

September 15, 2016

Labour Day 2016 -- Fighting for the Rights of All!

Workers Express Profound Concern for Their Living and Working Conditions



Hamilton Labour Day 2016

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Labour Day 2016 -- Fighting for the Rights of All!

Workers Express Profound Concern for Their Living and Working Conditions

Labour Day 2016 was marked by marches and other events which brought forward the deep concerns of workers and working families and their determination to fight for what belongs to them by right. Major concerns include the deterioration of their working and living conditions, joblessness, lack of security in retirement, the consequences of attacks on the public health care system, as well as all the current labour battles being fought.

Halifax



Ottawa





Hamilton



More than 1,000 workers and their families took part in the annual labour day parade in Hamilton. Members of United Steelworkers Local 1005 who have been locked out by Max Aicher North America (MANA) since 2013 stood at the head of the parade with fellow steelworkers in the midst of another battle to hold U.S. Steel to account. All sectors of Hamilton's economy were represented. Participants demanded a stop to the privatization of Ontario's public services, an increased minimum wage, pay equity and a national child care program, as well as recognition of migrant workers' rights and granting of permanent residency.



Hamilton Rally in Solidarity with Locked-Out MANA Workers

SHAME!

MANA IS USING SCABS TO RUN THE PLANT!



SHOW OF SOLIDARITY RALLY

Friday September 30, 2016 at 5:00 am - 8:00am

855 Industrial Drive, Hamilton, ON L8L 6X1

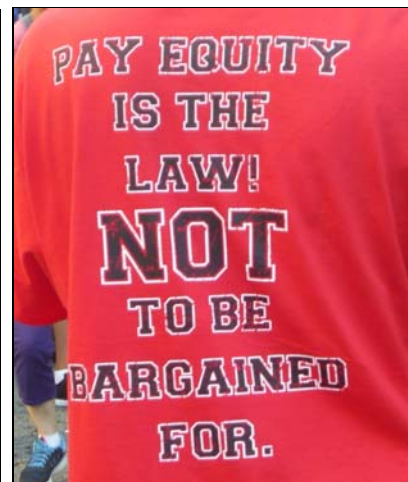
For more information, call the USW 1005 office - (905) 547-1417

**AT THE MANA GATES, ALL ARE WELCOME!
EVEN IF YOU CAN ONLY STAY A FEW MINUTES OR DRIVE BY.**

**THE MANA MEMBERS HAVE BEEN LOCKED OUT FOR OVER 3 YEARS
AND ALL WERE LAID OFF LONG BEFORE THAT!**

Toronto

Workers and their unions from every sector of the economy participated in Toronto's Labour Day Parade. They demanded society recognize the right to a secure livelihood, a living wage and pensions and benefits for all at the highest level the country can provide. Workers called on the Liberal governments at the federal and provincial level to increase investments in social programs and public services to ensure a sustainable human and social environment for all Canadians. Many of the speeches at the beginning of the march highlighted that despite their promises, the Trudeau Liberals are now the ones attacking workers' rights and these attacks must be resisted.





Windsor



Thousands of working people from across Windsor and Essex County from all sectors of the economy joined the march led by striking Essex County librarians, members of CUPE Local 2974. The librarians have been on strike for two and a half months to resist the efforts of the Library Board to eliminate sick leave protections for part-time workers. A contingent of activists also participated as part of the national campaign "Harvesting Freedom" fighting for the rights of migrant workers.





Winnipeg



Saskatoon

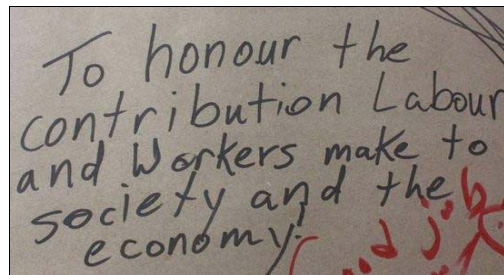
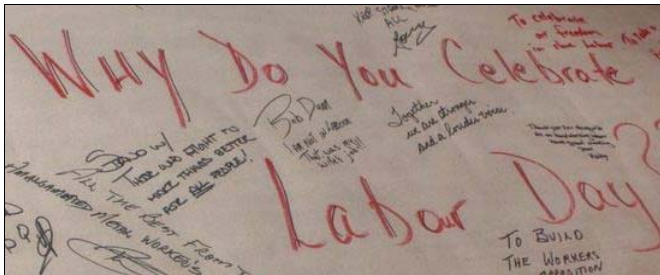




Calgary



Calgary held its Eighth Annual Calgary and District Labour Council BBQ for the Unemployed and Underemployed. Thousands of workers participated and union members as well as MLAs served food. Unemployment is now officially at 8.6 per cent in Alberta and many workers spoke about the extreme difficulty in finding employment after losing their jobs.



Edmonton



A highlight of the 26th annual Edmonton and District Labour Council BBQ was the participation of injured workers whose banner and leaflet demanded justice. Many people signed the injured workers' petition calling for the renewal of Alberta's workers' compensation system and for an end to the denial of compensation. In their discussions, workers made clear that they are in a fighting mood and will not permit the satisfaction of their demands to be dependent on the price of oil.



Prince George



Labour Day celebrations in Prince George, BC, were a resounding success with more than 2,000 people participating in the march and other activities held on the City Hall lawn over the course of

the morning and afternoon. The event was organized by the Labour Day Organizing Committee and the North Central Labour Council, and sponsored by 18 local unions, along with a number of community groups and businesses. The overall theme was: Labour Movement -- Past, Present, Future: Fighting for the Rights of All!



Vancouver



Some 1,000 participated in the Vancouver Lower Mainland Labour Day picnic held at Swangard Stadium in Burnaby.



Vancouver Island

Labour Day picnics were held in Port Alberni, Ladysmith, Victoria and Black Creek, organized by

the four District Labour Councils on the Island. Hundreds of workers and their families participated in the events.

(Photos: Workers' Forum, Foundry Photography, CUPE BC, Winnipeg Labour Council, J. Watson, A. Howe)



Holding U.S. Steel to Account

Your Pension Is Not as Secure as You Think

Workers' Forum is publishing below extracts from an item by Bryce Moffat distributed at the Labour Day Parade in Hamilton. Bryce is a retired member of Local 1005 USW and a long-time activist.



Local 1005 USW is now well into the process of asking the Attorney General of Canada for a Public Inquiry into the conditions that allowed our pensioners' savings to be so accessible to others who wished to manipulate them. We will be asking, among other things, for guaranteed assurance that when a Canadian saves his money for his retirement after forty years of working and planning for it that it will be there for him when he wants it. That assurance is definitely not there today, and we can be sure "our" Government isn't about to just give it to us; remember, it's they who created the laws that gave the courts and vulture capitalists the freedom to do what they're doing.

This public inquiry, if successful, will offer immense security to "all" future pensioners in Canada. The fight certainly isn't just for today nor is it for unions only; it's for the future of all working and retired Canadians, and all Canadians are encouraged to take an active part in supporting it.

We, Local 1005 USW, are going after what is rightly ours; and right now we're in this fight alone. We invite all those who are interested to come along with us; it should be quite a ride. If we do nothing now, we as working people, both union and non-union, will soon lose all the benefits we have gained in the past seventy years. With a strongly united contingent and a solid commitment to each other and the issue at hand, you can make this inquiry happen.

When we blindly follow along and let others use us we become so much livestock to be worked to their advantage, and thus become willing victims of their indifference. When we make no effort to stop a policy that's morally wrong and quietly go along with it, we're of no help at all in its demise; and when we either condone it or support the very issue we believe is wrong, that in itself makes us part of the problem instead of the solution. [...]

If a person has the moral courage, just challenging the principle of something that's wrong, win or lose, has its own honour. The system of government we see today, the way the working class and the less fortunate are treated, and the class distinction which is so obvious and getting worse must be addressed before it gets any more one sided. Today, financial profit seems to be the main ruling factor in many of our governments' decisions and it will remain that way until the working people themselves take action and force a change.



Michigan Sues U.S. Steel to Curb Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Air quality testing revealed in 2010 that sulphur dioxide emissions are high in an area including portions of Southwest Detroit, Ecorse and Trenton in the state of Michigan. Sustained exposure to sulfur dioxide (SO₂) is linked to respiratory illnesses in workers and residents. Experts point to the high levels of SO₂ in areas of Detroit as an important factor ranking the city first amongst the largest U.S. cities for asthma in children.

Michigan environmental officials identified U.S. Steel's Great Lakes Works plant in Ecorse as one of the five largest producers of SO₂ in the region. To reduce harmful sulfur dioxide emissions down to federal standards, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) under the authority of state Rule 430 entered into negotiations with the five largest polluters to develop individual SO₂ emission reduction plans. Four of the five largest polluters have agreed to a MDEQ negotiated plan but not U.S. Steel.

Instead of meeting a deadline of September 7 to submit a plan to reduce emissions down to the federal compliance standard, U.S. Steel officials on August 19, filed a lawsuit against the MDEQ stating: "(U.S. Steel) contends that MDEQ lacked constitutional statutory authority to promulgate Rule 430.... Even if such authority exists, the deadlines specified by Rule 430 cannot conceivably be met, and the Rule is further discriminatory, arbitrary, unreasonable and prejudicial."

Whether the state of Michigan has the authority or not, U.S. Steel will not agree to reduce its SO₂ emissions. In response to this refusal to meet the deadline to file a plan, MDEQ Director Heidi Grether said, "U.S. Steel has known for six years that they needed to reduce (SO₂) emissions.

Rather than pursue compliance in good faith, they have done everything possible to avoid making the necessary changes to reduce U.S. Steel's contribution to the region's SO₂ impacts.... Instead, they have pursued a strategy of competitive advantage over other SO₂ sources. They must either come into compliance or face the regulatory consequences of inaction. This stalling must end."

Scientists commented that the expertise and technology exist to reduce SO₂ emissions such as the widely used industrial practice of flue gas desulfurization of coke oven gas. As far back as 2006, the U.S. federal Environmental Protection Agency issued a recommendation to the Detroit steel



industry saying, "Most U.S. coke plants and many foreign coke plants already desulfurize their gas, which suggests that it is affordable and cost effective."

Michigan officials said the state agency cannot compel monopolies to use specific methods to combat pollution; it can only demand compliance with performance standards. MDEQ spokesperson Michael Shore wrote in an email to the *Detroit News*, "How to comply is solely a company decision."

For example, the U.S. energy monopoly DTE refuses to install desulfurization technologies at its EES Coke Battery on Zug Island, which supplies gas full of sulphur to U.S. Steel, because, as a state utility spokesperson said, "The company (DTE) already meets its requirements. The EES facility is in compliance with the (SO₂) standards, and for that reason the desulfurization technology was not required."

U.S. Steel powers its Great Lakes Plant, which is located directly across the Detroit River from Windsor, Ontario through the burning of coke oven gas that it purchases from DTE's Zug Island EES facility. The gas contains sulfur dioxide that is released when burned. The SO₂ emissions at the EES Zug Island facility in the Detroit River are within the federal mandate but the gas it supplies when burned exceeds those standards. If DTE equipped its Zug Island plant with the modern technology to remove sulfur dioxide from the gas it sells to U.S. Steel, it would have to charge more and USS says its competitors would gain an advantage if it did so. The arrogance, dictate and irrationality of monopoly right are on display even in matters that are well known to be harmful to workers, others in the nearby community, and the environment.

Note from Environment and Climate Change Canada Website

Acid Rain

Acid deposition is a general term that includes more than simply acid rain. Acid deposition is primarily the result of emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) that can be transformed into dry or moist secondary pollutants such as sulphuric acid (H₂SO₄), ammonium nitrate (NH₄NO₃) and nitric acid (HNO₃) as they are transported in the atmosphere over distances of hundreds to thousands of kilometres.

Canada cannot win the fight against acid rain on its own. Only reducing acidic emissions in both Canada and the U.S. will stop acid rain. More than half of the acid deposition in eastern Canada originates from emissions in the United States. Areas such as southeastern Ontario (Longwoods) and Sutton, Quebec receive about three-quarters of their acid deposition from the United States. In 1995, the estimated transboundary flow of sulphur dioxide from the United States to Canada was between 3.5 and 4.2 millions of tonnes per year.

Without further controls beyond those identified in the 1991 Canada-U.S. Air Quality Agreement, areas of southern and central Ontario, southern and central Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia would continue to receive mean annual sulphate deposition amounts that exceed their critical loads. The critical load would be exceeded by up to 10 kg/ha/yr of wet sulphate in parts of central Ontario and central and southern Quebec. As a result, about 95,000 lakes would remain damaged by acid rain. Lakes in these areas have not responded to reductions in sulphate deposition as well as, or as rapidly as, those in less sensitive regions. In fact, some sensitive lakes continue to acidify.

In total, without further controls, almost 800,000 km² in southeastern Canada -- an area the size of France and the United Kingdom combined -- would receive harmful levels of acid rain; that is, levels well above critical load limits for aquatic systems.

(Detroit News, Environment and Climate Change Canada)



Injured Workers In Alberta Fight for Their Right to Adequate Compensation

Justice for Injured Workers!

Injured workers and their allies in Alberta are stepping up the work to demand justice for injured workers. The Canadian Injured Workers Association of Alberta in Edmonton is circulating a petition calling for renewal of both legislation and governance of the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) on the basis of upholding the rights of injured workers. These rights include the maintenance of the living standard the worker had before injury, suitable retraining where possible for those who can no longer work in their old occupation, enforcement of the duty of employers to accommodate injured workers and full coverage for all their health needs.

Injured workers are also stressing that those in their ranks who have been denied compensation and are living in poverty are not "in the past" and must be provided redress and justice. They recently organized a picket at the Millard Treatment Centre, and were present with petitions at the Edmonton and District Labour Council Labour Day BBQ on September 5. The petition is reprinted below.



The Alberta NDP government has established a three-person panel which is conducting a review of the WCB. The initial stage of the review involved an online questionnaire and request for views and briefs. The review panel has now invited injured workers to submit their names, from which a random selection will be made and those workers invited to participate in discussions. Other Albertans will also be invited to meet with the panel.

The neo-liberal austerity agenda claims that the system is "not sustainable" as a pretext to make injured workers the target of brutal cuts. In Ontario, for example, the Liberal government passed legislation requiring the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to get rid of the so-called "unfunded liability," resulting in cuts to benefits and a huge increase in claims denied.

In Alberta, the principles on which workers' compensation was established have long been sacrificed to the goal of making the monopolies competitive internationally and cutting employer premiums to the bone. The average length of time an injured worker in Alberta receives compensation has fallen from 58 days in 2002 to 34 days in 2015. Employer premiums, which are the lowest in Canada, have fallen every year for the past five years, and are now about half the rate of other provinces.

In 2015 claims benefits amounted to only 73 per cent of the WCB's total expenditures, including payments to physicians and other health care providers, while 27 per cent was spent on administrative expenditures, including the vast system in place to find a pretext to deny workers their rightful benefits. While injured workers live in poverty, a "surplus" of \$405 million was returned to employers. This amounted to about 40 per cent of employer premiums.

The WCB presents statistics on reduced employer premiums and shorter claim periods as proof that its safety and return to work programs are a success. But the direct experience of injured workers tells a different story. Claim suppression is widespread, and many injuries are never

reported, or are reported as "no lost time" so that the employer's premiums are not affected.

A significant number of claims are rejected by the WCB from the outset, nearly one in ten. Many injured workers find themselves without any means of living because their claims have been denied.[1]

In a speech to a meeting organized by the Canadian Injured Workers Association of Alberta, Rachel Notley, then in opposition, said that the workers' compensation system was broken. Notley said the system was established nearly 100 years ago as an "historic compromise." Workers gave up the right to sue their employers, and injured workers in return would not suffer a loss of income or be forced to roll the dice in the courts. The system is no longer a partnership she said, but an incredibly cheap system of insurance for employers. The Progressive Conservative governments have seen the Workers' Compensation system as a cheap way for employers to do business, she said.

Notley said that in comparison to other provinces, workers in Alberta are less likely to be compensated, and when they do get compensation, it ends earlier. Claims for occupational disease, repetitive strain injuries and workplace-related stress and mental health are all less likely to succeed. Claims end much earlier because the WCB can make up a pretend job and tell a worker who is permanently disabled that they can work at this fictional job and is therefore not entitled to ongoing compensation. Many workers have no access to skilled representation to challenge these decisions.

There is also a growing reliance on medical evidence which is not actually medical evidence, Notley said. The WCB relies on doctors who provide opinions about people they have never met or examined, based on notes written by case managers.

Notley urged the workers not to back down and keep fighting. Injured workers think this is good advice, and are in turn urging Notley not to back down in the face of the powerful private interests who do not recognize the rights of workers.

Note

1. The WCB 2015 annual report states that there were 3,327 claims where a review was requested in 2015; 2258 requests for review by the WCB Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body (DRDRB); 830 claims appealed to the external Appeals Commission; and 346 decisions overturned at the Appeals Board. WCB calls all review requests which do not proceed to the next level as "resolved" without reference to whether the worker's request for review was successful, the worker was satisfied, or the worker was not satisfied but did not proceed. This self-serving manner of reporting means the number of actually unresolved claims is not made public.

Petition -- Justice For Injured Workers - Canadian Injured Workers Association of Alberta -

1. Ensure that the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board uphold its responsibility to safeguard the health and well-being of injured workers and uphold their rights, including: maintenance of the living standard the worker had before injury; suitable retraining for those who can no longer work in their old occupation; enforcement of the duty of employers to accommodate injured workers; and full coverage for all health needs of injured workers

2. Provide WCB with a clear mandate to ensure that decisions are based on medical evidence from treating physicians or clinical practitioners. Re-establish medical objectivity by replacing the Medical Panel Commissioner and Medical Review Panels with truly independent medical examiners chosen from a roster established by a professional body of physicians with appropriate

qualifications such as the Canadian Medical Evaluators Society.

3. Guarantee the right of claimants to natural justice, including: the right to cross-examine doctors and staff under oath, the right to submit evidence, the right to a fair hearing open on request of the claimant, the right to all documentation on a claimant's file.

4. End incentive programs which give bonuses or any other form of payments to case managers, other employees of the WCB or healthcare providers to declare a worker fit to return to work.

5. Forbid the practice of "deeming" workers ready to work or capable of earning income at a particular level even though the worker is not able to obtain or perform such work and/or the work does not exist in their community.

6. Increase the permanent disability and death (non-economic) benefits to reflect the real impact of disability on a worker's life.

7. Reopen all denied claims of injured workers where the decision was based on the opinion of WCB paid physicians and Medical Panels which contradicted the clinical observation and findings, ongoing direct examinations and supporting medical evidence of treating physicians.

8. Require the WCB to continue coverage for an injured worker whose claim has been accepted while WCB is still conducting or requiring further medical investigations.

9. Provide WCB coverage for agricultural workers.

10. Conduct an independent judicial inquiry into the treatment of workers by the WCB.

The petition can be found [here](#).

Note: Since the petition was drafted, the NDP government has implemented point 9 and included farm workers under WCB and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.



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