They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years contemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Laurence Binyon
Family Leave

Submitted by Mike Murphy, President CUPE Local1615

Family Leave is defined by Sections 31.09 of our contract. It has been improved with a provision allowing members to take non-emergency leave for any reason. However, there are restrictions on the non-emergency leave and on how the six-day maximum family leave bank works.

Only emergency leave can be used for periods greater than one day. Non-emergency leave can only be taken for one day at a time and up to three days in any fiscal year (April 1 to March 31). Non-emergency leave must be approved by your supervisor prior to when you want to take it and notice is required. Operational requirements will have to come first if you are requesting non-emergency leave. If a member uses all the six days leave in one year (6 days emergency leave, or some combination of emergency and non-emergency leave), there will have no days remaining until the start of the next two-year period (i.e. April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2012). As of the April 1, 2012 a member can avail of six more days from the next two-year period (i.e. April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2014).

If a member takes three days family leave (emergency and non-emergency) every year they will have a bank of at least three days for the next fiscal year and this will change to a six-day bank starting on April 1 the next two-year period (2012 – 2014). Example: I have six days in my family leave bank in 2009. If I use three days in 2009, I have three days remaining until March 31, 2010 at which time the bank is topped to a maximum of six days on April 1, 2010 for the 2010 -2012 two-year period.

If I don’t use family leave the bank will never go above six days, meaning that if I don’t take any days in a two-year period (2008 to 2010) I give up those days at the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 2010). However I would still have a bank of 6 days as of April 1 of the new fiscal year when a new two-year period begins.

If I only use one day in a two-year period I lose the remaining days at the end of that two-year period but my bank would return to six days on April 1 of that next two-year period (2012 -2014).
The 5-Year Rule
Submitted by Mike Murphy, President CUPE 1615

Most people would prefer Permanent Employment as opposed to Contract Work. Of the approximately 900 positions in CUPE Local 1615 at Memorial University St. John’s and Grenfell campuses, 166 are contractual positions. We all know how stressful and difficult it is going from one contract to another, never knowing if you will be employed after the current contract ends and always having to reapply and compete for work. I can only imagine what it must be like trying to get a loan or house mortgage without permanent full-time employment. That situation has to be disheartening, especially for those young workers who want to put down roots or start a family.

On your behalf, your Union has negotiated a means to have contractual individuals and contractual positions converted to permanent status. We are always trying to have jobs and members made permanent so that they can have the security and related benefits that most of us enjoy.

It is important that all Contractual members are aware of what is commonly referred to as the “5-Year Rule.” If a contractual position or an incumbent has been continuous for five years, there is a process to make the position and perhaps the incumbent Permanent.

Clause 51: Contractuals states:

51-01 “Contractual employees who have been employed in the same contractual position for five (5) continuous years will be made permanent on their fifth (5) anniversary date provided it is not a replacement position.”

This means if you were in the same position in a department for five years without a break in contract and you were not hired or temporarily assigned to a position held by someone on approved leave, you will be made a permanent employee. Permanent employees have greater job security in that they remain employed unless they retire, are laid off, or terminated with cause. They also have a better chance of putting down roots and getting loans/mortgages.

51.02 “Contractual positions which have been in existence for five (5) continuous years and held without interruption by a number of employees during the five-year period shall be converted to permanent positions where it is not a replacement position.”

This means that the position is made permanent, not the person. But there is still hope if the position is made permanent, since you can still apply for it.
51.02 (continued) “Where the incumbent has not occupied the position for a period of five (5) continuous years: one month prior to the expiration of the incumbent contractual employee’s contract of employment immediately following the fifth (5th) anniversary of the existence of the position, the position shall be posted in accordance with Article 20 – Job postings.”

This means that if the individual is not the only person to hold the contractual position for the five continuous years that it has existed, the job will be posted as a permanent position and the incumbents and any other eligible member will be able to apply for the permanent position. Once a permanent position is posted, all eligible employees can apply.

If you or someone you know has held a contractual position continuously* for five years or longer, contact us with all the information on the position and the dates of employment. We may be able to have you made a permanent employee in a new permanent position.

* Continuously refers to position or employment without long breaks of more than 1 month or more between contracts.

And the Winner Is.....

Congratulations to Sheilah Roberts winner of the Cash for Words Contest. Sheilah’s article, The Love Boat, appeared in the last issue of the newsletter and her name was drawn from all those who made submissions. A Library Assistant III in the Music Resource, Sheilah is a regular contributor to our newsletter. Thank you Sheila and again, congratulations!

Cash for your Words

Do you have a flair for writing? Would you like a chance to win a cash prize? Well, sharpen your pencil and get to work. CUPE on Campus wants writers – all kinds of writers – to fill its pages. You can write fiction, poetry, an opinion piece, or anything you choose. Keep it to two pages and make sure you follow the CUPE Equality Statement. That means that your writing should not contain anything that is discriminatory on the basis of ability, age, class, religion, language or ethnic origin, nor should it be racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic. All writers will be entered in a draw for a cash prize.
Are you sick?
Submitted by Lorraine Jackson

Have you ever been sick? Sick enough to miss work? Of course you have. Each of us has been sick at some time or other. Do you know what your rights and obligations are when you're sick? Do you know the facts? Or do you know the myths?

Myth #1: We get 20 days a year of sick leave [or 12, or 15, or whatever].
I get asked about this one quite a lot. Actually, I was even told when I first came to work here that I was entitled to a certain number of days a year. NOT TRUE!!! You're not entitled to any fixed number of sick leave days. You are expected to show up to work every day, when scheduled, as scheduled. However, if you are sick or injured and not fit for work, there are some provisions. Here is part of Article 30 of our Collective Agreement:

30.01 Sick leave means the period of time an employee is absent from work with full pay by virtue of being sick or disabled or quarantined by virtue of being exposed to a contagious disease.

30.02 Sick leave benefits for prolonged periods of disability are provided under the Long Term Disability (Salary Continuance) Plan, and membership in this Plan is compulsory. An employee will be entitled to receive full salary from the University during the waiting period before the employee becomes eligible for benefits under this Plan.

30.03 Sick leave benefits for lesser periods will be granted in accordance with the following:
(a) A "Reason for Absence Form" completed and signed by the employee, must be provided to the Human Resources Office through the Department Head. The Employer reserves the right to require a medical certificate. The nature of illness section of the form is voluntary and employees are not required to provide private, personal or confidential information regarding their illness.
(b) For periods in excess of four (4) consecutive days, or in excess of ten (10) intermittent days in the aggregate in a fiscal year, a medical certificate must be provided to the Human Resources Office through the Department Head.
(c) Excessive intermittent use of these benefits will be considered as chronic absenteeism.

Myth #2: I cannot lose my job for having a lot of sick time.
Well – technically yes, you actually can have your employment terminated for “chronic absenteeism” as outlined in 30.03 (c). Employees who are off for extended amounts of sick leave can be disciplined and possibly terminated for absenteeism.

Some of the members of your local union have received letters threatening this action. Such a letter may contain something like this: "... this loss of time is affecting the operations of your department. If there is not a significant improvement, the University will have no choice but to take action. ... Having brought this matter to your attention, we will be expecting an improvement in your attendance from this point forward ..."  (see sample letter in this month's newsletter article “Sick Leave.”) There are many situations which might be labelled “chronic absenteeism” and you may have one in your department. Do you have one of these? Sally is sick every Tuesday following a long weekend; Jack phones in sick on the Friday after every pay day; Betsy has a sick day or two every month; Bill phones in sick one day every month, but it’s always on a Wednesday; Hazel had 17 days of sick time last year, one day at a time. All of them might be legitimate or none of them might be. But all of them could be a reason to be called in for a meeting and/or receive a threatening letter.

Myth #3: My private medical history is my own business.
That is true – to a point. It is not your co-workers' business to know why you are away from work; the whole unit doesn't need to know whether you're sick or on vacation. But if you have to call in sick you owe it to yourself, as well as your supervisor or department head, to let them know what's going on in your life. If you explain things to your boss, s/he will be better equipped to help you get reassigned, if need be. The Employer does have a duty to accommodate employees who have health problems and/or disabilities which can be documented. There's the key to protecting yourself – documentation. If you are under a doctor's care for a medical condition, you should always get a note when your condition prevents you from coming to work. While Sally, Jack & Bill might not be able to justify their sick time, it could be that Hazel's or Betsy's days are due to migraine headaches brought on by a task she only performs now and then. Each of them would be smart to tell her supervisor about the problem her work has caused.
Three rules of work
CALM

OUT OF clutter find simplicity.
From discord find harmony.
In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.
– Albert Einstein, German physicist, 1879-1955

Sick Leave
Submitted by Mike Murphy, President CUPE Local 1615

This is a letter a member of our Local received from Human Resources. It is similar to letters that other members have received over the years. If you are interested in hearing more on the subject of Sick Leave, come to our next regular monthly meeting where this issue can be discussed.

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear [Name],

This letter is further to our meeting of [date] 2010 in the presence of me, [Administrative Staff Specialist and CUPE LOCAL 1615 representative]. A review of your sick leave record for the period of January to July indicates that you were absent from work due to sickness for a total of 11 days. A previous meeting occurred on [date] 2009 to discuss your high level of sick leave in 2009. The University has concerns with your total sick leave usage and views this amount of sick leave usage to be extremely high.

During our meeting you indicated that you have had some issues relating to your health. We did discuss some measures that the university can explore to assist you in performing the duties of your job. While we can appreciate your health issues, the fact remains that you have had high sick leave usage since starting with the [revised date]. This loss of time is affecting the operations of your department. If there is not a significant improvement, the University will have no choice, but to take action.

Having brought this matter to your attention we will be expecting an improvement in your attendance from this point forward, and we will be monitoring your level of absence. Any incident of abuse of sick leave will result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal. Excessive intermittent use of sick leave, regardless of whether or not it is blameworthy, will be considered as chronic absenteeism and will result in the University concluding that you are unable to fulfill your work obligations and your employment will be terminated.

Yours truly,

[HR Advisor]

[Redacted]
Purity Factories (NAPE) Strike  
CUPE 1615: A Helping Hand on Kindness Friday  
Submitted by: Sue Kearsey

Mike Murphy, Keir Hiscock, Ingrid Verbree-Barnes and I had the opportunity to participate in Kindness Friday. We went to visit the Purity Factories picket line with coffee, donuts and a cheque for $500. Their Local has only 52 members and their spirits are very good considering they have been standing on the lines for eight weeks. They have no benefits, no pension plan, and here’s an eye-opener: they don’t have any sick leave either! If a member is sick for any amount of time, management requires a detailed doctor’s note stating the reason for absence. If it is judged to be acceptable, the member will receive one-half his/her pay for the period of illness. If it is not acceptable, there’s no pay. The first thing that jumped out at me was this is a huge violation of the Privacy Act. I am sure that there are other outstanding items that were not discussed during our short visit.

This is an example of why we should be very thankful to our past CUPE members who fought the hard battle for the present members to have such things as a pension plan, benefits, job security, annual leave just to name a few.

I wish them success in their fight. Remember we will soon be back at the bargaining table again.
Tell us your story

Do you have a personal story you would like to share? Send it to us at lvatcher@swgc.mun.ca

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2010 CUPE1615 Holiday Party!!

Memorial University: St. John’s Campus
December 23rd 5-11 pm at the Breezeway Bar

Join in the fun. Cash prizes, great food & wonderful friends!

Admission fee: either a cash donation or non-perishable food item for the campus food bank

Memorial University: Grenfell Campus
December 16th - 7 pm at the Lions Club on Wellington Street

Dinner of Chinese or a dish of your choice with lots of fun and laughter to follow.

RSVP with meal choice to Linda Holwell-Tibbo at lholwell@swgc.mun.ca or Diane Johnson at dmmurphy@swgc.mun.ca

We don’t want you to drink & drive - keep your taxi receipt for reimbursement!
On The National Scene

The truth about public health care

b by Natalie Mehra and Mike McBane/PublicValues.ca/CALM

The outgoing president of the Canadian Medical Association, Anne Doig, recently went on record advocating for private health insurance and user fees for patients. Adopting this approach means dismantling more than 60 years of progress towards creating a comprehensive health care system. Medicare is Canada’s largest social program. It was set up to remove the financial barrier for access to care. Despite frequent propaganda to the contrary, medicare is neither in crisis nor unsustainable. According to eminent health economist Robert Evans, since 1975 public health care has remained relatively stable at between four and five per cent of the GDP. Medicare spending comprises the same proportion of provincial revenues as it did 20 years ago. While public resources for medicare have remained consistent, tax cuts have been eating away public budgets. It makes sense to pay for health care through a progressive tax system. It allows us to levy bulk buying power to contain costs, something that patients cannot do when they are left to their own devices in a private health care market. It means that as a society, we can redistribute income to provide care when we are most in need, when we are aging or sick or when we have the least ability to pay.

The public system has expanded in recent decades to provide millions of Canadians with access to new technologies for cancer treatment, diagnostics, and dramatic increases in surgeries. But it has also contracted. Cuts to chronic care and to rural and community health services have contributed to Canadian’s concerns about the future of the health system. Instead of exploiting these fears and seeking inequitable methods of obtaining more money, the CMA should join with the thousands of patients, health professionals and care workers who are advocating for a fair tax system in which money goes to improving care. Rather than taking away from the public system, we should be protecting and increasing the scope of care for seniors and those with long-term illnesses.

The experience of privatization in Canada and around the world is that only the healthy wealthy can afford adequate coverage. Private insurance is neither available nor affordable for those with pre-existing medical conditions.

A job, a union, but still can’t make ends meet

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS at Compass Airlines, members of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, picketed in Detroit and Minneapolis to protest the firing of a flight attendant, who was booted after publicly revealing she qualified for food stamps. Kirsten Arianejad was interviewed on local TV and fired soon after. Salaries start as low as $13,842 at Compass, which flies regional routes for Delta—another offender flying the low-wage skies.
Recent research has uncovered outrageous charges for private care: $1,200 per eye for cataract surgery; $500–$800 for a physician consult; $800–$2000 for MRIs; $15,000–$20,000 or more for knee surgery. In the present public system, these procedures cost a fraction of these charges.

Promoting private health insurance and user fees means inequity and higher costs that will worsen the standard of living and reduce access for the vast majority of Canadians. It is irresponsible to use the aging baby boomers as a tool to create fear. Our society is more than capable of taking care of our aging parents who have contributed all their lives to the public health system.

There is a clear path to restore confidence and ensure the sustainability of public health care. But it does not involve pretending that privatization is anything more than enabling private companies to make profit from people when they are ill and infirm.

The CMA should be insisting our governments uphold the principles of equity and fairness embodied in the Canada Health Act and renew the federal funding accord. They should work to ensure that chronic and rehabilitative care are properly covered. And they should push for the political leadership to expand medicare to cover drugs in a comprehensive public program that can provide more care for less money.

The only way we can safeguard equitable and effective care for Canadians is through a robust, democratic and responsive public health system.

Justice Emmett Hall, whose report set the foundation for public health care in Canada said, “We, as a society, are aware that the trauma of illness, the pain of surgery, the slow decline to death, are burdens enough for the human being to bear without the added burden of medical or hospital bills penalizing the patient at the moment of vulnerability.”

-Natalie Mehra is director of the Ontario Health Coalition. Mike McBane is national coordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition.
Union victory at Saskatchewan Walmart

UFCW/CALM

THE HIGHEST court in Saskatchewan has upheld a decision to certify a union at a Walmart in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

In a unanimous decision the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal upheld the certification of a UFCW Canada Local 1400 bargaining unit at the Weyburn store. The certification had originally been issued by the Saskatchewan Labour Board in December 2008.

Walmart had successfully challenged that certificate in a lower court but that court’s decision was struck down by the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, and the store’s union certification upheld.

“This is a victory for workers rights and the principle that no company is above the law,” said Norm Neault, the president of Local 1400. “Walmart has done everything it could to prevent the workers from getting a collective agreement. It has even prevented us from communicating with the workers at the store.”

The Court of Appeal's ruling is the latest chapter in a legal process Walmart has dragged out since 2004, when Local 1400 first applied to represent the Weyburn workers.

It was the second time in a week the courts have ruled against Walmart. Just two days prior to the Saskatchewan ruling, the Quebec Superior Court upheld an arbitrator’s decision that Walmart had acted illegally when it shut a store in Jonquiere shortly after workers there formed a union. Meanwhile, UFCW Canada members at a Walmart in Gatineau, Quebec recently achieved a first contract. UFCW Canada members at a store in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, also have a contract in place.

In Saskatchewan, UFCW Canada Local 1400 also has applications pending before the labour board for Walmart stores in Moose Jaw and North Battleford.

Student debt surpasses $15 billion and tuitions continue to rise

Bulletin/CAUT/CALM

MORE THAN 90 per cent of university students paid higher tuition fees this fall, according to a report released by Statistics Canada. This follows the news that the government expects federal student debt to surpass $15 billion.

“Canada is on the verge of bankrupting a generation,” said David Molenhuis, national chair of the Canadian Federation of Students. “A lack of government investment has left students and their families footing the bill for Canada’s universities.”

According to the report, tuition fees rose by four per cent for undergraduates to an average of $5,138. Graduate students faced larger increases, with tuition fees rising by 6.6 per cent to an average of $5,182. By comparison, inflation was only 1.8 per cent in the 12 months to July 2010.

Tuition fees are currently the single largest expense for most students, and are increasing far faster than inflation.
**Building Stronger Local Unions**

(Facilitators Michelle Cohen (CUPE National) and John McCracken (CUPE Atlantic))

Submitted by Diane Johnson

The Building Strong Local Unions CUPE weeklong school held June 2010 in Baddeck N.S. was attended by Theresa Antle, Aubrey Chubbs and me (Diane Johnson). This school was very interesting and I was very fortunate to be able to attend. Currently there are more women union members than men and the workforce is getting older. The number of people aged 55 to 64 in Canada was close to 3.7 million in 2006. If this trend continues we are going to run out of people to fill union jobs. In an effort to curtail this we need to recruit new members to the union workforce. There are three main sources of recruits: aboriginals, immigrants, and youth. Aboriginals are the first source because in contrast with the 31% national average, 48% of their population is age 24 years or younger and their population is growing. The second source is the immigrant community because by 2030 immigrants will be the single source of population increases. The last source, youth, is the 18-34 year old cohort consisting of 7 million people of which 20% are persons of colour (due to immigration). Studies show that these three sources have no regard for unions and what a union can do for them. They have not been taught the benefits of the union movement or the history of the union movement to the betterment of working conditions. Typically the members of these three sources are not covered by a collective agreement, however, most would like to be a member of a union. What can we do? We as union members can step up outreach, improve integration initiatives with these communities, and improve representation.

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**UnionBook - The social network for trade unionists**

Submitted by Patti Thistle

A message to all members of UnionBook

A lot of us have been promoting UnionBook to our friends and fellow workers using email and other online tools. But sometimes that's not enough.

We meet union members on the job, at union meetings, on picket lines -- wouldn't it be great if we had a leaflet, a piece of paper, which told them about UnionBook and encouraged them to join?

Well, we do now.

If you click here: http://tinyurl.com/3xfu84t you can download a PDF file suitable for printing. Please print, copy and distribute the leaflet wherever you're likely to meet union members.

Thanks!

Eric Lee

P.S. If you have ideas about how to grow UnionBook, please join our group Toward 1,000,000 Members and tell us.

Visit UnionBook at: http://www.unionbook.org/?xg_source=msg_mes_network

UnionBook is a LabourStart project.
Turning Canada into USA North
by Errol Mendes/Teacher/BCTF

DOES THE Harper government understand the fundamentals of Canada’s constitutional democracy?
There are worrying signs that are trying to design a form of U.S. presidential republican democracy without the safeguards of a true separation of power. Canada’s constitutional democracy is based on the principle of responsible government. This means that Canada’s executive draws its authority from powers derived from a unique form of constitutional monarchy remains in power only if it maintains the confidence of the elected House of Commons and is accountable to Parliament.
The Harper government seems to be launching an assault on Canada’s constitutional democracy on several fronts. The most well-known examples of this are the two antidemocratic prorogations in 2008 and 2009.
Harper’s criticism of any form of coalition government is also part of the desire to install a presidential system in Canada despite the fact that Canadians elect MPs, not the prime minister.
More recent assaults have included refusal to allow the Afghan Committee to see the uncensored documents on transferred detainees until the speaker’s ruling that forced them to do so.
The speaker ruled that the ability of the House of Commons to see the documents went to the heart of the principle of responsible government and that the government could not be the sole arbiter of what could be seen by the elected representatives.
Other assaults include creating manuals to undermine parliamentary committees and undermining vital officers of parliaments like the chief electoral officer, the access to information commissioner, and the parliamentary budget officer. Other assaults include diminishing the most vital role of parliament to supervise the spending of monies by announcing economic and budgetary statements outside parliament.
However, the most worrying sign is the recent insistence that political staffers not be allowed to appear before parliamentary committees even if they have been issued summonses.
If staffers are justified in not appearing before parliamentary committees due to the principle of ministerial responsibility, the same would apply to any public servants as they too fall under the principle of ministerial responsibility. Therefore, if ministers can refuse to appear before the same committees, then everybody in the executive would be perfectly justified in refusing to appear. This could happen in the case of public servants in the Privy Council Office and staffers in the Prime Minister’s Office—like Dimitri Soudas, the communication director in the PMO who is the subject of a summons, given that the prime minister is unlikely to be a frequent witness before parliamentary committees. Soudas has now officially ignored a subpoena from the Ethics Committee triggering potentially another showdown between his boss—the prime minister—and the opposition over contempt of Parliament.
This prime minister, his cabinet, and political staffers seem intent slowly transforming the constitutional order of Canada into an authoritarian republican form of government. Given the lack of even the most rudimentary checks and balances if we go down that path, this failure to respect the fundamentals of our constitutional democracy should be a central issue in the next federal election.

B.C. says Facebook and Twitter okay on the job
NUPGE/CALM

THE B.C. government is opening the door for public workers to use social media such as Facebook and Twitter on the job.
It is creating new guidelines for the use of social media and is encouraging its use in everything from forest fire updates to citizen input on policy decisions.
Allan Seckel, head of the B.C. public service, says the province sees social media as a new set of tools to be incorporated into the working day of a worker, rather than banned or discouraged.
Seckel says social media are quickly becoming a big part of public workers’ daily work and while it can be unnerving for organizations to let workers use social media in the workplace, the government has decided not to impose restrictions merely to avoid perceived risk.
Seckel cited cases in which government workers use Facebook or Twitter to assist them in their work during the summer forest fire season.
Harper told: Restore long-form census
Bulletin/CAUT/CALM

MORE THAN 300 organizations have joined the call for the Harper government to reinstate the mandatory long-form census.

“Stakeholders ranging from the business community to university researchers to social justice advocates are raising their voices to oppose this move,” reads an online petition that has collected more than 16,000 signatures.

The government axed the long form for the 2011 census, claiming it had received privacy complaints from many Canadians, but has presented no evidence to this effect. The short-form census remains mandatory.

The change was made without any consultation from the broad range of people and groups affected by the decision.

The government also ignored advice from Statistics Canada, whose head quit in July over the government’s assertion the agency had agreed that a voluntary replacement would be as statistically sound.

Provincial and local governments use data from the long-form census to guide their services policies.

New businesses use long-form census data to decide where to set up shop, examining measures such as education levels, incomes and occupations in particular areas. Existing companies use census data to know where to focus their marketing, where to locate new stores and what products to offer in which outlet.

“The mandatory long-form census is used as the reference point, a benchmark, for other important surveys, such as the Labour Force Survey used to measure unemployment and other key aspects of employment incorporated in the national economic accounts,” said Michael Ornstein, director of the Institute for Social Research at York University.

Cancelling the mandatory census prevents Canada from evaluating the quality of, and taking measures to correct information from, Statistics Canada’s and others’ sample surveys—thus undermining the entire system of Canadian social and economic statistics. This includes standard surveys needed to compare Canada with the OECD and other countries.

Hunger strike brings negotiations
Labor Notes/CALM

AFTER a 90-day hunger strike by members of the Mexican Eletrical Workers, the Mexican government has agreed to negotiations over its forcible takeover of Mexico City’s power system and the firing of 44,000 union members.

The move last fall dissolved one the country’s few independent unions, which had long been a thorn in the government’s side. The union is asking for pressure to be put on the Mexican government to bargain in good faith.

Send a message of support tiny. cc/SMEsoli.
On The International Scene

What’s behind the strikes and suicides in China?

by Manfred Elfsrom/Maquila Solidarity Update

SUICIDES AND strikes at facilities of the world’s largest electronics manufacturer and auto parts plants in China have brought attention to the struggles of Chinese workers. This spring, workers of Foxconn, a Taiwanese-owned high-tech assembly company, began jumping to their deaths from the firm’s dormitories. Foxconn workers said in interviews that their dehumanizing work environment was at the heart of the tragedies. Military-style discipline, long work hours, and management’s strategy of isolating workers socially had created a toxic environment. As the Foxconn suicides reached their peak in May, workers at the Nanhai Honda auto parts plant in Foshan responded to their exploitation differently. They went on strike for higher pay and better working conditions. News of the Nanhai strike sparked other strikes in Foshan, as well as in nearby Zhongshan and Guangzhou and at a Toyota facility in Tianjin. Striking workers consistently won wage increases, though the percentages varied. At the plant that started the wave, workers’ earnings rose by 35 to 70 per cent. Chinese workers have long used threats to jump from bridges or from buildings on construction sites as a desperate means of pressuring their bosses into paying money owed them.

Chinese workers have engaged in strikes since the early twentieth century. Today, strikes occur daily in export processing zones along China’s southeastern coast, where the vast majority of workers are migrant workers. Many strikes burn out after a day or two, ending with some compromise brokered by a local government, but the workers at the Honda plant held the line for about two weeks, establishing a representative negotiating team and working with prominent outside observers. The workers focused on livelihood issues. They dealt with graduated wage scales, the factory’s use of student interns, and the struggles of dispatched or outsourced workers. The strikers drafted powerful statements of their intentions and, at the end, thanked domestic and international supporters.

Foshan workers also demanded greater accountability from their enterprise’s union. Their call for real representation led to a commitment by the vice-chair of the Guangdong Provincial Federation of Trade Unions to making the Foshan plant a starting point for experiments in direct elections of union chairs. Elections are provided for by law, but rarely happen.

The All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the labour organization to which all unions must belong, is more like a government ministry. It is staffed at higher levels by political appointees. There are, however, some progressive leaders within the ACFTU, and the union has lobbied for tougher labour regulations. In addition to the promised elections, Guangdong has accelerated the drafting of new law that would mandate collective bargaining if one fifth of a company’s workers demand it. There is also talk of enshrining the right to strike in law.

Fewer than half unemployed receive benefits

CLC/CALM

FEWER THAN one in two unemployed workers in Canada receive Employment Insurance. Statistics Canada reports that only 45 per cent of unemployed Canadians were receiving EI benefits in July—down from 50 per cent a year earlier.

“This tells us that long term unemployment is a big problem,” says Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress. “A lot of people can’t find work and in the meantime they are running out of benefits.”

The government is ending programs that offered extended EI benefits to long-term unemployed workers. “These workers paid EI premiums believing that the program would be there for a rainy day but the government is taking away their umbrella,” Georgetti says. “Parliament is sitting again and MPs simply must focus on providing support for the unemployed.”

On The International Scene

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by Manfred Elfsrom/Maquila Solidarity Update

SUICIDES AND strikes at facilities of the world’s largest electronics manufacturer and auto parts plants in China have brought attention to the struggles of Chinese workers. This spring, workers of Foxconn, a Taiwanese-owned high-tech assembly company, began jumping to their deaths from the firm’s dormitories. Foxconn workers said in interviews that their dehumanizing work environment was at the heart of the tragedies. Military-style discipline, long work hours, and management’s strategy of isolating workers socially had created a toxic environment. As the Foxconn suicides reached their peak in May, workers at the Nanhai Honda auto parts plant in Foshan responded to their exploitation differently. They went on strike for higher pay and better working conditions. News of the Nanhai strike sparked other strikes in Foshan, as well as in nearby Zhongshan and Guangzhou and at a Toyota facility in Tianjin. Striking workers consistently won wage increases, though the percentages varied. At the plant that started the wave, workers’ earnings rose by 35 to 70 per cent. Chinese workers have long used threats to jump from bridges or from buildings on construction sites as a desperate means of pressuring their bosses into paying money owed them.

Chinese workers have engaged in strikes since the early twentieth century. Today, strikes occur daily in export processing zones along China’s southeastern coast, where the vast majority of workers are migrant workers. Many strikes burn out after a day or two, ending with some compromise brokered by a local government, but the workers at the Honda plant held the line for about two weeks, establishing a representative negotiating team and working with prominent outside observers. The workers focused on livelihood issues. They dealt with graduated wage scales, the factory’s use of student interns, and the struggles of dispatched or outsourced workers. The strikers drafted powerful statements of their intentions and, at the end, thanked domestic and international supporters.

Foshan workers also demanded greater accountability from their enterprise’s union. Their call for real representation led to a commitment by the vice-chair of the Guangdong Provincial Federation of Trade Unions to making the Foshan plant a starting point for experiments in direct elections of union chairs. Elections are provided for by law, but rarely happen.

The All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the labour organization to which all unions must belong, is more like a government ministry. It is staffed at higher levels by political appointees. There are, however, some progressive leaders within the ACFTU, and the union has lobbied for tougher labour regulations. In addition to the promised elections, Guangdong has accelerated the drafting of new law that would mandate collective bargaining if one fifth of a company’s workers demand it. There is also talk of enshrining the right to strike in law.
Mott’s strike ends in victory
UFCW/CALM

THE FOUR-MONTH strike by 300 RWDSU-UFCW Local 220 members at a Mott’s bottling plant in upstate New York has come to a successful conclusion.
Workers at the plant, owned by the Dr Pepper Snapple Group (DPS), ratified a new contract by a margin of three to one.
Their resolve was reinforced by the solidarity and support of UFCW International and UFCW Canada members and local unions across North America through their letters, petitions and boycott of DPS products.
The conclusion of the work stoppage also marked the end of UFCW Canada’s very successful No to Clamato/Down with Caesar campaign, which was widely received by Canadians across the country.

Union troubles
Internet/CALM

THE CUSTODIANS of America were in a hiring frenzy because their work was really picking up. So they went on strike demanding sweeping reforms.
The Bakers Union could not rise to the occasion when the members wanted more dough.
The Lumberjack Union couldn't hack it and failed because so many of their members were given the axe.
The Delicatessen Workers Union had to sandwich their meetings between shifts and couldn't cut the mustard when their members had a beef. They realized the wurst is yet to come.
The Coal Miners Union laboured in vein.

Migrant workers massacred in Mexico
UFCW/CALM

ON AUGUST 24, 2010, the bodies of 72 migrants from Central and South America were found in San Fernando, Mexico, about 100 km south of the U.S. border.
The migrant workers included 58 men and 14 women. They had been shot dead and piled in a room. Three workers managed to escape and inform police.
The massacre victims were from El Salvador, Honduras, Brazil and Ecuador.
According to survivors, the migrants were kidnapped by an organized crime cartel while they were on route to the Texas border, and then ordered to smuggle drugs into the USA.
When the migrants resisted, they were slaughtered.
The government has confirmed at least seven cases of cartels kidnapping migrant workers this year. Other groups including the National Human Rights Commission estimate that some 1,600 migrants are kidnapped in Mexico each month.
Coffee Break

Way The World Works
*words by Doug Rowe*

It’s the poor man queued in line
The poor man doin’ time
It’s the same man who sweats today
His dreams a million miles away

And I know, I know, I know that
The world hits hard and where it hurts

It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works
It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works

It’s the poor man who lives in debt
What he’s got he paid twice for it
It’s the same man who clocks his day
On the watch of the factory

And I know, I know, I know that
The world hits hard and where it hurts

It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works
It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works

This world has broken you my brother
Stole your dreams of something other
You fight back with heart and brain
You can steal them back again

“Get up stand up stand up for your rights
Get up stand up don’t give up the fight” *

It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works
It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works
It’s the way the world works
Just the way the world works

Yeah, alright!

* Line lifted from “Get Up, Stand Up” (Marley/Tosh) 1973

Our crazy language

Internet/CALM

WHY IS abbreviation such a long word?
Why is dyslexic so hard to spell?
Why is it so hard to remember how to spell mnemonic?
Why is it that no word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver, or purple?
Why is it that the word gullible isn’t in the dictionary?
Why is it that we recite at a play and play at a recital?
Why is it that writers write but fingers don’t fing, grocers don’t groce, and hammers don’t ham?
Why is the alphabet in that order? Because of the song?
Why is the plural of goose geese, and the plural of moose not meese?
Why isn’t phonetic spelled the way it sounds?

Doug Rowe was born and raised in St. John’s and has strong family ties to Heart’s Content. He earned a BA in Sociology and a Criminology Certificate from Memorial University and also holds a CCS Designation from the Canadian Society of Customs Brokers. Since September 2005 he has been employed with Financial and Administrative Services at Memorial. One thing that few people may know is that he has different colour eyes.

In his spare time Doug enjoys spending time with his family and friends, reading, writing, playing music, and working on his new home. Doug’s childhood ambition was to become a professional musician and he would love to take his band, Two Guitars Clash, on the road some day. Self-described as passionate about everything he does, Doug is most proud of becoming a daddy later this month!

Thanks for your submission Doug. Your name will now be entering into this month’s Cash for Words Contest. Good Luck!
**Meeting Schedule**

**Tuesday, November 9, 2010 5:00 p.m.**  
Room ED 1014 for St. John’s members  
AS275 for Corner Brook members

**Agenda**

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**Newsletter Note:**  
CUPE on Campus is now a bi-monthly newsletter.

For up-to-date info please visit the temporary website at http://1615.cupe.ca/. Stay tuned for the launch of our new website happening soon.

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**Next Issue**

If you have anything to submit or any great ideas for newsletter content, please contact us.

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Union meeting tonight and you don’t have time to get home and have supper?  

Come and enjoy delicious food with us. Before we start the proceedings, WE lay out the spread. Let's enjoy a meal together.