

New ways of **WINNING**

FIGHTING PRIVATIZATION AND CONTRACTING OUT

**Documenting What We Do –
The Quality is in the Details**

CUPE's National Privatization Conference, Toronto - March 27-30, 2003

CUPE·SCFP
On the front line • Au coeur de l'action

How to carry out this activity:

Bring together a diverse group of members who perform the service at risk of being contracted-out. Ask them to make a long list with the details of the tasks they perform. Pay special attention to the duties that are not easily observed by the public and those which are outside of the job description.

Ask members to organize the job activities into the following categories and discuss the significance of these features in the context of privatization.

- Which activities take the longest time to perform? Time consuming activities are the most costly and therefore most likely to be cut short by contractors.
- If you only had half of the time to do your job, what would you not do? This makes concrete the tasks that would be cut by contractors.
- Which activities take the longest time to learn? Those which require more time to learn will be costly in terms of contractor employees needing orientation and training.
- What unique knowledge would be lost if someone new took over your job?
- Which of your duties are difficult for your supervisor to monitor? Activities which are difficult to track will more likely be neglected in contract specifications, or cut later by the contractor.
- Which aspects of your work support, or are supported by, other public agencies or departments? Use this information to show the integrated nature of public services and to build a coalition with other public employees.
- Which aspects of your work and expertise are most important to the public, or serve specific groups in the community? Activities that are key to the public can be used in a public relations program and to gain community allies.

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How the information can be used:

A critical starting point for evaluating any privatization proposal is to involve members and identify the full range of tasks and responsibilities involved in their work. There are six good reasons to prepare a comprehensive description of the work we do when it's being targeted for privatization:

1. Discussing our work can be very empowering and can motivate us to defend our work within the public sector.
2. Documenting the details of our work equips us to evaluate the privatization proposal and advocate to keep the work in-house. Much of our work is not visible to the public, and often managers are unaware of the full scope of what we do. When a proposal to contract out is developed, often the RFP, the bids, the contract and other documents fail to capture all of the duties carried out in-house. This makes the in-house operation look more expensive, and it may lead to critical work being left undone by the contractor.
3. A description of our work shows how public services are integrated, one service depending on others. Especially in smaller communities, workers from different departments will routinely support each other to deliver various services. The description can include these relationships and be used to show how privatization problems will have ripple effects in other areas.
4. The information can be used to establish concrete expectations and performance standards of contractors. If contracting-out goes ahead, having the detailed work expectations and standards spelled out in the contract will limit the contractor's ability to demand higher fees for added work. To make performance standards enforceable, there should be financial penalties on the contractor – including canceling the contract – if those standards are not met.
5. Developing profiles of our work can also be used for our communications and education strategies. In the campaign against contracting-out, the information could be used for flyers, ads, posters, and presentations. In a workshop, members can use the job analysis as the basis for developing skills such as writing letters to the editor, providing commentary in radio interviews, making presentations at events and meetings, and a range of other actions.
6. Having this detailed description of our work could prove valuable during bargaining or in dealing with work restructuring and job reclassification initiatives.

Source: CUPE Union Development Department adaptation of material developed by Roland Zullo, University of Michigan Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations

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