

Counterpoint

TENS OF THOUSANDS TAKE TO THE STREETS IN MONTREAL

NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM – TIME TO DELIVER

Focus: Meet Debbie Downey global justice activist and LPN

CETA not just another trade agreement

KEEPSAKE POSTER:
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY



“Those letters were a morale booster for those prisoners and a show of international support.”

Debbie Downey, page 4

Attack on municipal sector pension plans

Quebec has not seen a demonstration of this size since the massive student protests of 2012 known as the Maple Spring. On a sunny Saturday in September more than 35,000 people took to the streets of downtown Montreal to protest the Liberal government’s Bill 3. They were protesting the legislation because it includes measures that would open signed collective agreements and push seniors into poverty.

The event was organized by the Coalition syndicale pour la libre négociation [Labour coalition for free collective bargaining]. The coalition represents most unionized municipal employees in Quebec, including white and blue collar workers, police officers, firefighters, professionals and public transportation employees.

“We are saying once again, to a government that refuses to listen, that we want to negotiate to find solutions,” said Marc Ranger, coalition spokesperson and assistant director of CUPE-Quebec.

“For three years now we have been pushed to our limits time and again in an

effort to identify workable solutions for our various pension plans without compromising the agreements in place.”

“Bill 3 breaks contracts and agreements that were negotiated in good faith, it will make our retirees poorer and it is shaking the confidence of Quebecers,” said Denis Bolduc, secretary general of CUPE-Quebec. “The government is proceeding with this legislation despite not knowing the exact nature of the deficit.”

The coalition notes that municipal pension plans are in good financial health overall, and wherever difficulties may persist the unions are willing to continue the process already underway to negotiate cost-control measures.

The Couillard government appears to want to move quickly on Bill 3, but it has not heard the last of the coalition on this issue.

“The coalition is planning additional actions to assert our fundamental rights,” said Ranger. “The government claims that it wants to establish social dialogue but in reality it is avoiding all attempts to negotiate. We are in mobilization mode,” he said.

■ Lisa Djvahirdjian



Some of the more than 35,000 people who protested a Liberal government bill that would re-open signed contracts.

DISPATCH FROM THE LOCAL CAMPAIGN TRAIL

This fall, voters in P.E.I., Ontario, Manitoba and B.C. headed to the polls in their local elections. CUPE was on the hustings in all four provinces, with three dozen candidates and hundreds more helping out on mayoral and council campaigns.

As the frontline providers of the many services that are the foundations of healthy communities, CUPE members know better than anyone what is at stake in municipal elections.

Many locals adopted coordinated strategies to support progressive candidates

and to make sure important issues, such as strong public services, smart environmental practices, and fair and healthy finances, were front and centre. The determination and dedication of CUPE members in these elections – from candidates, to campaign managers, to canvassers – showed how much they care about their communities. CUPE members showed that in every campaign they will work hard to protect public services and help elect progressive municipal leaders.

■ Willy Blomme

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Air passenger safety lands in court

Members of CUPE's Airline Division have successfully thwarted the plans of the Harper government and airline companies who are poised to jeopardize the safety of passengers by reducing the number of flight attendants onboard Canadian flights.

Although exemptions to the current ratio of one flight attendant per 40 passengers have been granted to a number of air carriers, the regulatory amendment proposed by Transport Canada (one flight attendant per 50 passenger seats) has yet to take effect.

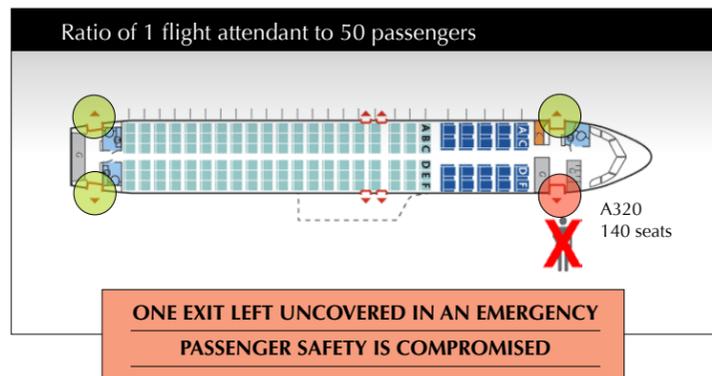
CUPE flight attendants have no intention of backing down from their opposition to this plan. "After making a sound argument in favour of passenger safety in May at the Transport Canada consultations, and following the success of the July

flash mob in Toronto, the Airline Division and CUPE are now moving on to the legal front in the campaign to stop the proposed regulatory amendment," said Division President Michel Cournoyer.

CUPE is contesting the exemptions granted to Sunwing, Air Canada, Air Canada rouge, CanJet, Canadian North and Air Transat in federal court. Applications for an injunction to suspend the implementation of exemptions at Air Canada and rouge are also being prepared.

"To build a solid case, the division's various components are identifying actual situations in which flight attendants have been adversely affected by the 1-to-50 ratio, whether in terms of hours worked, flight assignments or health and safety," said Cournoyer.

■ **Philippe Gagnon**



Child care and minimum wage hit the floor of the House of Commons



NDP Leader Tom Mulcair at an Ottawa child care centre staffed by CUPE members.

This is the third edition of our quarterly column where we look at the bright spots in Canada's Parliament during an often bleak Conservative majority.

In September two major announcements from the New Democrats changed the channel back to workers and their families.

The first was a commitment by the NDP to deliver a national child care program based on Quebec's \$7-a-day model. The successful program in Quebec has not only created affordable and regulated child care spaces for families, but it has also paid for itself (and then some) in tax revenue generated to both the provincial and federal government. As we enter an election year, it's critical that Canadians have a clear proposal put forward to fix the child care crunch facing families from every corner

of the country.

Next, the NDP announced the introduction of a \$15 federal minimum wage proposal. This would apply to more than one million workers in federally regulated sectors such as transportation, financial services, telecommunications and broadcasting, and other federal employees. Although the minimum wage is set province by province for all other sectors, a federal minimum wage would set a national standard and place pressure on provinces to raise theirs.

In the last session of Parliament, Stephen Harper launched a major attack on working people by introducing Bills C-377 and C-525.

Bill C-377 creates a new and onerous requirement for financial disclosure that will only apply to unions - no other similar organizations. C-525 will make

it harder for workers to form a union, but easier to dissolve one. Opposition MPs put up a strong fight in the House of Commons where we secured a series of important amendments to C-525. In the case of C-377 Harper used his majority to ram it through without amendments, but the opposition continued in the Senate and led to a number of Conservative Senators joining up with their Liberal counterparts to reject it. It was then sent back to the House of Commons with a number of major amendments.

Unfortunately C-377 was reset when the government prorogued parliament and C-525 has also made its way back through the House and onto the Senate, where it has joined C-377, now back in its original unconstitutional form. The fight continues on both fronts.

■ **Riccardo Filippone**

NATIONAL PRESIDENT PAUL MOIST

Global solidarity: act locally, think globally

Solidarity is the foundation of the labour movement and of strong, healthy communities. I have seen firsthand how deeply CUPE members across the country are committed to standing with others, at home and beyond our borders. Last year at our convention, CUPE recommitted to our international solidarity work. With the urgent climate crisis threatening the planet, the global economy dragging incomes down everywhere, and big corporations pushing for unbalanced trade deals, the need for international solidarity is critical.

The good news is, international solidarity works. We saw this a few years ago when CUPE participated in a cross-border coalition that succeeded in amending Canada's flawed trade deal with Columbia. Despite Columbia's abysmal record on human rights, the deal had no provisions to protect workers or civilians. Instead, it

included new land grabs and powerful new rights for Canadian mining companies, without any accompanying responsibilities. Recognizing our duty to stand with Columbian workers and communities, CUPE joined with trade unions and social movements in both countries to challenge the agreement. This coalition forced the governments to include a human rights assessment in the deal, a necessary mechanism to hold corporations accountable.

Today, we are working with partners in Europe to stop the disastrous Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union. This trade deal would give corporations the power to sue governments, threaten municipal services and the rights of municipal governments to make procurement decisions based on public policy, and put Canadian and European jobs at risk. The Harper government is eager to sign the deal, but our European labour partners have succeeded in getting their governments to take a second look. The result? Today CETA is in jeopardy. We still have work to do, but the more Canadians and Europeans hear about the deal, the more the opposition grows.

Corporations keep pushing for more power - and our governments keep handing it over. We must fight back. Over the coming months and years CUPE will expand our international solidarity work with our labour partners and social movements from around the world. Together, we can build a better world.



PAUL MOIST ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatPres

FOCUS:

GLOBAL JUSTICE



PROFILE DEBBIE DOWNEY

GJ Profile of an activist

Debbie Downey candidly admits that her involvement with the Global Justice Committee did not come from a lifelong passion with International Solidarity.

“I wish I could say something moved me, but I became involved because a friend persuaded me to join the Global Justice Committee, which

was just getting off the ground in New Brunswick.”

A Licensed Practical Nurse at the Passamaquoddy Lodge Nursing Home in St. Andrew for more than 20 years, Downey was more involved in member’s education than international solidarity.

“When I attended my first National Global Justice Committee meeting, I was like a fish out of the water. I knew little about international solidarity. I was simply blown away by the work CUPE does at the international level.”

In July 2013, Downey was part of a delegation of 12 trades unionists and human rights activists from Canada who travelled to the Philippines.

“That was a life changing experience,” said Downey. “Meeting with so many

people who live in a country where the human rights violations are so appalling, listening to them talk about their fights to change the situations they face on a day to day basis and knowing what the consequences could be was empowering. Their determination and perseverance to change things was amazing, especially coming from the young political detainees who stated when they were released from jail they would do it all over again.”

Downey understood that the issues and fights happening at the local level are connected to the struggles workers face in other countries.

“As a provincial committee, we send letters to union leaders detained in the Batanga’s Provincial Jail in the Philippines,” said Downey. “Those letters were a morale booster for those prisoners and a show of international support. We also raised a small amount of money to help

them. I like to think that our visit to the Philippines and the solidarity shown by union members contributed -even if it was just signing a petition or writing a letter - in a small way to the release from jail of some of them.”

Downey believes it is easier now to bring this issue home. “We have foreign workers (through the temporary foreign workers program) in many communities in New Brunswick who are being exploited. Our members have a better understanding of the struggles those workers face in their own country and are appalled to the conditions they are subjected to when they are working here,” she said.

Being involved in the Global Justice Committee, both at the provincial and at the national level, has been fulfilling work for me and my hope is that more members will get involved because we can really make a difference.”

■ Danielle Savoie



Why international solidarity?

The labour movement has engaged in international solidarity long before we described the world as “globalized”, and before corporate sweatshops and supply chains were exposed and expanding across borders.

When workers in Chicago in the late 1800s struggled to have an eight hour working day recognized, workers around the world, including City of Toronto workers, took up their struggle. When migrant Mexican and Filipino workers in California launched a five year boycott and strike action against grape growers in the 1960’s, CUPE sent leaders to participate in an international delegation.

Unions, including CUPE, have supported social and political movements around the world when led by people challenging oppressive governments. When the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa was gaining momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, CUPE members across the country were

engaged in efforts to expose Canadian corporate interests in the racist system. Our solidarity has often included challenging the Canadian government’s interests in other countries as we did when Canada aggressively negotiated a Free Trade Agreement with Colombia.

The lessons learned when doing international solidarity work guided us when CUPE set up the Global Justice Fund (formerly the Union Aid Fund) in the early 1990’s. Today we support worker to worker, union to union solidarity in Colombia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Cuba and the Philippines because we believe we have a great deal to learn from workers and unions around the world. It is through exchanges and building relationships that we create a just world that serves the interests of the majority of the worlds’ people.

CUPE.CA/GLOBAL-JUSTICE

■ Kelti Cameron

Têtes-à-têtes!



“I don’t believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person. I have a lot to learn from other people.”

Eduardo Galeano



Bridge on the highway to Elbow Falls, Alberta wiped out by rushing flood waters making their way to High River and Calgary in June 2013.

Photo © Gregg Jaden <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

The climate crisis has arrived. Scientists and environmentalists have been warning us about the dangers of climate change for decades and those predictions have now started to become reality. More extreme weather events? Look at Hurricane Sandy and the devastating drought in California. Permafrost melt? Look at the town of Pangnirtung,

Nunavut, forced to declare a state of emergency when its main bridge collapsed due to the sinking ground, cutting many residents off from vital medical care. Dangerous sea level rise? Look at the governments of The Maldives, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and other small island states, reluctantly making relocation plans for the entire population of their low-lying countries. Or better yet, listen to the

Marshall Islands’ Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner’s poem to her infant daughter pledging to protect her from the waves coming to swallow their island home. Delivered at the opening of the recent UN Climate Summit in New York, her poem brought some of the assembled world leaders to tears.

If leaders are so moved, and the planet is in such dire straits, why have we seen so little action to

address the crisis? In her new book, *This Changes Everything*, award-winning journalist and author Naomi Klein argues that it is because: “Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war.” The drive for ever more growth and more profit is fundamentally at odds with the basic health of our planet.

“As the motor of the global economy, the financial system is still biased towards funding oil, gas and coal, the industries that cause climate change,” explains Gyorgy Dallos, Greenpeace International energy investments advisor. “And as the planet suffers, it is the world’s most vulnerable populations that are hit the hardest.”

This clash between profits and justice is nothing new to the labour movement. Standing up for workers and their families against big business looking only to increase its gains - and the governments paving the way - is the *raison d’être* of trade unions. “Unions have always fought for equality. Climate justice

is a fight for fair treatment of the earth and all who depend on it for a decent life,” said Matthew Firth, CUPE national senior officer for the environment.

We may now be in the midst of the climate crisis, but experts say a window remains to prevent it from becoming catastrophic. To seize this final chance, Klein calls for a “People’s Shock,” a broad-based social movement along the lines of the one following the Great Depression. That movement fought back against the unfair economic system, putting in place regulations and programs to protect workers and their families. Unions were vital to that movement, and are vital to the climate justice movement today.

CUPE works both with Climate Action Network and the International Trade Union Confederation in calling for a just transition for workers as an important part of our demands to take action on climate change

■ Willy Blomme

Public Services International

Together a better world is possible

Over the past few decades, corporate elite interests have successfully globalized private sector policies to turn the public sector into a for profit business (privatization), prevent governments from establishing rules which protect citizens (deregulation), and prevent public policy constraints on their ability to make a profit (liberalization). In the process they have made a fortune.

Workers and people who are poor did not fare so well

in this scheme. The promise that everyone would get their fair share has not been realized, in fact poverty and the associated social and economic inequality is growing.

CUPE has made it a priority to engage and strengthen relationships with sister unions around the world. We do this through our affiliation with Public Services International (PSI). PSI ensures there are strong global campaigns defending public services and that these actions support the workers

in countries most in need of our solidarity.

In the Global South, many countries have been experiencing an economic crisis for decades; the 2008 economic crisis was not a new experience for them. Now, powerful western nations are decreasing their development aid to countries most in need, and are tying what aid is provided to their own economic interests. Corporations have set their sights on new markets in regions of the world where they think they can gain access to land,



water, energy and minerals without regard or genuine interest to support the communities who live there.

Despite the challenges, we have the power of the majority of the world’s people on our side. There is a great deal of creative thinking and action taking place. Developing alternatives that are economically and socially sustainable within the limits of the world’s resources is possible.

WORLD-PSI.ORG

■ Kelti Cameron

Corporate rights could be Canada-EU deal breaker



Photo Patrick Doyle

Trade activists on Parliament Hill

Stephen Harper really, really, really wants you to believe he's signed a trade deal with the European Union (EU). And he's staked a lot on Canadians believing the

Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a done deal, including hosting yet another faux summit with EU officials – complete with a \$300,000 lift home

to Brussels on a Canadian Forces Airbus.

But no photo-op can gloss over the fact that CETA is far from final. Any signatures are at least two years away, and can only

happen if the deal survives an ever-growing wave of European opposition.

Thanks to workers and other concerned citizens mobilizing, the Austrian government and the Social Democrats in Germany's coalition government have both raised serious concerns about CETA's dangerous corporate rights provisions.

CETA's Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) rules are similar to NAFTA's Chapter 11, and allow corporations to challenge a government's democratic decisions in private tribunals.

Before being finalized, all 28 EU member states must ratify CETA. Both Austria and Germany may reject the deal if it includes ISDS.

New analysis of CETA's implications is also fueling Canadian resistance. A newly-formed coalition of marine transport workers, which includes CUPE dockworkers in Quebec, rallied on Parliament Hill against the deal. And transatlantic solidarity continues to grow, with more

than 100 Canadian and European groups signing a joint statement opposing CETA's special rights for corporations.

Leaked in August, the latest CETA text is now public. And it confirms Canadians stand to lose far more than they gain. Analysis by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows the trade and investment deal works for large multinational corporations – not for people, or the planet.

There's growing understanding of just how bad CETA is for workers. The deal will let corporations bypass the temporary foreign worker program (TFWP) and move specialized workers across borders. Unlike the TFWP, corporations can bring workers in under CETA without needing to prove there aren't any similar skilled workers in Canada.

While Harper and EU officials scramble to reach a final agreement, it's time to step up our fight to stop this dangerous deal once and for all.

■ Karin Jordan



GLOBAL JUSTICE FUND

The solidarity and support from CUPE have made a huge difference for many workers across the globe as well as here at home. Is your local interested in making a contribution? If every CUPE local made a modest and sustaining contribution we could ensure that solidarity work continues to grow.

For more information – please contact Kelti Cameron at kcameron@cupe.ca

in brief

Stronger together: Sector Council Conference builds CUPE's power

Members who attended CUPE's Sector Council Conference gained new know-how and renewed resolve to stand up for good jobs and public services.

The conference, a first for CUPE, drew nearly 1,200 members and staff. They connected across regions in 11 sector meetings, and connected across sectors in lively plenary sessions.

Workers in every sector reported they are under pressure. Legislative threats, attacks on pensions, cutbacks and underfunding were prominent issues, as were the rise of precarious work, privatization, and health and safety at work.

Black River-Matheson workers back at work

Workers in Black River-Matheson are back to work after a 52-day lockout. Following a troubling round of bargaining in which the employer demanded many concessions in the name of "flexibility", CUPE 1490 was able to hold the line on working conditions and negotiate a wage increase. Workers in this close-knit township in Northern Ontario remained cohesive and strong, rallying much support from their community. "That we were able to ultimately sign a deal without the key concessions sought by the employer shows that this lockout was unnecessary," said Sonya Moffat, president of CUPE 1490.

McNeil Liberals pass regressive new Act

In October, the Liberal majority in government in Nova Scotia passed Bill 1, an Act to Provide for Health Authorities and Community Boards.

The bill reduces the number of District Health Authorities from nine to just one provincial health authority and the IWK health centre. The bill also has far-reaching implications for the 24,000 unionized employees in the sector, including 4,600 CUPE members.

When trade is free but not fair

"Canada and the world need a trade agenda that is democratic, socially progressive and economically just. This alternative trade vision has at its core the principle that trade agreements should be fair and benefit everyone," said Paul Moist, national president of CUPE to participants of the Public Services International (PSI) Global trade summit in Washington.

CUPE along with other PSI affiliates met in September to discuss and find strategies to organize for an alternative trade agenda. "We are working to dispel the myth that unions are against trade. We support fair trade not corporate free trade deals," said Graham Cox, CUPE researcher for energy and trade. "The distinction is important because one is designed in secret and puts corporate development ahead of social development. Fair trade is about developing trade relations based on mutual respect and safeguarding our public services," said Cox.

Regina workers stand up for pension security

All workers deserve to retire with dignity. Workplace pensions are a key piece of providing a secure retirement. But all too often workplace pensions are under attack. The City of Regina is the latest battleground in this fight. It is breaking a pension promise it signed with civic workers last May.

After years of difficult work and negotiation, the City of Regina and the plan member side Pension Benefits Committee agreed on changes that made the pension plan stable and sustainable, while still delivering defined pension benefits.

But the city is now pushing for a proposal that removes the security of a defined benefit plan by introducing a hard cap on contribution rates. This means there is no guarantee for an adequate pension. Instead, the pension income would fluctuate as the market fluctuates. Workers may think they will be getting \$1,500 a month for retirement (which is the average monthly income for workers in this plan), but there is no guarantee.

The situation is complicated by the fact that the City of Regina has been breaking provincial pension regulations by failing to make its required contributions to the plan since 2010. Now the provincial regulator, the Superintendent of Pensions, is considering cancelling the pension plan. There is an open comment period until November 30. After that, the future of the pension is in the hands of the Superintendent.

This plan represents 4,000 current employees, and 2,000 retirees, that include teaching assistants, librarians, firefighters, bus drivers, city workers and management who work for five different employers.

Protecting the defined benefit nature of the pension is an important fight for all workers. Please stand with us and learn how you can take action at HONOUROURDEAL.CA.

■ **TRIA DONALDSON**



CUPE members join striking BC Federation of Teachers' Federation members.

Photo Janet Szliske

Side by side with B.C. teachers

In the wake of the BC Teachers' Federation's September agreement with the provincial government, CUPE B.C. President Mark Hancock had strong words of praise for the many CUPE members, local activists and staff who supported B.C. teachers throughout their prolonged labour dispute.

"I want to thank everyone—from the K-12 bargaining committee and local presidents to the many activists, rank-and-file members and staff, who stood tall on the picket lines beside their BCTF brothers and sisters—for doing such a great job," said Hancock.

CUPE members stood shoulder to shoulder in

solidarity with teachers, on the picket lines and at rallies to support public education.

Meanwhile, CUPE's K-12 provincial bargaining committee in the summer reached a provincial framework agreement that follows the provincial wage mandate (5.5 per cent over five years). It includes increased hours for education assistants, improvements to extended health benefit plans through standardization, and a commitment to implement a job evaluation plan to address recruitment and retention issues. An unprecedented employee support grant, in recognition of lost wages for CUPE members who do not cross legal picket lines, was also

bargained.

The provincial agreement became part of each local's contract after bargaining with their respective school board concluded. Local agreements were to be ratified by November 30 in order to be included in the provincial framework agreement.

CUPE represents more than 26,000 education support workers in 59 locals and 53 school districts throughout B.C. These include education assistants, school secretaries, custodians, First Nations support workers, IT workers, Strong Start facilitators, trades and maintenance workers, and bus drivers.

■ **Daniel Gawthrop**

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

Targeting resources to support our members

Attacks on public services and the labour movement by employers and right-wing governments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels continue with great fervor. In this increasingly challenging context, CUPE members across the country can count on their national union for financial support as they continue to defend public services.

Membership dues are being put to good use in fighting against the provincial governments of Alberta, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador who are seeking to undermine the pension plans we have worked so hard for. This year, the entire annual budget of the Fightback Fund in the National Defence Fund has been used to fund these and other campaigns.

CUPE and locals are coordinating their efforts in cost-share campaigns on multiple fronts. As of September 30, 2014, the budget allocated to these campaigns totalled \$5.8 million, \$2.9 million of this coming from the national budget and the other half raised at the local level.

Our organization's budget is also used to assist locals in fighting austerity programs such as the restructuring of health services currently underway in both Nova Scotia and Quebec.

The national budget will provide for continued support of our members in 2015 as they continue to negotiate better pay and benefits at the bargaining table. We will also continue our action in the political arena. It is especially important for the labour movement to throw out the Harper conservatives during the next federal election and elect a NDP government that is sensitive to the priorities of workers.

As our revenue growth has been weaker due to the rise of precarious jobs and retirements, both of which drive down average wages, we continue to manage our union finances responsibly. In doing so, we can ensure that we always have the financial resources at hand to support our members when they need it.



CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatSec



People united

will never be defeated

CUPE

