

# *InsideOut*

**Canadian Union of Postal Workers  
Edmonton Local**

**June - July 2011**



**2011**

**Special Strike and Lockout Issue**

From the Acting Editor..... Doug Frechette



Opinions expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily the official views of the Local. "InsideOut" material may be copied, provided proper credit is given.

Submissions are welcome for "InsideOut". Please include your name and phone number. Requests for anonymity will be considered.

Welcome to the special strike and lockout issue of the InsideOut. Across this country postal workers are back at their jobs after the Harper government unjustly revoked our right to collective bargaining and ordered CUPW back to work.

Once again, the Edmonton Local can be proud to be at the forefront of the fight! When our call to arms came on June 7, we responded en masse and sent a strong message that was heard across the nation. When the employer locked out the workers after a series of blatant escalation tactics, we again responded in strength, with picket lines springing up like wildflowers at depots all around our region.

We can be proud of what we have done, but the fight is not yet over. Regardless of the outcome of the unjust legislation, we must be prepared to continue our struggle. Winston Churchill once spoke of fighting in the landing grounds and in the streets. Although our places are different, the words he spoke ended with in 1941 resonate through the years to us today: "We Shall Never Surrender!!!"



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THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.....

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## Message From the Acting President Bena Pattni

On June 27th 2011 at 4 p.m we held a rally at EMPP to show Canada Post how outraged we were with the unjust back to work legislation that was imposed by the Harper government. Sister Bev Ray, our Local President addressed a large crowd of postal workers, other unions, labor organizers and the media to let Canada Post know that this will not be the end of our fight! We made sure the first group of workers to enter at 6:30 p.m. were not alone. They went in with their heads held high, with loud messages of solidarity and unity, reminding themselves not to forget or forgive how the employer treated us.

The Conservative government used their newly won majority to pass Bill C6, which is an assault on the postal workers' right to Collective Bargaining. It also violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We will fight this law in the courts and continue to make the public aware of this injustice done to the working class.

The strength of our membership was visible on the picketlines despite the rainy weather; it dampened our spirits but our spirits remained high! We created our own new signs that we proudly showed off to the passing public and we were overwhelmed by the public support we received.

The pickets were run very smoothly and the discipline shown was incredible; thank you all for the unity shown on those lines, we need to take this back to the work floor!

The massive support we received from the Opposition MPs, our allies at EDLC, AFL, CUPE, HSAA, AUPE, UNA, as well as RSMC members and our family and friends was phenomenal. For the first time in history, members of Parliament actually addressed our issues in front of a noncaring government. We were also joined by Women's Organizations, students, anti-poverty activists, seniors, and local community activists in our fight against an unjust corporation and unjust government.

There was a tremendous amount of work done in the union office during the lockout, and after we were ordered back, including organizing and processing strike pay, answering phones, supplying the picket lines and much more. President Bev Ray and the executive would like to thank everyone who helped in the office, on the picket lines, all your support went a long way!

Throughout this difficult period, postal workers remained united and remained ready to defend our rights and we did not back down!

Bev Ray has been in Ottawa for two weeks working with the Constitution Committee, and I had the opportunity to cover her position for the past week. It was a change from delivering mail and quite a challenge to work and answer membership questions. I would like to thank Bev for her hard work, thanks to her we had great media coverage throughout the strike and lockout.

(continued on page 6)

# Picket Line and Rally Gallery...



..Thanks to all who contributed these photos!!!

## RSMC Regional Conference

...by Doug Frechette

In a historic first, RSMCs from across the prairie region met in Calgary June 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> for their first ever regional conference. This was the first step in formulating demands for our upcoming contract discussions. Over 200 resolutions were submitted by locals for consideration, as well there were a number of composite resolutions formulated by the resolutions committee, in which several similar items were combined into one.

Although most delegates were new to the process, the conference ran smoothly with minimal procedural problems. Debate on the resolutions was surprisingly light; it was clear that the RSMCs share very similar values and concerns which allowed for many unanimous votes on key issues.

As always, the Edmonton delegation was a strong presence. Led by Secretary Treasurer Sue Wilson and delegates Doug Frechette, Giselle Cossey, and Robin Feakes, we presented a united voice on a number of critical issues, and we were pleased to see several of our resolutions adopted without change. Also on our team were two observers including Local President Bev Ray and Marilyn Lewis, lending moral support and sage advice.

The next step in the process will be for these resolutions to be sent to the National Executive Board, who will integrate them with the resolutions sent by the other four regional offices. From this will be formed a series of demands. These demands will be sent out to be voted on by the RSMCs; no firm timeline has been set, but we expect this to happen in September.

The final step, after the demands have been voted upon and verified, will be for CUPW to issue a Notice to Bargain on our behalf. At that point the real work begins, when our negotiators sit down across from the employer and begin the long process of hammering out a new collective agreement.

This is a critical period of time for RSMCs. Unlike the previous reopeners, which the employer has dragged on with endless arbitration hearings, in this round of negotiations we will have the right to strike if our demands are not met. This is not a decision to be taken lightly, but it remains a critical tool that we must be willing to use as a last resort if the employer yet again decides not to take us seriously. I urge all members to closely follow these developments and come out and take part in this process. Remember, we must be united and have a strong voice to succeed.



**From the Education Department**

I know this might not be a widely held belief but I say Canada Post locked us out simply to really screw up all the plans of Edmonton's Education committee because there is nothing more terrifying to management than an educated and motivated worker.

Now we are back and we are going to make up for lost time. Basic Shop Steward (for both urban operations and RSMCs) course will be held on the 25,26 and 27<sup>th</sup> of August. If you want to be a steward this is the course you need. It's designed to give a worker the tools and knowledge needed to start as a steward, does it provide everything you need to know to be a steward, no. A steward never stops learning and improving but it does provide the basis for going forward. The Strength of this union is the Workers, and the Steward is an integral part of that. Stewards organize, educate, communicate and use their knowledge and experience to promote the interests of their co workers. It can be frustrating but it can also be a lot of fun, a chance to get to know the people you work with and a chance to really help people. If you want to know more talk to your local steward or call the union office, if you think this might be for you apply now, even if you don't make it into the August course new courses are being planned even as I type.

What's in the future, well the Region will be putting on a 5 day Leadership course that will be held in scenic Moose Jaw this September as soon as the applications are out they will be made available at the Union office. This course is designed to help activists who want to take on a leadership role with communication skills and critical media analysis. In November the Region will be putting on the 3 day fall school, courses to be announced. As well locally we will be putting on our Taking back the workfloor course in the coming months and hopefully a pension course as well.

We have an Education committee meeting the first Thursday of every month at 6:30pm in the Union office if you want to have a say in upcoming courses or are interested in Union education please come by the meeting is open to all workers.

**Darcy Griffiths**  
**Education Officer**

**(Bena Pattni President's Message continued from page 3)**

Rollbacks, lockout, illegal benefit cuts, reduction of vacation and sick leave credit; now they are telling us they're happy to see us back! **QUITE AN UNUSUAL WAY OF SHOWING HAPPINESS**, by ordering letter carriers not to work past eight hours, bringing back mail if unable to deliver without overtime, leaving mail behind, and refusing overtime.

This policy change will adversely affect customers. These directives readicly alter the policies that have been in effect for years. **ALL LETTER CARRIER ROUTES MUST BE SORTED AND DELIVERED ON THE SAME DAY AS RECEIVED.** Canada Post has chosen to delay the mail and is acting contrary to the government's stated intent to restore the economy! There is a serious backlog of mail still piling up in the depots, plants, and warehouses across the country.

CPC's divide and conquer tactics continue, favoritism is on the rise, 24 hour notices on the rise, picking on activists on the rise. When will it STOP?!

Today, July 22, the dreaded overtime is back! The employer insists on calling it reverse seniority overtime. No matter what you call it, it is unwanted overtime! It causes overburdening of letter carriers and increases their chances of injury. Some letter carriers who are injured are still forced to do overtime.

PDSL workers have been told about a shift change from 4 a.m. to 12 p.m. without consultation with the union. Delton depot changing relief start times without consultation. Due to the Capital X parade, some duty changes were required, but were ignored and there was no consultation with the union.

**(continued next page)**

**(Bena Pattni President's Message continued from page 6)**

### **Postal Transformation**

Despite all the unaddressed issues, Canada Post is still going ahead with the Postal Transformation in Edmonton. EMPP construction outside and inside is significantly affecting the workers. One lane on 121A avenue and movement of cement trucks will seriously affect traffic flow. Employees will have to take extra caution for their own safety.

Cutbacks in commercial mail pickups mean that MSCs will only pick up upon customer request. Colin Mackenzie from National Office confirmed that this is in line with modern post implementation, but that MSCs should report large mail volume pickups to the union.

The Union is working on getting retroactive back pay dated to February 1st. Our negotiating committee has already been working since July 14 and the Labour Minister Lisa Raitt appointed as arbitrator Justice Coulter Osbourne. He has been practicing law since 1959 and has experience in mediation, settlement, etc. As we all know, our struggle is not over!

**Bena Pattni, acting President and Letter Carrier, Depot 3.**



### **Local Honored at CALM Awards**

Make some room on the mantel: The Edmonton Local has won three awards at the Canadian Association of Labour Media annual awards banquet held in May. Brother Rashpal Sehmy, Brother Doug Frechette and Sister Karen Kennedy were at the awards banquet when the announcement was made.

The Dennis McCann Stroke-of-Genius Award was won by the Local for the amazing campaign Porchlights for Posties. The campaign was developed based on an idea that originated in Winnipeg, in response to pressures on letter carriers related to the Modern Post. Edmonton Local members Steve Cowtan, Yvette Brusseau and Bev Ray developed hand outs, organized materials and expanded the idea to include distributing light bulbs to homes in some delivery areas experiencing delivery in the dark.

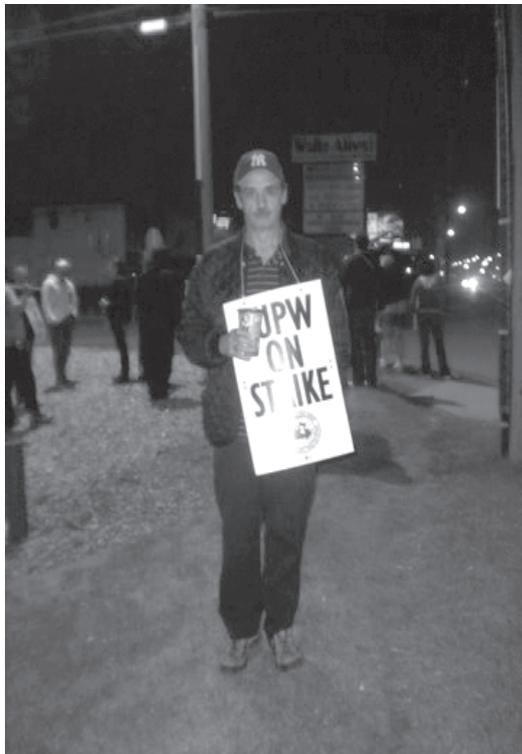
The Edmonton Local also won an Honorable Mention award for the cartoon 'Modern Post Delivers', drawn by Karen Kennedy, and an Honorable Mention award for the October print interview with JC Parrot, also by Sister Kennedy.

CUPW Pacific Region once again won awards for their Pacific Perspectives, and Brother John Bail, National Director Pacific Region was on hand to accept the awards.

The awards banquet wrapped up a 2 day conference that included numerous participants across Canada who work in labour media. The event was held in Burnaby, British Columbia just prior to the opening of the Canadian Labour Congress Convention in Vancouver, BC.

**- K. Kennedy**

**More Pic's of Pickets...**



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**THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.....**

# Striking Impressions

MONDAY MORNING JUNE 20<sup>th</sup> 2011... LETTER CARRIER DEPOTS ACROSS CANADA



By Karen Kennedy

**CUPW EDMONTON LOCAL  
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP  
MEETING**

**Sunday, September 10**

**6 - 8 PM**

**Central Lions Seniors Recreation  
Centre**

**11113- 113 Street**

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## Rural Ramblings

... by Doug Frechette, Chief Steward RSMCs

Hello to all! As we enter the last week in July, the strike/lockout is slowly fading into the rear view mirror. I'm very proud to report that RSMCs did many things to support their urban brothers and sisters during the dispute. This did not go unnoticed, and these actions went a long way to building solidarity with the urban ops bargaining unit.

After the return to work, it has become clear that management intends to take a hard line when it comes to CUPW members, including the RSMCs. I have heard reports of the employer trying to force RSMCs to do inappropriate work, or to work under unsafe conditions. It appears that CPC feels that with the backing of their new friends in the Harper government, they can disregard the collective agreement at will, with no care for the consequences.

I would urge all RSMCs to continue to hold the employer to the terms of our agreement. They are counting on us to be afraid to stand up for our rights, and are using this fear to abuse many of us. I urge anyone who feels the employer is in violation of our contract to contact myself or a full time officer to put an immediate stop to it! We have had success in fighting back against these transgressions. In many cases there was no need to even file a grievance, all it took was a phone call for the situation to be resolved. They are testing our resolve, and we must demonstrate that we are as strong and united as ever.

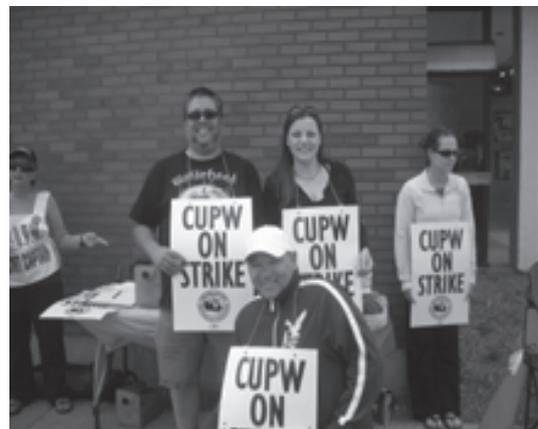
As most of you have heard, our reopener negotiations continue to drag. The employer seems to have no intention of settling the reopener before our contract expires; they have once again forced us to arbitration, with dates now being scheduled into November.

This is yet another sign of the contempt that Canada Post has for RSMCs. Although we are a small group, we must continue to be vocal in our opposition to their attitude and continue to fight for what we need and deserve.

I'm also pleased to announce that there is a one-day RSMC activist course under development. Due to family constraints and the vast distances involved, many RSMCs never have an opportunity to participate in Union education. This one day course is specifically designed to be offered as a "road school", with facilitators travelling to smaller centers to meet with RSMCs from the surrounding areas.

The first center this course will be offered in will be Bonnyville (date TBA), with other locations to be announced. If you have interest in having this course delivered in your area, please contact myself or Education Officer Darcy Griffiths at the Local Office.

As there is no August issue of InsideOut, enjoy your summer and see you in September!



**CUPW Rotating Strike June 2011 (compiled by Karen Kennedy)**

\*the rotating strikes began at 11pm EDT on each date shown except as noted June 9th.

June 2<sup>nd</sup> Winnipeg was out on strike for 24 hours.

June 3<sup>rd</sup> Hamilton, Ontario was on strike for 48 hours.

June 5<sup>th</sup>, Montreal, Quebec was on strike for 24 hours.

June 6<sup>th</sup>, Victoria, British Columbia and Moncton, New Brunswick went on strike for 24 hours.

June 7<sup>th</sup>, Calgary, Alberta and Edmonton, Alberta went on strike for 24 hours.

June 8<sup>th</sup>, Thunder Bay, Ontario went on strike for 24 hours.

June 9<sup>th</sup>, the following locations went on strike for the day:

- Labrador City, Newfoundland-Labrador
- Bathurst, New Brunswick
- Summerside, Prince Edward Island
- Ste-Therese, Quebec
- St-Jerome, Quebec
- Hearst, Ontario
- Brantford, Ontario
- St. Thomas, Ontario
- Flin Flon, Manitoba
- Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
- Whitehorse, Yukon
- Vernon, British Columbia

June 9<sup>th</sup>, Kitchener, Ontario and Quebec City, Quebec went on strike for 24 hours.

June 10<sup>th</sup>, Red Deer, Alberta went on strike for 48 hours.

June 12<sup>th</sup>, the following locations went on strike for 24 hours:

- Breton, Nova Scotia (Sydney, North Sydney, Sydney Mines, New Waterford, Glace Bay)
- Fredericton, New Brunswick
- Mauricie, Quebec
- Sherbrooke, Quebec
- Cornerbrook, Newfoundland-Labrador
- Cornwall, Ontario
- Windsor, Ontario
- Niagara Falls, Ontario
- Regina, Saskatchewan
- Nanaimo, British Columbia

June 13<sup>th</sup>, Toronto, Ontario, Scarborough, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec went on strike for 24 hours.

June 14<sup>th</sup>, Salmon Arm, British Columbia, Carboneer, Newfoundland-Labrador and Sioux Lookout, Ontario were to go on strike for 24 hours.

June 14<sup>th</sup>. At the same time, it was confirmed that Canada Post had locked out Nanaimo, British Columbia, Sherbrooke, Quebec and Breton, Nova Scotia. And that night Canada Post locked out all postal workers across the country.

June 15<sup>th</sup>, the Conservative government announced its intention to introduce Back-to-Work legislation.

More picket line photos. Thanks to those who contributed.



THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.....

Yesterday at the Post Office:

June 15th 2011 By P. Gage

Last weekend Canada Post declared a series of service cuts that reduced the Letter Carrier work week down to three days a week. On the first day of the service cuts there were several early morning actions where hundreds of Letter Carriers showed up for work and demanded to deliver mail that had piled up inside their depots. In Edmonton several depots took this one step farther by sitting down inside the depot and refusing to leave. Several other depots rallied outside and marched around outside their workplaces.

Following these actions the Canadian Union of Postal Workers held a demonstration on Whyte Avenue where over 300 Postal Workers marched on Depot 9, one of the largest and most militant depots in the city. When the workers arrived at the depot they used the password on the door, which had not been changed, to storm the depot with camera phones in hand. Again the workers staged an occupation with management locking themselves in their office to hide from the angry mob. Workers with cameras photographed piles of mail stuffed into the depot exposing Canada Post Corporations lie that there was no mail to be delivered.

Workers banged on the walls to make noise, flipped over trash cans to use as drums and banged on metal racks with sticks. This episode went on for a while before the crowd retired to Gazebo Park down the road for speeches and a short rally. Although rowdy, the event was entirely non violent if not very confrontational. Many workers said afterwards that this day was the best moment of their lives, but the day was not even yet over.

Across town the facilities still operating were extremely tense with major confrontations reported with management across the board often involving groups of workers. As the afternoon wore on the public was told that the Air Canada Workers were about to be legislated back to work. Emboldened by this move and in retaliation for militant action across Canada by Postal Workers the Canada Post Corporation locked the CUPW out at 9:15pm.

As the workers filed out of the plant they noticed that about ten members of management were staying behind, many putting up tarps over the windows so no one could watch them operate mail equipment. Incensed the crowd went on to erect barricades out of metal construction fences at the back gates, they turned around any trucks coming in and parked a 5-ton Canada Post vehicle in the truck gate and padlocked the mail inside.

Several hours later the management team started sending their people out to go home. The pickets locked arms and chanted "no one in, no one out". Management was informed that the workers sincerely hoped management had brought pyjamas. The bosses looked dejected. Then the police arrived. They sincerely wanted to not have to intervene but said we couldn't hold management forever and at some point it became unlawful confinement and suggested we open up negotiations.

The pickets decided that an apology was in order from the Labour Relations team and Senior Management. If one person from the top of the management team came out and announced to the crowd that they were sorry for disrespecting the picket line that evening and the previous week during the rotating strikes the workers would not stop them from crossing the line in order to leave. Management categorically refused. Our next offer was to have them come out and walk through a small gap in our lines and board cabs waiting outside. Their personal vehicles were to remain outside and over 100 angry postal workers would see them off. We agreed on a path of travel, the crowd agreed to stick to where they were and heckle.

When management left the building they quickly veered to the right and made for a gap in the side of the building walking past their personal vehicles but not entering them. The police officer in charge was visibly displeased at them breaking the agreement. The crowd surged forward with camera phones in front jeering and heckling the bosses as they left the building. The event was rowdy but no one was even shoved, the workers remained disciplined, not by some outside force but by their own rank and file members giving each other encouragement.

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This day was the high water mark in years of struggle for several militants in the Post Office and there is no doubt we will carry this story with us for the rest of our lives. But it is also just the beginning. Yesterday workers got a taste of their own power and made the first step towards taking back control over their own work. This won't end with a new collective agreement and it will continue when we all walk back into the post office with our heads held high.

## **RSMC Meeting**

### **Wednesday September 21**

### **6 - 8 PM**

### **At the Union Office**

### **11001 - 107 St**

(red and white house next to the church)

#### **Inside Out Deadlines**

Friday at noon

September Issue August 19

#### **HAVE YOU MOVED?**

**ARE YOU PLANNING TO MOVE?**

**Don't forget to contact the union office  
with your new address and phone number.**

## RSMC Negotiating Team Proudly Wears Edmonton RSMC T-Shirts



Members of the Edmonton Local Executive, in a show of solidarity with the RSMC negotiating team, proudly donated T-shirts for the team to wear as they sat down at the bargaining table across from the employer. The CUPW RSMC negotiators with 'I Support RSMC Demands' shirts presented by the Edmonton Local. From Left to Right: Donald Lafleur, 4th National Vice-President CUPW, Bonnie Pollard, RSMC negotiator (Toronto Local), Kathy Zimmer, RSMC negotiator (Kelowna Local), Rose Johnson, RSMC negotiator (Red Deer Local), Bernard Phillion, lawyer, Suzanne Simard, RSMC negotiator (Saguenay Lac St-Jean Local), Ken Bird, CUPW negotiator

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| Water Reduced Gallons | 1,083 | Energy BTU (000)             | 1,466 |

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**THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.....**