even if we don't attend the lottery.

It's too loud. I had to leave. The Sunday evening session was too loud and today was no different. I have some minor hearing loss and the sound pressure was too intense for me. I felt like continued exposure would damage my hearing. I did express my concern to Cori Longo, a regional rep for the CLC. When I returned from lunch, she informed me that there is a quiet room. I can't thank her enough. It's a small boardroom with a TV.

The resolutions passed as policy at the CLC are much like those of the AFL. Obvious mission statements that can benefit labour in many ways. The only controversy was an environmental bill. The CLC contains many unions, and some have members who work in the fossil fuel industry. A representative of one of those unions came to the mic and spoke about requiring a better definition of "just transition," as it was not defined. A struggle in labour is taking into account the needs of all while making sure there is a world left to live in.

The voting rules are a bit different at the CLC. There are pro and con mics. During one resolution, only pro speakers were lined up and the chair moved a motion to call the question. It passed and no points of order were raised. Any other motions in the list that didn't make it to the floor were to

be reviewed and voted on by an executive branch of the CLC. In our Convention, any motions we don't have time for are lost.

Tuesday. I think the reason that most of the policies say things like, "we will lobby," or, "we will ask," is because of the distance the CLC is removed from actual control of unions. The CLC cannot instruct any of its affiliates to go on strike. Without explicit support for the member unions, all the CLC can do is lobby.

Wednesday. Day 3 covers healthcare and the healthcare action plan. It's rather depressing the losses that we are taking from the conservative provincial government. More and more private clinics that are picking at our depleted pool of labourers. The problem is the number of staff, not the number of facilities. Opening more facilities, public or private, only strains the system further. Ironically, because of these attacks, the shortfall in staffing is not resulting in higher wages. The attacks on public sector healthcare workers include laws that freeze wages, making it easier for private companies to compete by only raising wages slightly. It needs to stop. As usual, the action plan is criticized for not doing enough.

Thursday. My understanding is that there were no challenges to the existing Executive members so the Exec of the CLC is unchanged. They still go through the nomination and acceptance process, which makes sense. The resolutions scheduled for today are very important and very heavy. Composite Resolution #5: residential schools. I sit and listen to horrifying stories about residential

schools. The motion passes unanimously.

Chris Smalls speaks of his experience organizing an Amazon facility. Interestingly, Chris invites the Black Coalition of Trade Unionists, which includes our National President Jan Simpson, Jordan Forde, and other postal workers. Chris tells of how no one tried to unionize or support him, for 29-years, and how it's not a left-wing or a right-win thing but a worker thing.

Overall. The CLC Convention is a good experience for me, but I'm not certain I will attend in the future. What I've learned, or, rather, what has been reinforced in my ideals is that the relationship to labour power is directly proportional to your proximity to the workforce. In Mike Palacek's concession speech when he lost the presidency of CUPW in 2019, he thanked the members for electing him to the most powerful office in CUPW: the workforce.

All the work, policies, and lobbying that the CLC does is important, but it lacks any leverage if your members aren't ready to stand up for themselves. The work needs to continue on the floor. We need to follow in the footsteps of the OSBCU and PSAC who recently have struck and won concessions from their respective governments. They have established the tone and we need to follow through in the tradition of CUPW and force the hand of government to create better working and societal conditions for Canadians.



PARTICIPATE IN FRONT YARDS IN BLOOM

AN EDMONTON LOCAL 730 TRADITION!

By Kathleen Mpulubusi - Front Yard in Bloom Coordinator

CUPW 730, along with our partners the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Horticultural Society, are launching a new year of Front Yards in Bloom; a beloved tradition for gardeners, yard enthusiasts and community members. Since 1999, CUPW Local 730, the Edmonton Horticultural Society and the City of Edmonton have celebrated citizens who work hard to make their space beautiful.

It's easy to do! Help by nominating a customer's beautiful yard, public space or balcony along your delivery route. Lawn signs will be placed on nominated yards along with a brochure of recognition. Customers are very appreciative when their yard is nominated by their delivery person. This program helps to foster community connections and is good public relations for our Local. Over 6000 yards were nominated last year with approximately 1/3 (2000) nominated by CUPW members. Even if you don't deliver mail you can nominate yards around your neighbourhood.

You can nominate directly on the City of Edmonton website at www.frontyardsinbloom.ca. On the form, please, indicate you are a postal worker. You can also take a picture of the yard to submit as well.

On www.cupw730.ca you will find a nomination form you can use to nominate yards as well. Printed nomination forms are also distributed at depots and the EMPP. Completed nomination forms can be dropped off or faxed to the Union office (780 423-2883) or emailed to KATHLEEN.MPULUBUSI@kmpulu@gmail.com

The **Deadline for Nominations is July 4!**

Front Yards in Bloom helps to foster our connection to our communities and gives a positive image to postal workers and CUPW.

It can also help brighten up the work day seeing some of the beautiful front yards!



CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS CONGRÈS DU TRAVAIL DU CANADA



Comic by Wes Schafer
Communications Officer
CUPW Local 824 Saskatoon

CUPW'S NATIONAL CONVENTION: MORE OF THE SAME

By Robert Hohnstein

From May 1st to 5th the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) had its quadrennial constitutional convention which determines the internal workings, policies, and leadership of the union going forward. What transpired was five days of bureaucratic maneuvering and a defeat for the left against the right-wing status quo of Jan Simpson surrounded by the conservative union bureaucracy. This report intends to illustrate what the author - a first time delegate - witnessed and took out of this convention.

Prior to even getting to Toronto to attend the convention, all delegates received a package of resolutions, policies and reports. Upon reading the reports from the national executive committee of the union one could notice immediately the tensions and open political opposition between the leaders of our union. These reports also foreshadowed exactly how the convention conflicts would take place and what political lines were being drawn.

On one hand we had leaders like our current national president Jan Simpson or Bev Collins the Secretary-Treasurer, who painted a plain picture that the union sails and continues sailing, but provides little to no direction of where we are headed or how to get there. Reports very carefully put together to not say anything of notable substance that would hurt their chances for re-election or *god forbid* to incite any fighting spirit from the workers themselves, independent or otherwise. In simple terms a very routinist, very proceduralist, and bureaucratic method of seeing and running the union.

The outlook of the national executive under Simpson can be summed up in an example. During the convention it was openly admitted that when the EMPP had a protest back in february where 40

members were met with suspensions. Edmonton's own Roland Schmidt (former 3rd VP) drafted a bulletin on behalf of national in support of our 40 members. This publication was outright blocked by the right-wing bureaucracy. You will not find any mentions of the EMPP struggle in the bulletins of national, let alone in support of our coworkers. The intention of this action is clear. They don't want any independent action by the workers, lest a spark turns into a firestorm.

On the other hand we had leaders like former 1st VP Julee Sanderson or Roland Schmidt who right out the gate expressed open criticism and aired the dirty laundry of the National Executive Board (NEB) from everything like open bullying & harassment within leadership bodies, to suppressing transparency, to denunciations of the 2 year contract extension. As well as promoting "Building Workers Power" an extensive internal organizing campaign to engage and mobilize workers for the fights ahead and to get them involved in the union.

During the convention itself delegates went over 37 resolutions/policies and then the elections for national and regional positions. Unfortunately, almost all time spent was on discussing things which will have little to no effect on anyone except for the bureaucrats in office and the hardcore activists who attend everything. The height of absurdity was spending about an hour and a half on discussing whether or not union locals can spend money on snacks and nonalcoholic beverages(!) to encourage better participation from members. Only one thing passed that will make a notable impact on everyone in CUPW is the change in strike pay which has now slightly increased and is now daily paid. Barring that everything

will almost certainly be unchanged for the workers on the floor.

As for the elections, the status quo of the right-wing bureaucracy prevails as the left-wing candidates failed in their bid for power. This question is quite significant given that the past 4 years had the pandemic, an incredibly unpopular 2 year contract extension, and the rise of labour militancy with the CUPE strike in Ontario and the PSAC strike nationally. Politically the programs that the left wing leaders put forward were leagues ahead of the right, but were either too little or too late.

A central pillar of the left wing program was full support for the 'Building Worker Power' (BWP) campaign which they used to emphasize in why they should be elected. This campaign posits that the union must engage members in a grassroots method by educating them on the tools they can use to win against the bosses and build "internal capacity for organizing". From that base the union will be able to transform into a proper fighting force against the bosses and government. The right wing gave it positive lip service and handily helped make this campaign unanimously pass at convention. Why?

Simply because the campaign itself does not actually push for any particular goal or plan other than we must organize our workfloors in preparation for a fight (a fight for what exactly?). The opening statement on the [website for BWP](#) is: "CUPW is only as strong as our workfloors are organized, unified around a plan, and willing to mobilize.". The technical organizing aspects of this campaign are overall fine as outlined by the action plan released at convention, but the real question must be posed though, what is the plan? What are we willing to mobilize around? Organizing workers without adequately answering any

these key questions will be akin to chopping and carving wood with a blunted axe.

The union leaders, both left and right, will almost certainly respond with "well the goal and/or plan is for whatever you [workers] want to fight for". This response might be fine for already active small scale issues localized to a particular work floor that workers can fight for, like removing a bully boss or wanting health & safety walks/talks. When it comes to bigger hard hitting issues like two-tier wages, tackling inflation, staffing, discipline, automation, etc. i.e. the real meat, bread, and butter of workers issues; these type of demands and the plans on how to win them are ultimately decided by the national leadership of the union (whether one likes it or not) and not by the mass of postal workers.

It is why the hated right-wing was able to stomach this campaign that should actually be a real credible threat to their positions. Had there been generalized demands that this campaign intends to work towards (and there is no shortage of such demands!) that would have held them to account, we certainly would have seen a totally different attitude by the bureaucracy. As things stand, the situation is completely within the control of the bureaucracy as they have control of the narrative, limitations, and ultimate direction of this campaign. Simply using this campaign by the left as a way to get elected was a case of being too little to be an effective foundation to counterpose themselves from the right wing.

What about general issues like lack of communication that was vividly illustrated by the reports by the left wing leaders? Or defying back-to-work legislation? These were included as criticisms by the left-wing and in the program of presidential candidate Julee Sanderson. Workers certainly crave information about what the union is doing and currently receive nothing. One delegate even publicly and scathingly criticized President Jan Simpson about not receiving any

communication from national. Workers want to win, to claw back from the defeats of the past and move forward with winning new ground. This all may mean needing to defy back-to-work legislation and having a showdown with the government. Workers are not prepared for that now, but will want their union leaders to *prepare them for it*. Just as you'd expect your coach to teach you to be a good hockey player for the finals. Yet these among other promises from Julee did not sway the room, even when her opponent Jan offered nothing at all except enforcing the status quo. Why? This question goes deeper in the structure of our union.

Many locals in our union barely make quorum or are under trusteeship. This is remarkably different from our Edmonton local who, on a bad day(!), has active meetings with about 40 or more people in attendance (this is apparently a lot for union meetings). The majority of delegates seemed to largely be union executives on the local levels or the hard core activist layer. Both of whom are seasoned in working within the stifling bureaucratic structures and have molded their ideas and mindsets into conforming to these structures. This creates a strong foundation for conservative and bureaucratic thinking that becomes antithetical to class struggle unionism which Julee Sanderson was campaigning on. Many locals also have simple, but restrictive bylaws on who can be a delegate and how to maintain that status. So some delegates are elected months, if not years prior to these conventions. This highlights the importance of engaging workers well ahead of the curve to build a militant worker opposition. The left-wing leaders did not fully prepare themselves by building bases in locals across the country that could challenge these conservative tendencies union-wide before making their bid for power. They built in their own locals which is good, but sadly not enough and relied on the good graces of the largely seasoned delegates in the room to hopefully ride them into power. This

challenge to the status quo bureaucracy failed and did so miserably.

So bad was their defeat that after the national elections were done, Jan Simpson and Bev Collins came into the prairie caucus which was looking to elect its regional leaders and tried to strip Julee Sanderson, Dave Bleakney and Roland Schmidt - all of whom are left-wing and from prairie locals - of their democratic right to vote via the constitution. By the logic of the arguments that Jan and Bev put forward, this would have also stripped Julee, Dave and Roland of their delegate statuses thereby expelling them from the convention. This was a blatant display of absolute ruthlessness by the bureaucracy to crush their opposition. If they showed this sort of ruthlessness to the bosses and the governments in Canada, postal workers everywhere would never lack in want.

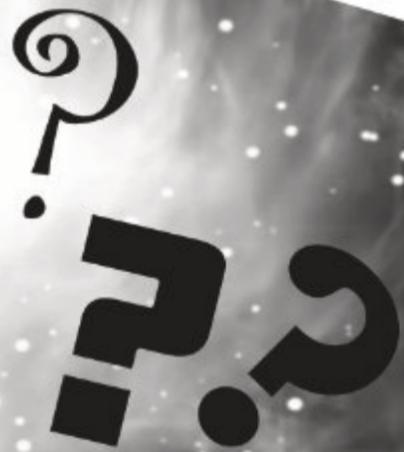
That all said, what is to be done? Many rank & file members may not have even known this convention had even happened or what was accomplished and there is reason for that. CUPW's national convention is presented as a dry bureaucratic affair. This sort of setup becomes one such deterrent from members wanting to participate in any CUPW convention and this setup extends all the way down the ladder to the local general membership meetings. In practice this allows more bureaucratic, conservative, and legalist elements and ideas to thrive and flourish while workers become rightly indignant and turned off from ever attending union functions. Ultimately what we see in our union is the natural result of this process. It is up to the militant left-wing to capitalize on the popular discontent that workers broadly face. Create a capable organized fighting force in overthrowing the bureaucracy and the foundations that perpetuate it. To prepare the union on the basis of class struggle to defeat the bosses, and to create a healthy workers' democracy where workers will want to freely participate in their union. 

IT'S BEEN HOW MANY DAYS!?!

Back in February, a member who works at Mayfield noticed a strange trend with a workplace health and safety sign. This sign is counting the number of days the department has worked without a lost time accident.

While we don't have a complete data set, what we do have shows that there is something up with this sign.

So how many days has it been since there was a lost time accident? Were these days calculated in the Twilight Zone? A dimension between science and superstition?



FEBRUARY 2023

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72	35	36	37	38		

MARCH 2023

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APRIL 2023

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MAY 2023

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Front Yards
in Bloom



Recognize a beautiful front yard in your neighbourhood!

Nominate a public space, yard, or balcony today.
Submit your nominations at FrontYardsinBloom.ca

Thank you to our partners



SOLIDARITY STYLE

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