



CUPW Prairie Region Update
407-275 Broadway, Winnipeg Manitoba R3C 4M6
February 2007

Negotiations Information

I Respectfully Disagree

A Message from the National Director

I have been your National Director through three rounds of bargaining for the Urban bargaining Unit. In the last 2 rounds, when the majority of the NEB made a recommendation to accept the Collective Agreement, it was not just a majority of one. This time, seven of the 15 members have voted against and recorded their dissent in accepting the employer's last offer. That is a serious message to members that should not be ignored.

In all good consciousness, based on my feelings and experience, I can not recommend this Collective Agreement to the membership and as such voted no and recorded my dissent.

I am a National Officer and am accountable to the membership across the country but in particular to the members and Locals in my Region. As such, I try and review all the information provided by the Negotiation Committee based on the wishes of my constituency, the Local leadership and membership of the Prairie Region.

The Union members and activists in the Prairie Region have a fighting spirit and they have the courage to stand up for their beliefs. They take pride in the work they do as part of a public service and they believe that they are entitled to respect, dignity, safe working conditions and good wages and benefits. They have said that they are prepared to try new things if it leads to improvements in their working lives but they are not prepared to give up the rights and benefits they have acquired over the past 40 years. Not without a fight!

So when I look at the proposed Collective Agreement and I weigh the benefits against the losses, the achievements versus the demands we originally voted on, I have to decide whether the gains are substantial enough to accept or if we could achieve more in a strike.

Eight members of the NEB believe that this is the best we can do. **I respectfully disagree.**

I believe that our internal members have tried too long to keep offices running without enough staff or relief and they are wearing out. CPC has not addressed this issue in an honest or meaningful way.

I believe that letter carriers are being overburdened by the corporation's drive to deliver admail and the only way to ensure that we can provide the service without harming our members is to have proper values that reflect the real workload. CPC refuses to adequately address this issue.

This Collective Agreement contains dangerous "team" provisions that will have a long term harmful effect on the membership.

I believe that the CTI is an illusion that hides an insidious goal by Canada Post to lure us into sacrificing our rights and our solidarity for the promise of some unsubstantiated bonus. The membership has correctly seen through this **Corporate Team Insult - or as some have described it - Coercion Through Intimidation.** It is nothing more than 30 pieces of silver - payment for selling out our rights in the future to "improve productivity."

I believe that CPC's new Health Risk Prevention (Wellness) is a way of escaping their health and safety obligations. Instead of pretending to care about us they should deal with the poisoned workplaces they have created and stop demeaning and humiliating members by sending them to corporate doctors when they are injured or ill.

If they cared about health and safety they would accept our proposal on Health and Safety Committees and paid representatives to be proactive and to advocate on behalf of the membership. They should stop denying special leave when we have personal needs to deal with. If they cared about our well being they would find ways to create more day shift positions so members on night shift had a chance to escape.

There are important gains in the proposed contract and I don't blame anyone for

agreeing to take the easy road and accept what the corporation is prepared to hand out. But I don't believe they are offering enough, despite the good work done by our Negotiating Committee.

We asked the membership to limit their demands so we would only have priorities to deal with and the members reluctantly agreed. The members also realize that in the process of negotiations we never get all that we want or all that we deserve but it is our chance to make improvements and position ourselves for the future.

There is a risk in saying no. The risk is that we could end up with the same or less at the end of the day. The risk is that we could be legislated back to work and have an arbitrator imposed on us like Judge Richard who was inadequate and inappropriate to take on the task of arbitrating a contract. There is a risk that some of the corporation's business may leave and never come back, putting them in a weaker financial picture.

But there is a risk in saying yes to a contract that is not exceptional at best and dangerous at worst. It is a risk to our future and our orientation. It is a risk on the integrity of the bargaining unit. It is a risk that can not be ignored and I feel I have an obligation to raise it for you.

The danger of changing the nature of our relationship with the employer by engaging in unnecessary joint initiatives means that our Constitution is compromised. It means that newer members can more easily fall into a trap of believing that our goals and the employers are the same. Those of us with experience and who understand the deceptive and dishonest nature of the employer will not be moved but the employer is setting up for the future. Their reach is long and their goal is not for today but is for the next decade.

So do we just stand by and take what we get or do we say that we need substantial improvements in staffing and relief, in our working conditions, in proper evaluation of our routes, in protecting our personal dignity, in protecting all the retail jobs that we currently hold.

The boss wouldn't agree to add protections in Article 56 from psychological harassment, bullying and abuse of authority so how committed are they to fixing our poisoned workplaces.? They had agreed in principle to our demand to train all

employees under Appendix HH but they walked away from that even though they know it is necessary. They prefer to let a crisis develop and then over-react or under-react to it so it means they have no intention to fix our workplace. In fact they intend to set the groundwork for more harassment and stress by implementing an "incentive" program that will have us at each other's throats in a few years time.

Sometimes a contract is not all about how much money we can get. Sometimes it is about defining our future in a way that allows us to have more than the grievance procedure to right the wrongs in the workplace.

Our opportunity to achieve that is during negotiations and in this round, we have not corrected the inadequacies. Our Committee beat back many of the boss's rollbacks that CPC put on the table. Now it is up to our membership to decide if it is enough, or if we can, through our ultimate power, beat back the arrogance, incompetence and abusive actions by the boss that we live with on a daily basis.

In a few weeks the members will make their decision based on their individual needs. But our collective needs and our collective strengths are at stake. They should never be sacrificed.

Unlike some, I can not recommend to you that this contract being proposed is the best we can achieve or that the CTI is just something that we can accept and hope to deal with at a later date. I have an obligation and responsibility to tell you how I feel so you will have a number of perspectives to consider before you make your decision. I take all my obligations to the membership and the Union very seriously.

Your Sister in the Struggle



Cindy McCallum
National Director
CUPW Prairie Region