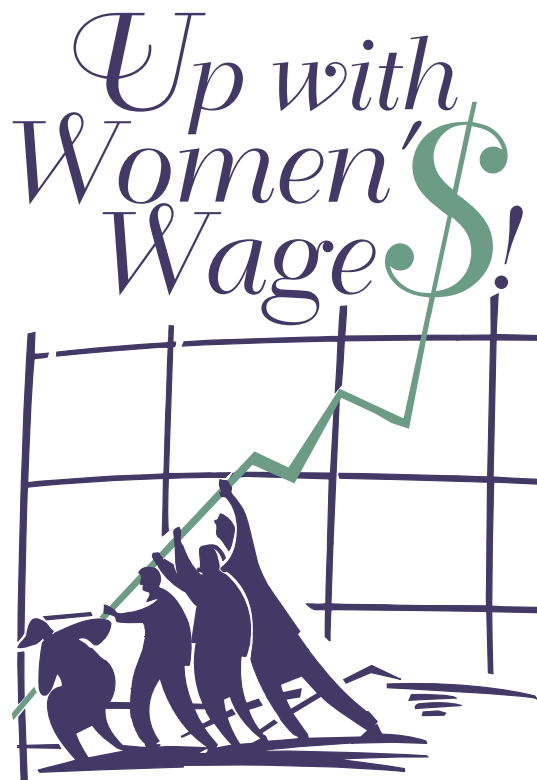


Up with Women's Wages! means it's time for a raise. It's time to close the wage gap through bargaining. It's time to make concrete gains on pay equity, minimum wage legislation and other legislative improvements. It's time to secure pensions and strengthen CPP. It's time to end violence against women – often a by-product of women's economic dependence.

Up with Women's Wages! means concrete, real change – not tomorrow, but today. It means integrating women's equality issues into everything

CUPE does on a day-to-day basis, including our union education and organizing non-unionized workers. Most importantly, it means including these goals in our collective bargaining and our political action efforts.

Up with Women's Wages! calls for the creation of 2000 women's committees. These committees foster a safe environment where CUPE women can share their stories and build on mutual concerns. A committee can promote a strong foundation – and a voice – that adds to the strength of the union local. It can connect women to our larger provincial and national bodies, including CUPE's National Women's Committee.



Up with Women's Wages! is a way for us to deepen our understanding about why CUPE women continue to be underpaid and to renew our resolve to take action to raise women's wages. The campaign was launched as CUPE's major initiative around the World March of Women 2000. It is a way to show our solidarity with women all over the world on the issues of poverty and violence against women. It is a way to put women's wages back in the spotlight – and keep them there until women get fair pay.

In this kit you'll find a number of useful tools to help make women's wages a priority in your local and at the bargaining table:

- We all benefit
- The facts on women's wages
- Building our history
- Bargaining strategies
- Building women's power
- Starting a women's committee
- A local campaign on women's wages
- CUPE women's committees tell their stories
- Unions work for women – organizing



A global injustice

What's happening on the other side of the world is little different from what's happening in our communities and workplaces. The globalization of capital is fuelling the drive to privatize, downsize, de-regulate, and cut back government funding and services.

While corporations make unprecedented profits, workers are told to lower their expectations. There is continual pressure to lower wages, particularly in unionized work, to privatize down and to pit workers against each other. Workers now compete for fewer "bad" jobs – jobs that cut salaries but not workloads, slash benefits and offer little security or future.

As deliverers and users of public services, women are often the hardest hit through cutbacks. Women are the ones expected to "pick up the slack" on the job and at home because their work as caregivers is undervalued and underpaid. Struggling to make ends meet, women are relegated to casual, part-time and part-year work. Many more work in low-wage job ghettos, suffer discrimination and do not have the benefits of belonging to a union.



Power together to act

Within this global environment, CUPE women, like women across Canada, have seen their gains in the fight for economic equality backslide during the last decade. Equality and our birthright of basic human rights depend on achieving economic independence. Women cannot afford to wait any longer.

It's time to recognize that we do have power together and can act to achieve positive lasting change. We have the power to resist the forces that would treat us like commodities instead of people whose work the world depends on.

Within CUPE, we're renewing our commitment to moving women's equality issues up front through collective bargaining and collective action. We're going to turn up the heat to remove the barriers that block women's economic independence – barriers within our union and at all levels of government.

Breaking down barriers will benefit all union members, women and men, because it will mean changing power relationships from "power over" to power shared. Everyone gains when workers gain control of their working lives and participate equally in decision-making.

Who wins when women earn more?

We all do. Here's why:

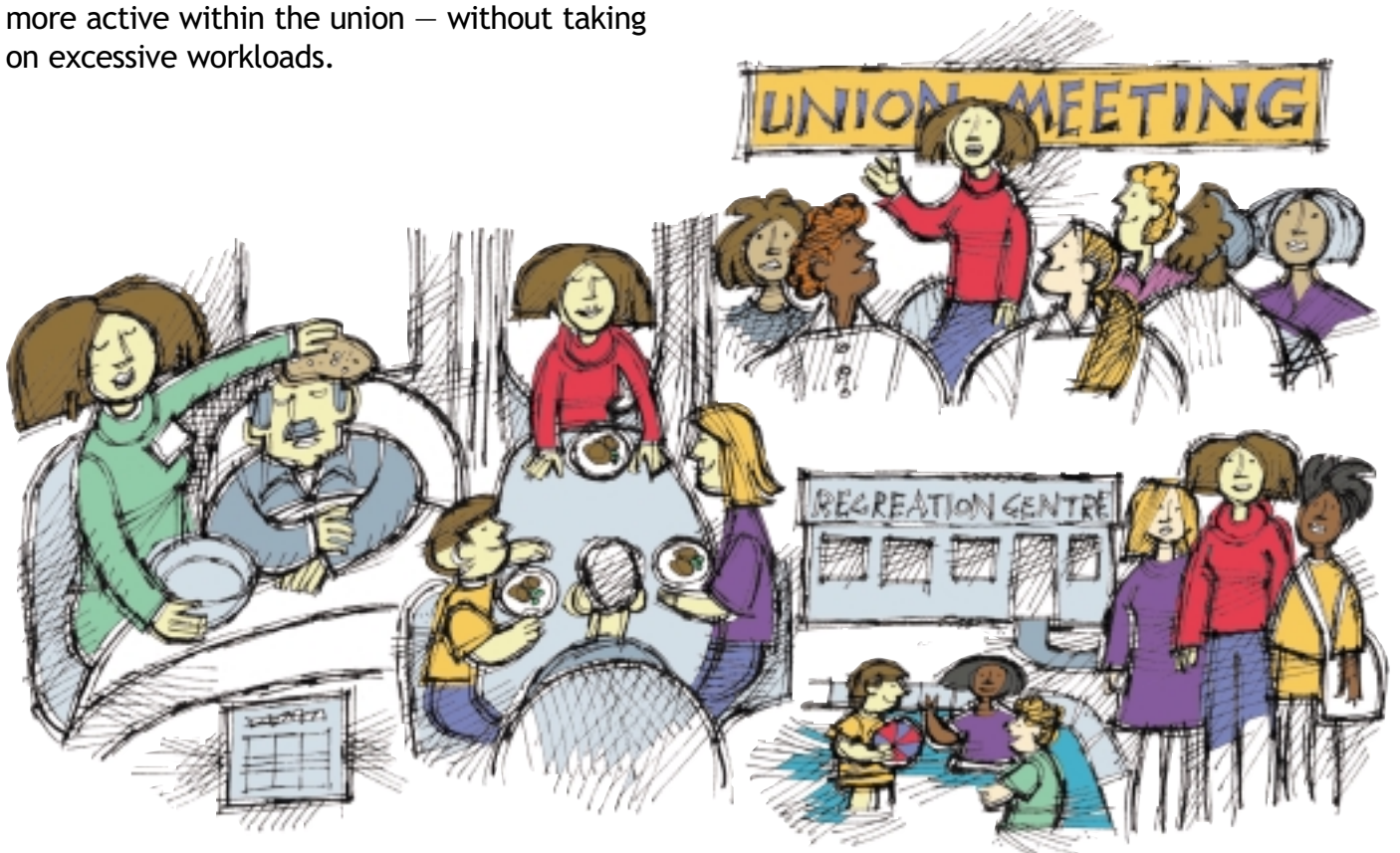
- The push to privatize down, lowering benefits and standards, is related to what workers on the bottom of the scale, generally women, are able to earn. Raising the wages of low-paid workers reverses the downward spiral.
- Much of the economic restructuring around the world and within our Canadian workplaces depends upon women's inequality. For example, child care workers earn a pittance compared to those who care for cars. Many women are forced to leave paid work to care for the ill or elderly without compensation. The more visible women's undervalued and unpaid work becomes, the less governments and private employers are able to get away with cutting back essential services or paying poverty-level salaries.
- Families' incomes and standard of living increase when spouses, partners, mothers and grown daughters earn higher wages.

- Men also benefit. Those who work in sectors that are predominantly female will see their own incomes rise as their jobs are better paid.
- Recognizing women's childbearing and child-rearing needs through benefits which provide for maternity, Employment Insurance, parental leave and other essential accommodations, is good for both parents. When women's needs are recognized, men's needs become visible as well.



- When we challenge the status quo – the expectations that one group of workers can be ghettoized, underpaid and treated poorly – we change the very system that maintains the present economic model of inequality. We shake up the foundation of assumptions that certain groups of workers, depending on their looks, culture or “able-bodiedness” are less deserving of decent wages and benefits than others. If one of us cannot be discriminated against, then none of us can.
- Women often hold quadruple roles in our society – in the workplace, union, home and community. By raising women’s wages and improving working conditions, we create an environment where women are freer to choose how they contribute – and able to become more active within the union – without taking on excessive workloads.

- By fighting to raise women’s wages, we strengthen union solidarity. The union becomes more relevant to women’s lives, and they are more likely to support the union in all its struggles.
- When we organize the non-unionized (often the most marginalized women workers) in our workplaces and sectors, we raise the standards for all within the group. This adds to our strength and stops employers who seek to divide us by playing our interests against each other. We eliminate workplace hierarchies and pave the way for inclusive, broader bargaining.



Wage inequity denies women economic equality. More importantly, it contributes to the feminization of poverty in Canada.

The majority of the poor in Canada are female. According to a Statistics Canada report on women, one in five Canadian women lives in a low-income situation. Those at highest risk of poverty are female, unattached seniors; young, unattached women; female lone parents; women with disabilities; Aboriginal women; and visible minority women.

The gap between the rich and the poor in Canada is growing, and women and children are on the losing end. Statistics Canada reports that between 1993 and 1996, the low-income rate increased as economic recovery progressed. This trend was particularly strong among children — a significant departure from the 1980s, when rising government transfers to low-income families helped stop poverty rates from rising.

We know women are having a hard time making ends meet:

- More and more women hold down two or three jobs to put together a full-time wage. In the last 10 years, the number of women holding multiple jobs has grown by 45%, while the number of men holding multiple jobs has risen by only 4%. In 1999, 52% of the 725,000 multiple job holders were women.¹
- The term "working poor" is relatively new. How many CUPE women are part of this growing group? The poverty line for a family of four living in an urban centre is \$28,098; in a large urban centre, it is \$32,759.² Compare these figures to a typical starting clerical wage — of around \$20,000.

- Wage inequity follows women for life. Because the Canada Pension Plan is based on an individual's earning history, many women retire into poverty. The average CPP benefit currently paid to women is \$285 per month; for men it is \$410 per month.

Why women's wages are low

It was once legal and an expected practice in Canada to pay women half of what men earned for the same work. Laws promoted inequality between women and men in the labour force. Despite huge increases in the number of women working for pay, we have not completely overcome this systemic inequity.

- During the last century, paid work deemed suitable for women was an extension of their "natural" work in the home. Today, more than 70% of women in the paid labour force are still concentrated in a few female-dominated sectors very much related to these traditional roles: health, clerical, sales, services and education.³
- Canadians support the idea of economic justice, but as a society we have yet to make the link between valuing women's work and achieving economic justice. For example, child care workers provide one of the most important services in our society, yet the wages of this female-dominated group have been consistently undervalued. You Bet I Care!, the latest report on child care services in Canada, found

that child care workers' wages are below those of workers in comparable occupations, such as teacher assistants. In fact on average, child care workers earn wages comparable to those of parking lot attendants!

It is clear that employers benefit from wage inequality because women are seen as a source of cheap labour. This is why there has been so much reluctance to properly address the economic inequality that women suffer.

Women still earn less than men

Despite historic gains and the introduction of pay equity legislation, there is still a wage gap between women and men. Women earn on average 80 cents for every dollar a man earns — and

that's on an hourly basis. But when we look at the annual earnings of those working full-time, we see that women earn about 70% of what men earn. The situation is somewhat better in the public services sector, but even in this sector women still earn only 83 cents for every dollar a man earns, and full-time annual earnings of women are about 76% that of men.⁴

Consider this:

- A man working full-time earns an average \$14,600 more per year than a woman working full-time. In the public services sector, the difference is still a staggering \$11,400.
- For women of colour the wage gap is even bigger. Looking at the unionized sector, women of colour earn \$2.50 (or 15%) less than the average hourly wage earned by women, and \$4.67 (or 25%) less than the average hourly wage earned by men.⁵



We'll all benefit if there's no wage gap

Eliminating the wage gap is key to improving the economic situation of CUPE women. The impact of raising women's wages has broad implications. Not only do women benefit, but so do their families. For a growing number of children, eliminating the wage gap means the difference between living in poverty and making ends meet. Today, 56% of families with children headed by a sole-support mother are poor.

Unequal pay hurts men too. As the percentage of women in an occupation rises, wages in that occupation tend to fall. Workers who do what traditionally has been viewed as "women's work" – clerical workers, cashiers, librarians, child care workers, and others in jobs with 70% or more women workers – typically earn less than those in jobs that are predominately male or are integrated by gender. Moreover, lower paid workers and classifications act as a downward drag on everybody's wages, providing employers with arguments to keep overall wage rates low.

Undermining pay equity gains

A key reason the wage gap still exists is that many employers and governments actively oppose pay equity. For example:

- In 1992, P.E.I. enacted pay equity legislation that provided public sector workers with long deserved pay equity adjustments. However, in 1999 the government attempted to deny

teaching assistants the same general wage increase given to other public sector workers, claiming that this predominantly female group of workers was now overpaid. This attempt to turn back the clock was successfully stopped by CUPE members in arbitration.

- Ontario school board workers are struggling to maintain their pay equity victories. In 1998, the Harris government imposed a new funding model for schools that eliminated funding for pay equity plans negotiated between school boards and CUPE locals. The government claimed that pay equity funding was no longer needed.

These examples illustrate the need to look beyond pay equity legislation in the fight to narrow the wage gap and improve women's wages.

Eliminating two-tier wages

It is not uncommon for CUPE members to do comparable jobs in the same industry, but at different wage rates. A flight attendant for a regional carrier is paid less than the one working for a national carrier; a health worker in the community sector is paid less than the one working in the hospital sector. Eliminating two-tier wages can mean a big improvement in the wages of CUPE women.

In Winnipeg, health clinic workers negotiated wage adjustments by rating some classifications with comparable jobs in the hospital sector. For example, the advocacy coordinator and the phone line coordinator saw their wages increase by 39%, while cross-cultural counselors saw an increase of 42% when their wages were brought into line with those of social workers.

Privatization hurts women



Public Works! for women. Women in the public sector have made greater wage gains than women in other sectors. But these hard-won victories are threatened by continued government cutbacks and the drive to privatize public services.

CUPE members know all too well the dangers of privatization. For example, in Ontario a health care aide working in a private, for-profit retirement home earns an average \$12.14 an hour, while a health care aide in a municipal home for the aged earns \$16.83 – a difference of \$4.69. This translates into a difference of more than \$9,000 per year. It's the difference between being above or below the poverty line.

When public services are privatized, profits are realized at the expense of workers' wages. CUPE's anti-privatization campaign is an important part of our goal to improve women's wages.

Improving part-time wages



Part-time workers are fast becoming the latest source of cheap labour. There is a trend to replace full-time work with part-time positions. This means that a growing number of people, particularly women, are economically vulnerable. For this reason, it is important to link the valuing of women's work and the low wages paid to part-time workers:

- More than 72% of part-time workers are women.
- Part-time workers earn on average nearly \$4 an hour less than full-time workers. The majority are excluded from benefit plans and have little or no job security.
- More than 25% of women who work part-time do so because they cannot find full-time work, and an additional 21% work part-time because they are caring for children or have other family responsibilities.⁶ This is an important issue for CUPE, since 30% of our members work part-time, well over the average rate of 18.5% for all workers.

Violence against women



Economic inequality not only keeps women in poverty but it also helps to perpetuate a culture of violence against women. Although violence against women crosses socio-economic lines, low-income women may be more often trapped in abusive relationships because of a lack of financial resources for housing and income to support themselves and their children.

Economic inequality has a far-reaching impact on women. Closing the wage gap and improving women's wages are about opening all the doors for women so that they can attain economic justice and true equality – in every sense of the word.

- 1 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1999 annual average.
- 2 Statistics Canada, Before Tax Low-Income Cut-Off, 1997.
- 3 Status of Women Canada, The Changing Nature of Home Care and its Impact on Women's Vulnerability to Poverty, (various authors), 1999.
- 4 Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1997.
- 5 Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1993.
- 6 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1999 annual average.

In 1971, CUPE's National Convention adopted a Report on the Status of Women in CUPE. It challenged the union to make changes in a number of areas to advance equal rights for women members. Equal pay for women workers was one key priority. The Report set a bargaining goal for CUPE locals: to negotiate wages for Registered Nursing Assistants and Nurses' Aides equal to or higher than those of Orderlies, a higher paid, mainly male job class.

By 1975 – International Women's Year – CUPE had closed the pay gap between Registered Nursing Assistants and Orderlies in six provinces through collective bargaining. This represented about a 10% increase for the RNAs. In three other provinces, trained Nursing Assistants were earning more than Orderlies.



tant headway on women's wages because of the united and determined strike action by thousands of CUPE sisters and brothers in B.C. What's more, this struggle inspired bargaining efforts elsewhere in CUPE.

No easy road

Our history of bargaining to raise women's wages has been difficult. Employers have strongly resisted our demands, and we have had to fight hard to make inroads.

In 1981, thousands of CUPE members in British Columbia took strike action to press for two key demands to raise women's wages. The first was to bring the starting pay of clerical workers (mainly women) up to the starting pay of outside (mainly male) workers. The second was to eliminate the increment steps that meant clerical workers had to wait years to progress to the final job rate. We made impor-

Legislation results mixed

In the mid-1980s, attention started to shift away from bargaining to raise women's wages in favour of pushing for, and responding to, provincial pay equity legislation. In some provinces, CUPE made important gains in raising women's wages through this type of legislation. But some provinces have never introduced pay equity legislation. And even where legislation exists, its value to CUPE's female members has sometimes been small.

Low wages for CUPE women continue to be a problem the union needs to address through collective bargaining. In provinces where pay equity legislation has not touched CUPE members, collective bargaining approaches are critically important. In provinces where pay equity legislation does exist, bargaining to raise women's wages up from the legislative minimum is key. It's just like bargaining for higher wages above a legislated minimum wage.

A renewed commitment

In the last few years, as our members have come out from under the shadow of provincial wage restraint legislation and the threat of layoffs, we've started to turn our attention back to making important wage gains for women workers at the bargaining table. Through innovative strategies and united action, we have once again made important inroads in raising women's wages.

In a number of provinces, we've made headway in provincial bargaining by negotiating wage parity with a higher paid group of workers. These victories have significantly boosted lower paid women's wages, even though in many cases, there was no conscious women's wages bargaining strategy. However, women covered by these collective agreements were the ones who mainly benefited from the wage increases because women are concentrated in low paying jobs. For example, increasing wages for the lowest paid has been particularly beneficial to women of colour in health care, who are often concentrated in the poorest paid jobs in the workplace.

Successes

- The provincial wage parity bargaining strategy has been most successful in CUPE's health care sector. During the 1990s, CUPE brought the wages of lower paid nursing home workers up to par with higher paid hospital workers' wages in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and most recently in Nova Scotia through provincial wage parity bargaining.
- In 1992, Saskatchewan nursing home workers achieved parity with hospital workers with a campaign around "First class workers, second class wages." However, negotiations in 1997 produced an even larger wage increase for CUPE Saskatchewan home care workers, who gained parity with their counterparts in acute and long-term health care.
- In 1999, the provincial wage parity strategy was again successfully used by social services workers in British Columbia. March 8, 1999 – International Women's Day – kicked off a provincial rotating strike to negotiate wage parity for community social services workers with health care services. This collective effort involved a number of unions representing workers in this sector: CUPE, our B.C. Health Services Division – the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), the Health Sciences Association (HSA) and the B.C. Government Employees Union (BCGEU). The strike ended in victory, raising women's wages by as much as \$8.00 an hour in some cases.

Other bargaining strategies have been used by CUPE over the years to raise women's wages. These strategies are still relevant today and are included in the tools on *Bargaining strategies*.

Over the years, CUPE's active and creative membership and staff have devised and pursued many different bargaining strategies to raise women's wages. These strategies were developed to address the specific conditions low-paid women workers face in our workplaces. The reasons for women workers' lower pay are numerous. So, too, are the bargaining strategies needed to effectively tackle a variety of problems.

Pay equity legislation has brought improved wages to many CUPE members. But legislation hasn't touched all of our members and even where it has, problems remain. For example:

- Many women are employed in occupations or in sectors that are among the lowest paid.
- Wage increment steps still exist for many predominantly female job classes. This means it takes a long time for women in these jobs to get from the minimum to maximum (or job) rate.
- Most part-time and casual workers are women and they get lower wages and fewer benefits than full-time workers.
- Women bear and tend to look after children, causing interruptions in work and loss of pay.

There is still much we can do to improve the wages for CUPE's lower paid female members through collective bargaining. In this kit, there are a number of bargaining strategy tools that describe different bargaining approaches CUPE has used over the years to raise women's wages:

- Removing increment steps
- Flat wage increases
- Equalizing base rates

- Negotiating parity
- Paid parental leaves of absence
- Direct grants to raise women's wages
- Stopping privatization and contracting out (Public Works!)

Removing increment steps

An incremental wage system provides salary increases based on how long you've stayed on the job. It is also known as a step or increment system. There are variations on how many steps — or how many years — it takes a worker to reach the top of the increment scale, depending on the collective agreement. Lengthy increment systems are more common for female job classes, such as clerical jobs, than for jobs typically held by men. And since lengthy increment systems are usually found in collective agreements covering a high proportion of women workers, or only apply to female job classes, their effects are discriminatory.

For example, in the Vancouver Public Library, where the majority of employees are female, most job classes have 5 increment steps to get to the job rate. However, there are two job classes that do not have any increment steps: Truck Driver and Bookbinder. These two job classes have always been filled by men.

A long way up

This system forces artificially low wages by stretching the period employees have to work until they're making the job's full rate. Many of the jobs with increment scales can be learned in a relatively short period of time. For example, an aide in a hospital or a clerk-typist in an office may be fully qualified for the job in two to three months, yet still has to work several years before reaching the full rate of pay for the position.

Employers are robbing women of thousands of dollars through increment systems. In some cases, the foregone salary can amount to over \$50,000 for each woman. That's how much each woman loses under an 11-year increment system that only exists for the female job classes in one of our collective agreements.

Are you losing?

If you follow these steps you can figure out how much money you're losing under your increment system if one exists in your collective agreement.

1. Look at the wage grid in your collective agreement. Does it have a different wage rate, depending on the years of experience in the classification, like this example?

Classification	Hourly wage rate Effective Jan. 1, 2000
School Secretary	
Year 1	\$ 9.23
Year 2	\$10.08
Year 3	\$10.53
Year 4	\$10.98
Year 5	\$11.43
Year 6-10	\$11.89
Year 11	\$12.37

2. If so, start by calculating the loss in each year. Take the difference between the rate paid for Year 1 and the job (top) rate, which in this case is in Year 11. Here the difference amounts to \$3.14 on an hourly basis ($\$12.37 - \$9.23 = \$3.14$).
3. Multiply the hourly amount by the number of hours worked weekly. In this case, multiply by 30 hours a week ($\$3.14/\text{hour} \times 30 \text{ hours/week} = \$94.20/\text{week}$).
4. Then multiply by the number of weeks worked per year. In most cases it would be by 52 weeks for the year. In this case, these employees work 40 weeks a year ($\$94.20/\text{week} \times 40 \text{ weeks/year} = \$3,768 \text{ a year}$).

A compounded loss

This annual loss is compounded, or continues to add up, over the years it takes to work your way up through the wage grid. Over the 11 years of this particular wage increment system, a school secretary loses more than \$55,000.

Here's how it adds up. Use the same basic formula to calculate the loss in each year of the increment system. For example:

- The difference between the wage for Year 2 and the top (job) rate in our example is \$2.29/hour.
- Multiply this by the number of hours worked weekly ($\$2.29 \times 30 = \$68.70/\text{week}$)
- Then multiply by the number of weeks per year ($\$68.70 \times 40 = \$2,748$). The annual difference in pay between the Year 2 rate and the final job rate is \$2,748.

Calculate this difference for each of the years on the increment system and add them together to come up with the total amount of money each woman has lost over the time span of the increment system.

Here's how it adds up in this case:

Year	Loss that year plus the previous total	Total wage loss
Year 1	\$3,768	\$ 3,768
Year 2	\$2,748 + \$3,768 =	\$ 6,516
Year 3	\$2,208 + \$6,516 =	\$ 8,724
Year 4	\$1,668 + \$8,724 =	\$10,392
Year 5	\$1,128 + \$10,392 =	\$11,520
Year 6-10	\$2,880 (\$576/yr x 5 years) + \$11,520 =	\$14,400
Total		\$55,320

amount of wages lost over 11 year increments

Employers promote the idea that increments are a reward for service. They claim that workers who remain loyal employees over the years are rewarded by higher rates. Unfortunately, many office and clerical workers have come to believe this explanation.

But increments are not a reward for service. They are simply a way to withhold the proper rate for the job. The same employers who impose increments on clerical and office workers pay their manual workers the full rate from the first day of employment, or on completion of the probationary period.

There are other, more appropriate, ways to reward long service. You can negotiate long service pay, such as a special annual payment that's made for long service employees based on the number of years worked. Longer vacations based on the number of years worked are another of the many ways to reward long service.

Increments aren't wage increases

Workers' support for increment systems also stems from the belief that they represent a wage increase. When general wage increases are low or non-existent, workers look forward to a pay increase through an increment. But we need to

put our energies into bargaining decent general wage increases rather than relying on an increment increase for some workers.

Overall, increments amount to a big loss for workers and big savings for employers. They can also be an incentive for employers to encourage turnover, since replacing a long service employee with a new one will lower the wage costs.

Increments undermine the principle that workers should be paid for what they actually do. It is clearly unfair to pay two workers different wage rates for performing the same job. Yet under an increment system, the employer does exactly that. Different rates are paid to different workers according to whether they are considered to be loyal employees. This is contrary to all principles of natural justice and basic trade union goals.

Flat rate wage increases



Delegates to the 1981 CUPE National Convention enthusiastically passed a resolution supporting across-the-board cents per hour (or dollar) wage increases, rather than percentage increases. The delegates recognized that many female members were clustered in lower-paying jobs and that percentage increases furthered the economic exploitation of women.

Percentage increases widen the wage gap because they give larger increases to those at the top wage scale. For example:

- A worker earning \$40,000 a year who gets a 5% wage increase will get a pay hike of \$2,000. But a worker earning \$20,000 a year will only receive an increase of half that amount:

\$1,000, based on a 5% settlement. Over time, the difference in wages grows and the wage gap widens between the lowest and highest paid.

- After 10 years, the advantage of the flat rate increase is even greater, raising her hourly wage to \$19.43, rather than the \$17.23 she'd be making with a 3% increase.

Close the gap

An important first step is to negotiate wage increases which give each worker the same cents-per-hour wage increase – also known as a flat rate wage increase. This stops the wage gap from widening between the lowest and highest paid. Unlike percentage wage increases that favour higher paid workers, as the above example shows, flat rate increases benefit lower wage earners. See the table below.

The table shows that a flat wage rate increase puts more money into the pockets of low wage earners:

- A woman making \$12.82 an hour would make \$14.86 after five years of 3% wage increases.
- But if that 3% increase had been converted to a flat wage increase for all workers, this woman would make almost \$1 more an hour after five years than she would with the percentage increase.

Flat wage rate increases narrow the pay gap between the bottom and top of our wage scales by boosting the bottom rates more than the top rates. The opposite happens with percentage increases: top rates increase more than bottom rates.

Combinations

Another (less effective) alternative is to combine a percentage and a flat amount increase. In this approach, each worker receives either the percentage or the flat rate increase, depending on which method yields the greatest dollar increase for the worker. This has the effect of bringing up the bottom rates while not giving up the higher value, percentage wage increase for those members at the top of the wage scale. Some local unions have alternated percentage and cents-per-hour wage increases each year.

