



UFCW CANADA Locals 175 and 633

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Organizing: A 2002 Priority

UFCW Canada Local 175 is putting increased emphasis on organizing new members. This is an important effort because it is only through the union representation of most workers in a given sector that we can protect the good wages and benefits of our members.

Take the retail grocery industry for example. UFCW Locals 175 and 633 have many strong contracts with excellent wages and benefits. Members may earn substantially more than minimum wages and be entitled to privileges and benefits – negotiated as part of their collective agreement – which are far greater than the minimums provided by Ontario’s increasingly-weakened employment standards legislation.

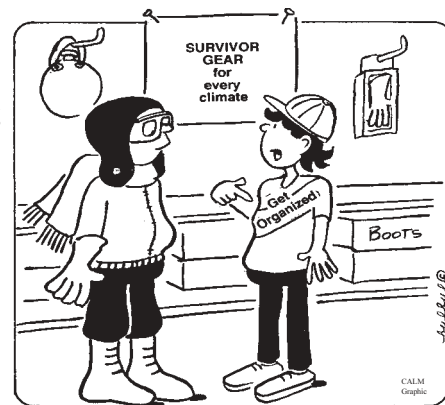
If union employers must compete directly with non-union employers, however, there is increased pressure by employers for workers to accept conces-

sionary agreements that reduce their wages and benefits. Union employers often claim they must cut labour costs to increase profits and compete with non-union stores. Non-union stores and other types of non-union business operations can even threaten the viability of union workplaces because their wage and benefit costs are lower. A non-union employer may attempt to save money by cutting corners on health and safety training and standards as well.

The best way to protect the good contracts of unionized workers is to ensure that all workers in their sector of employment are organized. That’s why Local 175 is intensifying organizing efforts and has more than doubled the organizing department. Coordinator of Organizing **Mark Flannigan** will be assisted by **Mike Duden** as well as by **Serge Castonguay**, **Kevin Shimmin** and **Cliff Kostyniuk**. The local held a very successful three-day organizing training session for six Special Project Union Representatives (SPURs) and 12 Voluntary Organizing Committee Representatives (VOCs) in early February. The organizing department is now reporting directly to my office.

In addition to ensuring adequate organizing staff resources, the locals have taken a number of other steps to make union membership easier and more appealing for new members. These include anticipating and removing so many of the barriers that employers attempt to implement during organizing drives.

Increasing the size of our membership is a win-win situation for both new and existing members. Becoming a union member allows workers to



"This is, can't live without, survivor gear for this political climate."

News and Views



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improve their wages, benefits and working conditions, while having a larger membership enables us to have a stronger voice in the community and provide more services for all Locals 175 and 633 members. We hope many members will assist with these organizing efforts. You can tell your friends and relatives in unorganized workplaces about the many benefits that belonging to a good union can provide. You can also pass on names of workers who need a union to our organizing department. And of course you can volunteer to help organize non-union workers. More information will follow in the next issues of Checkout and News and Views.

New Agreement at Caressant Care

Members of UFCW Canada Local 175 at the **Caressant Care Listowel Retirement Home** ratified a new collective agreement on January 29, 2002. Highlights of the contract include pay increases, more holidays, and improved benefits.

The new agreement includes across the board wage increases of 2% immediately, 2% in the second year and 1% in the third. Employer contributions to the Canadian Commercial Workers Industrial Pension Plan (CCWIPP) and the members' dental plan will also increase in each of the three years. There are now more float holidays and paid statutory holidays. Bereavement leave has also been improved and contract language has been strengthened.

"Local 175 is a leader in health care negotiations," says Local 175 Union Rep **Wendy Absolom**. "Retirement home workers without a union can be very vulnerable. Local 175 protects these workers from unsafe work and provides them with security through strong collective agreements and continuing arbitration successes."

Negotiating the agreement were **Donna Bartlett, Mary Vandereyk** and **Wendy Absolom**.

Valumart Huron Workers Ratify

On February 23, 2002, nine full-time and 55 part-time UFCW Canada Local 175 members at **Valumart Huron in London** ratified a new collective agreement. It provides a \$200-lump-sum payment on January 1, 2003 for both full-time and part-time workers plus increases of 2% per year, retroactive to August 31, 2001. The employer will increase its contributions to CCWIPP by 5¢ in each year of the agreement.

The contract protects the number of full-time jobs over the life of the agreement and guarantees that no

full-time workers will be laid off. Part-timers will benefit from "push" scheduling, which assures a minimum of 24 hours of work per week, based on seniority. Other improvements include the addition of anti-discrimination language and improvements to severance. In the event of store closure, all workers will receive 1.5 weeks of pay per year of service.

"This is an excellent contract," notes South-Western Region Director **Teresa Magee**. "It represents a vast improvement over the company's original concessionary demands." All existing workers will maintain their holidays, vacations and sick pay.

Negotiating the agreement were **Mary Maguire, Karen LeBlanc, Toulou Makrakos, Susan Bayne** and **Teresa Magee**.

Members Ratify New Agreement at Knollcrest Lodge

UFCW Canada Local 175 members at **Knollcrest Lodge in Milverton** ratified a new collective agreement on February 27, 2002.

The three-year agreement includes an across the board increase in pay of 30¢ per hour in each year of the contract. Employer contributions to the UFCW dental plan will increase to 27¢ per hour in the first year, 28¢ in the second and 29¢ in the third year. Contributions to CCWIPP will also increase to provide a pension benefit of \$39 per month per year of service. A new job classification of "Restorative Care Aide" will take effect in the new contract. Vacation entitlement has also been improved and contract language has been made stronger, particularly for Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs).

"Our members at Knollcrest Lodge have ratified an innovative collective agreement that recognizes the distinctive needs of workers in the retirement home sector," says, Local 175 President **Wayne Hanley**. "Based on our outstanding reputation in the health care service, Local 175 will continue to unionize and represent more and more workers in this sector."

Negotiating the agreement were **Connie Cassel, Rochelle Ryter, Annie Ropp** and **Wendy Absolom**.

New Contract at Better Beef

Local 175 members at **Better Beef in Guelph** voted in favour of ratifying a new three-year agreement on March 3, 2002. The majority of plant workers will receive wage increases of 70¢ per hour, retroactive to January 1, 2002, plus an additional 75¢ per hour on

January 1, 2003, and another 80¢ per hour on January 1, 2004. A separate wage schedule is in effect for student and maintenance workers. Workers also gained an extra personal day and an additional day's bereavement leave.

There are also significant improvements to the dental and vision care plans, as well as increases in life insurance, and accidental death & dismemberment insurance. All employees with two or more years of service, including those hired after April 18, 1999, are now eligible to participate in the pension plan. The employer already pays 100% of the insurance and dental plan premiums for workers hired prior to April 18, 1999. The employer's contribution for more recent hires will now increase each year from the current 50% to 100% on June 4, 2004. The employer will also contribute \$1,000 in each year of the contract to the Education & Training Fund.

Additionally the weekly hours guarantee has increased from 37 to 40. "This is an excellent agreement," says Union Rep **Kip Connolly**. "The wage and benefit increases are significant and having a 40-hour work-week guarantee is practically unheard of in the meat-packing industry."

Negotiating the agreement were **Perry Brindley, Louise Croft, Nick Franchetto, Rudy Gwinner, Jim Keller, Robert Monroe, Brian Reid, Chris Watson, Angus Locke** and **Kip Connolly**.

Canada Safeway Workers Strike Update

The determination of the more than 400 members who work at three **Canada Safeway** stores in **Thunder Bay** remains strong, despite more than five months on the picket line and Safeway's announcement that it's closing the distribution warehouse – **McDonald's Consolidated** – that has been supplying most of the products for the three stores.

Almost 100 striking workers participated in a winter carnival and spaghetti supper on Saturday, February



Striking Safeway workers pull together during tug-of-war contest at the winter carnival.

23. Full-time meat-cutter **Cindy Macleod** says striking workers are grateful for the unusually mild winter – "God must be a union person", she says.

Local 175 has been running newspaper ads in Thunder Bay to thank the community for their support during the strike. The workers are seeking parity with other unionized Safeway workers. Important issues include maintaining the percentage of full-time to part-time jobs, having the employer respect the contract provisions for scheduling and hours of work for part-timers, and preventing both the elimination of meat-cutter jobs and layoffs of meat-cutters. The majority of the people in the community are supportive of the workers' position.

Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) President Wayne Samuelson held a brief media conference at the Court Street store on February 27. UFCW Canada is working to increase the pressure on Safeway to negotiate a fair contract with the workers and end the strike. Union representatives have been conducting a direct-to-the-consumer campaign to discourage purchases at Safeway stores in Western Canada and recently extended the campaign to Safeway stores in the U.S. Leafleting for the U.S. campaign is targeted for the Baltimore-Washington area as well as for Chicago and San Francisco. "We know our efforts will have an impact on Safeway," says Local 175 Northern Region Director **Sharon Gall**. "And we'll continue these campaigns until Safeway agrees to negotiate a fair agreement with the workers in Thunder Bay."

Negotiations began in February for another 400 members who work at **Canada Safeway** stores in **Dryden, Fort Francis** and **Kenora**.

Year-End Grievances Report

UFCW Canada Locals 175 and 633 does *more* than negotiate good contracts. It also works to ensure that the employers who sign those contracts live up to their agreements. When that doesn't happen union representatives talk to the employer, and if that fails, then they file a grievance.

In 2001 the locals filed a total of 6,582 grievances. Of the 6,582 grievances filed, an astounding 5,091 – or more than 77% – were successfully resolved in 2001. From the total, 603 – or just over 9% – were filed for arbitration. More than one half of those – 51% – were resolved without a hearing. Another 294, or just over 4%, proceeded to arbitration with the majority – almost 70% – being resolved on the day of the hearing. Decisions were reached on 54 of the remaining grievances. The win/loss percentages for these 54 decisions was 56% won versus 44% lost.

As of December 31, 2001, there were just 1,491 grievances outstanding. Most of these are still pending or

awaiting responses to appeal letters or hearings, or settlement decisions. For the year 2000, just 53 grievances are still outstanding.

Resolving all these grievances takes, literally, thousands of hours of work as well as large cash expenditures. In 2001 Locals 175 and 633 spent in excess of \$1.6-million in outside legal and arbitration fees. Additionally the locals have three staff people doing full-time legal work. Their efforts are augmented by those of union stewards in every workplace and the more than 40 full-time union representatives and regional directors who also assist with grievance work. "The cost of protecting members' rights is enormous," says Local 175 President **Wayne Hanley**. "But that, after all, is the reason we exist and we'll continue to defend these rights until every employer completely adheres to its agreement."

Support Local 175 Members – Boycott Thrifty

UFCW Canada Local 175 encourages everyone to boycott **Thrifty Canada Limited** as the company has illegally locked out 70 members of our local. The members are employed at the Thrifty outlets at **Pearson International Airport** and the **Etobicoke Indian Line facility**. They were locked out at 6:30 p.m. on February 18th, 2002 – less than 6 hours before the legal strike deadline. Company negotiators walked out of mediation talks the same day.

A few days earlier, on February 15th and 16th, the

members at Thrifty had voted unanimously to reject the company's final offer. Local 175 is seeking a mediated settlement that will allow the members to make improvements in wages, benefits, hours of work and layoff language. "From the time negotiations started, the company has refused to address these issues that are so important to the members; it's an outrage," says Local 175 Central-East Director **Jerry Clifford**. "We've been in negotiations with the company for several months, after the contract expired last year, and Thrifty has refused to offer any real improvements in the agreement. These members deserve your support and solidarity. I ask you not to give Thrifty any business until they sit down and bargain fairly with your local union."



Thrifty's picket captain Ken Wratten (left) signs for strike pay as UFCW Canada Local 175 Director Jerry Clifford, shown with Union Reps Larry Bain and Anthony Dimaio, oversees the process.

A Reminder

April 28 is the National Day of Mourning. It is an annual day of remembrance for workers who are killed or injured on the job. To find out about more about commemorative activities planned for that day contact your local union office or your District Labour Council.

Are You Moving?

If you are moving or planning to move, please let us know so we can continue to send you Local 175 and 633 publications such as News and Views. Please mail your new address to us at UFCW Locals 175 and 633, 2200 Argentia Road, Mississauga, Ontario L5N 2K7, or call us at (905)-821-8329 or 1-800-565-8329.

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