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CUPE 3911 Monthly Grievance Report

Attend the CUPE 3911 Monthly Meeting on March 20, 2021

Our next general meeting, open to all members, will be held on Saturday, March 20, 930 AM. Suggested agenda items should be sent to the administrator's email address by 1100 PM, Thursday, March 18. The meeting will be conducted remotely via ZOOM. Instructions as to how to join the meeting will be sent to you.

International Women's Day – Save the Dates!

For 111 years, working class women have mobilized on International Women's Day (IWD) to defend our rights and the rights of all. ([Click here to learn more about IWD history](#)). Our theme for this year's events is:

NO GOING BACK - WOMEN FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE!

Women have borne many of the heaviest burdens of this pandemic but we have also played a leading role in putting forward solutions to keep everyone safe. But the pandemic has exposed many vulnerabilities sown by ignoring the demands of working people, and powerful interests have used the pandemic as a pretext for even more attacks on the rights of women and the rights of all. This International Women's Day, Women for Rights and Empowerment invites you to join us in celebrating women on the frontlines and amplifying their calls, including an end to privatization of health, access to PPE, increases to staffing and pay, and, most importantly, for decision making power to create a better future.

Simultaneous socially distanced solidarity pickets Saturday, March 4th 2pm - 4pm

Head to one of the pickets listed below (or let us know if you want to organize another one!). We will gather in groups of 10, spread out around the building as more people join. Don't forget your mask and stay 6ft apart!

- Royal Alexandra Hospital - (North/111 Ave. entrance)
- UofA Hospital - (East/112 St. entrance)
- Grey Nuns Hospital - (main entrance)
- Misericordia Hospital - (87 ave. main entrance)
- Capital Care Lynnwood- (165 St. main entrance)



Take Action to Support Post-Secondary Education in Alberta

CUPE Local 39111, 4207 115 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB T5M 3B6 cupe3911@gmail.com. BY E-MAIL, January 25, 2021

To: Derrick Antson, Mount Royal Faculty Association W315 - 4825 Mount Royal Gate, SW Calgary, AB T3E 6K6

Dear Mr. Antson

We are CUPE 3911 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, representing more than 350 continuing part time academic instructors at Athabasca University. We are participating in the Stop PSE Cuts campaign because of our concern for the future of post-secondary education in Alberta. As the frontline educators at Athabasca University, we work directly with students to support their academic success. Many of these students are the first generation in their families to attend university; they are parents and working people, they live in rural, Indigenous and remote areas, as well as our towns and cities.

Athabasca University (AU) is an open university that offers accessible education to these students in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world. AU is at the forefront of online education in Canada -- especially crucial at this time. Our key role in distance education is being threatened by unprecedented budget cuts to AU and all post-secondary institutions across Alberta. While cuts of this extent and nature would be dangerous under any conditions, it is even more harmful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AU is the leanest post-secondary institution in Alberta; we receive the lowest per capita funding per FLE. We cannot absorb any further cuts to our budget without harm to our institution and the students who depend on us for their education. Affordable post-secondary education is essential during this economic recession. Affordable education helps to break the cycle of poverty. It is an investment for the whole society, which has a continuing positive impact on students, their families, and their communities. We are not in the business of skills training, so any half-baked schemes to link learning outcomes to the needs of business through "performance metrics" are doomed to fail. We believe in the well-rounded education offered at comprehensive institutions such as AU.

Increasingly, we speak with one voice, joining together with faculty, staff and students across Alberta in campaigns such as asstopsecuts.ca. On the national level, CUPE is participating in a multi-partner campaign called Education for All to promote a vision of high-quality, publicly funded post-secondary education in Canada. The campaign, launched on January 21, includes the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

We hereby serve notice to the conservative government of Alberta: we will not stand idly by while it attacks our institutions. The United Conservative Party, under the leadership of Jason Kenney and Demetrios Nicolaidis, seeks to destroy our world-class post-secondary institutions using torqued and highly inaccurate research. This only demonstrates that the UCP does not understand Alberta's post-secondary education system and the crucial role it plays in the well-being of our province and our people. This government should immediately reverse its current efforts to impose further cuts that will damage the working conditions of faculty and staff and the learning conditions of students.

For further information, please contact Dr. Ronnie Joy Leah Co-chair, Local 3911, Canadian Union of Public Employees. ronnijoy@telus.net Cell: 403-669-3554

Where Are We Now? Where Do We Want to Go? How Will We Get There?

by Dougal MacDonald, Communications Officer

Where Are We Now?

At the present time, post-secondary education in Alberta is wallowing like a ship caught in a storm. The current situation has a number of salient features that are connected but also separate. They include the following.

The ubiquitous presence of online teaching:

Athabasca University, founded in 1970, has always been Canada's leading online university. But in recent years, more post-secondary educational institutions (PSE's) have made remote learning at least part of their mandate, increasing competition for online students. The COVID 19 pandemic accelerated that situation with many PSE's now completely online. This has enabled the continuation of post-secondary learning but has also created new problems, including the need for instructors to adapt, the need for students to adapt, technology issues on both sides, valid methods of evaluation, and questions about the quality of education being offered.

Chronic underfunding: Post-secondary education in Alberta has always been underfunded. At one time in Canada, funding was about 50% provincial and 50% federal but the federal portion has declined which has led to more "strings-attached" private investment and concomitant erosion of public control. The main problem is that governments see education as an expense to be cut rather than an investment to grow. This extends to those who work in the field, who are seen as costs rather than important creators of billions of dollars in added value. A recent study by University of Alberta economists estimated the university's annual economic contribution at about \$15 billion.

Government cuts to education budgets: Cuts to PSE funding have long been part government "fiscal austerity" programs. In 2013, for example, the Hancock Conservatives slashed \$147 million

from PSE operating budgets. UCP budgets have made Alberta's deepest spending cuts to advanced education in more than two decades, with further cuts planned for subsequent years. The province removed over \$117 million from postsecondary funding in 2019, or 5 percent, with further cuts of 2.8 percent in 2020, and plans for 2.2 percent in 2021 and 2.3 percent in 2022. These reductions amount to a funding cut of about 30 per cent over the next years.

Tuition fee increases and student debt: Student tuition and other add-on fees of various kinds have steadily increased over the years, except during legislated fee freezes as was the case under the previous provincial government. The UCP government is now allowing fees to increase annually by a maximum of 7%, a change that many PSEs are already taking advantage of. Statistics Canada states that from September 2019 to September 2020, Alberta's tuition fees increased the most in Canada. The upshot will be decreased access to post-secondary education and more student debt, now estimated to average over \$20,000 per student.

Oil executives spilling over into PSE: In August 2019, the UCP government fired a number of PSE board of governors' members and replaced them with their own appointees. Many were from the heavily subsidized energy sector. For example, Nancy Laird, a 30-year energy executive, was appointed the new Board Chair of Athabasca University. While corporate representatives (euphemistically known as "public members") have always occupied BoG seats, the UCP blitz is the first time a government has implemented a mass change in members across numerous institutions. (Full list of the 43 UCP corporate appointees is available here: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/ucp-sweeps-ndp-governance-appointments-out-of-post-secondary-institutions-1.5249900>)

Upper administration’s abject capitulation to funding cuts: One very noticeable feature of the recent UCP budget cuts has been the complete lack of opposition by the PSEs’ upper administrations. While faculty, students, and staff have resisted and denounced the cuts, administrations have simply capitulated and looked for ways to “adjust”. The word chosen to describe this adjustment is “restructuring”. Ignoring the PSEs’ academic missions, “restructuring” has included firing hundreds of staff, eliminating important programs, removing courses, merging departments, closing libraries, and so on. The administrations claim that all this is having no negative effects on student learning!

Refusal to consult: Throughout the “restructuring” process administration has held no meaningful consultation with faculty, staff and students. This has been pointed out over and over. For example, at the University of Alberta, the Academic Association (AASUA) stated on November 20, 2020: “We have not been provided access to any of the detailed data, financial projections, benchmarks, and calculations underlying the entire U of A for Tomorrow process. Furthermore, we have been denied seats at the tables where the analysis is being discussed and the options are being designed and considered.” The situation is similar at all the other Alberta PSEs.

Very uncollegial governance: According to the system of “collegial governance” which Alberta PSEs supposedly operate under, General Faculties Council’s (GFC) decisions on academic matters are upheld as the will of campus and the Board of Governors (BoG) is expected to respect their collective wisdom. In a December 11, 2020, University of Alberta GFC meeting, the BoG bluntly rejected the GFC’s recommendation on restructuring. This arbitrary decision was a clear dismissal of GFC’s long-recognized mandate over academic issues. Even more absurd was that several BoG members implied that their corporate experience gave them better knowledge on academic restructuring than those who taught in

university classrooms. It should also be noted that the U of A’s official description of what took place at this meeting was extremely misleading.

Sessionals just won’t go away: Amid all this turmoil one issue continues to stand out, that of the situation for contract academics known as sessionals. A recent Canada-wide CUPE research study found that precarious sessionals teach from 55-70% of PSE courses depending on the institution. There are 13 universities where contract academics make up over two-thirds of faculty appointment. Contract academics teach with no job security, no benefits, and minimal recognition of their major contribution. During the pandemic, sessionals turned their courses into online courses without any compensation for their extra work. (A brief summary of the CUPE study can be found here: <https://cupe.ca/contract-jobs-now-account-majority-university-faculty-appointments>)

Handservants of the monopolies: Alberta’s research universities are more and more becoming the direct handservants of private industry. The UCP government openly states that the most important PSE research is that which is easily commercialized. Much university research for private interests is done by stealth and kept secret and much of it violates the academic integrity of the institutions where it is taking place. Alberta research universities fund projects where highly educated university staff do the research, but the vital decision-making power is held by the private monopolies and, in the end, the results benefit the corporate sector who acquire it on the cheap.

The zombie idea of performance based indicators: Like zombies rising from the grave, performance based indicators (PBIs) are once again a hot topic with PSE administrators. This neo-liberal idea, which originated in the business world, tries to tie “costs” to the production of a particular commodity, with the basic intention of driving down those costs. That is why it is no accident that the rise of PBIs is always accompanied by relentless budget cuts to public

education. Further, those who push the notion of PBIs basically believe that what is not measurable by numbers, e.g., critical thinking, is not valuable and therefore can be ignored.

Exams and surveillance: Due to the greater difficulty in holding in-person exams, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the use of assessment practices in higher education settings where many institutions have opted to use exam surveillance software to replace invigilated, in-person exams. Use of this kind of software has brought longstanding concerns about the validity, fairness, and equity of assessment practices more sharply into focus. Criticism is coming not only from students but also from instructors. It is clear that there must be renewed attention to assessment in higher education, including issues of privacy and the broad overall issues of students' and instructors' rights.

Where Do We Want to Go?

To move forward in post-secondary education, requires not just summing up the current situation but also putting forward a concrete program for change. One such program might focus on implementing the following Ten Principles. These are not meant to be exhaustive.

1. Recognition and legislation of education as a right which all people have by virtue of being human.
2. Continuously increasing investments in education.
3. Funding based on student needs, not predetermined budgets.
4. An end to privatization of education and elimination of private enterprise from education.
5. Elimination of all user fees.
6. Accountability measures which reflect the needs of a democratic society.
7. All staff to have the working conditions necessary for the provision of quality education.
8. Meaningful input of all staff into decision-making processes.

9. Mandatory labour studies courses, created in consultation with labour.
10. Establishment of a free, quality comprehensive public education system accessible to all.

How Will We Get There?

It is critical that the unity of faculty, staff, and students within and among the PSEs is developed in the course of taking action with analysis to change the situation. The anti-education forces want to divide the faculty, staff, and students by pitting them against each other. Blaming each other plays into the hands of the upper administrations and lets them off the hook when they are the ones who have created the current situation. Again, instead of opposing the UCP's anti-education policies, the upper administrations have caved in with their phoney restructuring that is seriously harming the PSEs' academic missions. We must all hold upper administration accountable, along with the UCP.

As is the case everywhere in society the key question facing everyone is, "Who decides?" The current system of collegial governance at the PSEs disempowers the faculty, students, and staff when they are the ones in whom decision-making should be vested, not some UCP-appointed corporate hacks with zero stake in the academic mission of the PSEs. We must end the phoney "consultations" where faculty, students, and staff try to have their say but are subjected to a predetermined agenda and predetermined results, as well as end the token representation on administration committees that eventually do as they please and ignore any input from those on the ground.

The bottom line is that faculty, students, and staff need to have the power to consciously make the decisions that affect their lives and to implement those decisions responsibly. The defence of their rights and the rights of all facilitates the resolution of academic problems

in a manner that genuinely enhances the quality of student learning. We must organize to empower ourselves and gain control over the PSEs and their academic missions so that we can effectively deal with the problems that affect our lives. This is the way forward to building academies and societies that are not just for the rich but which serve the interests of the working people and their allies.



Regarding COCAL *by Glynnis Lieb, Co-Chair*

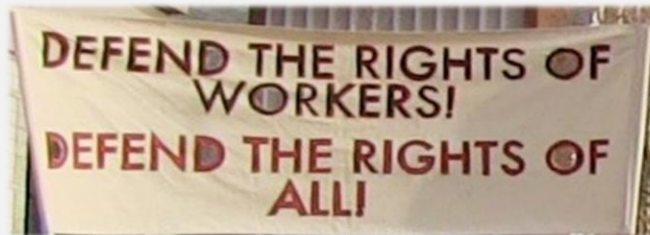
COCAL is the Coalition of Contract Academic Labour which includes precarious workers from Canada, Mexico and the U.S. In 2016, CUPE 3911 organized the biannual COCAL conference in Edmonton at University of Alberta, attended by about 140 academics. In 2018, the next conference was held at San Jose State University.

Originally, the 2020 conference was scheduled to be held in Queretaro, Mexico. Due to the ongoing efforts to distribute vaccinations and the

uncertainty about when travel and socializing will be allowed across our countries, the local organizing team in Mexico has made the decision to delay the biennial COCAL conference to August long weekend 2022.

However, the COCAL international team has been using the time during the pandemic to reach out beyond borders and

engage more precarious post-secondary workers and graduate students. They already held one online seminar in Fall 2020, which was very successful. Two hundred people from Canada, Mexico and the United States participated. The COCAL team will be holding a two-day event on August long



weekend in 2021, when the conference was to have taken place. The first day of this event will be a small, in-person gathering in Querétaro, Mexico. The second day will be a mixed delivery physical and online conference. The online portion will have post-secondary speakers from multiple countries, and will be free to anyone who wishes to participate.

Please watch <https://cocalinternational.org> for more details to come.

On behalf of the COCAL international committee, we are determined to have something productive come out of our time of forced separation during the pandemic. We hope that by the time we get together next year, we will have reached out to and engaged more precarious post-secondary workers from around the world. Together we are stronger and right now it is imperative to work together to ensure that quality post-secondary education and working conditions are fought for and maintained.

Celebrating Black History Month

(CUPE National)

February is Black History Month, also known as African Heritage Month. Black History Month is a time to celebrate and highlight the best of Black History and culture, and to honour the ancestors and upcoming leaders of Black communities, their accomplishments and their continued fight for liberation.

It is also a time for all Canadians to reflect and educate ourselves on the history of Black enslavement, discrimination, bigotry and criminalization of people of African descent.

Canadian society has seen progress over the decades, but the realities of differential treatment towards African Canadians continue.

Over the past year the crises of over-policing and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black and Indigenous communities have thrown spotlight on how much remains to be done.

At the global level, the United Nations working Group of Experts on People of African Descent is educating people on our world history of enslavement, discrimination, bigotry and criminalization. In 2016, this UN body visited Canada and wrote a detailed report on what they learned. They called for a number of actions, including one for the federal government to “issue



an apology and consider providing reparations to African Canadians for enslavement and historical Injustices.

At our 2019 National Convention, delegates unanimously adopted a resolution to create our own anti-racism, anti-Black racism strategy for members in the union and workplace. Over the past year, Black, indigenous, and racialized CUPE

members across Canada have participated in virtual Anti-Racism Strategy consultations despite the challenges of the pandemic. The goal of this work is to ensure that all Black, Indigenous, and racialized members to not face barriers or any acts of racism, discrimination or bigotry.

Our union is committed to fighting racism and hatred in

all its forms, and to empower our members to speak out and act against discrimination. We encourage members to celebrate Black history Month and to keep fighting anti-Black racism in their locals, workplaces, and communities.

For CUPE suggestions on Learning, Acting, and Bargaining re Black History, go to cupe.ca/black-history-month

Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls! End the Violence!

Women's memorial events were held on Valentine's Day in cities across the country to demand justice for Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or have gone missing, and to get the

government to take measures to end the violence. The marches began in 1992 in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside to demand that action be taken following the murder of a Coast Salish woman whose death was met with indifference from the authorities and the media.

Today, people from all walks of life are demanding justice for

murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and opposing all forms of violence



against women. Violence against women has been on the rise since the beginning of the pandemic, as the isolation imposed on everyone renders them all the more vulnerable.

From the beginning these marches have also been the occasion to call for a national inquiry into this violence and brutality, to identify the causes, to seek solutions and redress for

the victims who now number more than 4,000 individuals.

The persistence of Indigenous women and peoples in asserting their right to be is an inspiration to all, especially their insistence on defining what it is they need and not permitting others to define what is acceptable. As it stands, the

Memorial Marches will continue and the Indigenous peoples and Canadians will continue to work together to end the genocide against Indigenous people and to hold Canada, its governments, institutions, police agencies and media accountable.

Family of Alberta Cargill Worker Demands RCMP Investigate Cargill for Criminal Negligence

(by Peggy Askin, former President Local 203 Telecommunications Workers)

Ariana Quesada, the 16-year-old daughter of Benito Quesada, filed a formal complaint with the RCMP on January 8 asking police to investigate potential criminal negligence in the death of her father. Benito Quesada, a 51-year-old worker at the Cargill meat processing plant in High River Alberta. The father of four and shop steward died

of COVID-19 on May 7, 2020, one of almost 1,000 workers who contracted COVID-19 at the plant. He was the second worker to die at Cargill from COVID-19. Hiep Bui, 67, died on April 19, 2020.



Armando Sallegue, the father of Cargill worker Arwyn Sallegue, also died of COVID-19 after Arwyn contracted COVID-19 at work.



"We have filed a complaint ... to finally bring justice to my dad ... to finally hold Cargill accountable for what they did,"

Ariana Quesada said. Ariana has the support and assistance of Local 401 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) which represents workers at the Cargill plant.

The complaint filed by Ariana Quesada cites the Westray Law, a *Criminal Code* provision named after a deadly mining disaster in Nova Scotia in 1992 that provides for criminal prosecution for employers who fail to take "reasonable steps to prevent bodily harm" to workers.

The complaint states that Cargill failed to heed early public health warnings and failed to protect workers from a known, deadly threat.

The RCMP has confirmed that it has opened a file. Media reports state that this is the first known file opened regarding a workplace-related COVID-19 death.

Michael Hughes, spokesperson for local 401 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) which represents workers at the Cargill plant, pointed out that the threat of fines for violations of occupational health and safety laws is not a strong deterrent for a company like Cargill which reported revenue of \$113.5 billion U.S. in 2019. "I think what the situation at Cargill really exposed is that there are severe limits to accountability" under current workplace rules," he said.

The plant is also facing a class action lawsuit initiated by people who had close contact with workers at Cargill. While workers who are covered by Workers Compensation are prohibited from suing their employer for wrongful death or injury, families and close contacts are not. Class action lawsuits must receive judicial certification before they can proceed.

Cargill workers and their families and friends are to be saluted for their courage and determination to hold Cargill to account and for justice for all who have died or lost their loved ones because of the refusal of those in authority to hold Cargill to account.

Workers' Organizing for Solutions Remains Key

(by Pierre Chenier, reprinted from *Workers' Forum*)

As the spread of COVID-19 results in higher numbers of infections, hospitalizations and deaths, it has become clearer than ever that workers organizing to push forward their demands and solutions is key to curbing the spread and stabilizing the situation, especially in the health care system. Workers speaking out and organizing to protect everybody, including themselves, as they deliver the services people need is essential

in affirming social solidarity of all for the well-being of all. It is also only through this work and struggle that working people can force those in authority to

take up their responsibility of protecting the people.

It is a tragic fact of life that after nearly 11 months of the pandemic, safe working conditions for frontline workers have not yet been achieved. Workers' demands for such basic things as adequate personal protective equipment that they themselves determine is needed based on their experience and public health standards have not been universally met. Some health and safety measures are in



place in some workplaces but not others, according to random criteria decided by unknown parties.

Governments and employers are looking for alternative sites where various health services that do not require full-fledged hospitals can be delivered. However, without adequate personnel and mobilization of the human factor to sort out the issues of safety, training, maintenance, and all issues related to the success of such projects, they will come up against the same problems they are already responsible for creating. Hoping that by mobilizing the armed forces to deliver vaccines will guarantee efficiency is pie in the sky given the lack of interest in putting human beings at the centre of social organization.

These projects can only be built with the pro-social aim of looking after the well-being of all. This is where the fight is the

most acute. Workers are taking initiatives to lead the people in solving the crisis in a manner that benefits the people and society but matters are not under their control. Ruling elites continue to put forward schemes which they announce by decree such as curfews and fines no matter what violations of workers' rights they entail.

Only by the workers mobilizing themselves, starting with the organized collectives of workers, youth, women, Indigenous peoples, community organizations and so on, can they exercise some sort of control over what happens.

At this time, there is discussion in Quebec about requisitioning private surgery rooms and their staff to integrate them into the public sector during the crisis so that they can do important surgeries that are being postponed because of COVID-19, alleviating the situation in the hospitals. There is no doubt

that marshalling resources to face the crisis has to be done but this requires the full mobilization of the workers and medical authorities and others to ensure that it is done safely. Health care workers told *Workers' Forum* that this is an avenue that could help alleviate the pressure on the health care system, provided that utmost care is taken to ensure that this is done safely and that it does not mean the expansion of private health care. They say this is intended as a temporary measure to address the crisis.

In Ontario and other provinces, governments are talking of plans to open up more hospital beds, temporary field hospitals, and other ways to expand the system. But without addressing the demands of the workers for increased staff and improved working conditions this will exacerbate, not solve, the health care crisis.

We Need a Public Authority to Manufacture Vaccines in Canada

(by Peter Ewart, activist and writer, and Dawn Hemingway, Associate Professor UNBC)

As has become glaringly obvious, Canada does not have a public, self-reliant health authority to research and manufacture COVID-19 vaccines and other medical technology. All of the COVID-19 vaccines currently being used in Canada are manufactured across the ocean in Europe by giant global pharmaceutical companies known for their scandals and rapaciousness.

In that regard, the European Union (EU) has recently threatened to impose export restrictions on these COVID-19 vaccines which could dramatically affect vaccine availability in non-



EU countries, resulting in increased illness and mortality. According to the EU, Canada will not be affected. However, the fact remains that the EU and the pharmaceutical companies have this power in this one sided relationship.

In addition, the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, which the federal government has a contract with to supply millions of vaccine doses, has recently announced that it is delaying shipments of the vaccine to Canada. Pfizer claims that the delay is because it is retooling its manufacturing facilities in Europe and that supply to all its client countries will be affected.

However, according to various reports, Canada is at the back of the line in terms of priority, as European Union countries are not experiencing the same amount of delay, i.e., one week instead of Canada's four weeks. This is an interesting "coincidence" given that Pfizer and the federal government have been in an ongoing dispute for some months over tax breaks that the pharmaceutical company is demanding. In addition, Pfizer is critical of Canada's demand to reduce tax avoidance by global multinationals in general.

Federal minister Anita Anand would not explain why Canada was being singled out. However, according to economist Tony Sanger, Pfizer's demands "are pretty aggressive" and disturbing, as the company is pushing for the tax breaks "at a time when they basically hold the cure" to the COVID-19 epidemic. "It's not a gun to the head," he said, but rather "a needle to the arms". Compounding the problem is that "Canada has not even negotiated the right to manufacture doses of [the vaccine] here at home".

According to a member of Canada's Vaccine Task Force, the country's biopharmaceutical

industry has been "hollowed out" over the past 25 years with the big pharmaceutical companies pulling out much of their funding for research and development, resulting in Canada becoming a research "backwater." According to the *Globe and Mail*, "innovation in Canada's life science sector happens less and less in the labs of foreign-based multinationals and more and more among a small number of homegrown biopharma startups, which now account for the bulk of drug research and development in this country". As an alternative, the federal government has funded a number of smaller vaccine research and manufacturing initiatives, including one by Canadian-based Providence Therapeutics which expects to have a vaccine by 2022 and another by Quebec-based Medicigo. Both are privately-owned corporations.

As a solution, some are pushing for some kind of negotiated settlement with Big Pharma that would see the Canadian government withdraw its attempts to regulate drug prices and impose tax increases in return for the pharmaceutical companies ramping up their research and development funding in Canada.

The problem with such "solutions" is that they put crucial health research & development in the hands of narrow private interests which do not coincide with the public interest. Indeed, there is nothing to stop corporations from amassing government funding and then pulling up stakes and leaving the country as has happened too many times in the past. And then, as described above, there is the corporate blackmail problem.

Instead, as part of a nation-building project, Canada needs a self-reliant public authority that can research and manufacture vaccines and other medical technology and that is not at the mercy of Big Pharma. In that regard, much of the infrastructure and personnel

already exists at universities and public research institutions across the country.

There will be more pandemics in the future. As a country, we need a new direction for

health research and development, one which puts public interest first.

(Reprinted from *Prince George Daily News*, January 28, 2021)

Canada's National Farmers Union Stands with Indian Farmers *(Statement by National Farmers Union, December 2020)*

The National Farmers Union stands in solidarity with farmers in India, who continue to protest new agricultural laws formally passed in September. This agriculture reform will effectively undermine the guaranteed prices farmers receive through government purchase of staple crops and open them up to exploitation by large corporations. Tens of thousands of Indian farmers are protesting, demanding that these reforms be rescinded or that a new law be introduced to guarantee them a minimum price for their crops. "We in Canada recognize the Indian farmers' struggle as similar to our own struggle. We support them in their right to protest, and in their call for agriculture policy that supports the millions of smallholder farmers growing food in India," said NFU President Katie Ward.

As shrinking net farm incomes reach a crisis level for farmers around the world and also in Canada, Canadian farmers understand the need for government regulation that works for farmers rather than for those who take profits at the expense of farmers. "We have experienced the dismantling of institutions that were vital to the bargaining power and, by extension, incomes of Canadian farmers," said NFU Vice-President Stewart Wells, "For example the loss of the single desk marketing system for hogs in the 1990s and more recently the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board, among others."

As a result of losing the single-desk marketing system for hogs, thousands of Canadian farmers



could no longer raise hogs because they could not access the market without a contract. The intentional shift to corporate hog production has left that sector fully vertically integrated and dominated by only three meat processing corporations. Prices are regularly below the cost of the production. The industry is heavily dependent on government safety nets to ride out the highly volatile market. It is an industry now largely devoid of family farmers. The change in hog farming in Canada was swift and brutal for family farmers raising hogs -- a direct result of agriculture policy aimed at assisting corporations instead of farmers.

While the circumstances of Indian farmers are vastly different than Canadian farmers in many ways, it is clear that agricultural policies that serve to undercut farmers' livelihoods to make room for large corporations to profit will have devastating consequences for the millions of smallholder farmers and families.

India's food security is threatened, as the new laws will shift its agricultural economy from "food production" for people to "commodity production" for trade and export. Farmers take on more debt and risk in a system of contract farming. The new laws will lift the ban on hoarding food by corporate buyers, which will allow them to capitalize on ups and downs in production by price-gouging consumers during shortages and depressing prices to farmers in times of abundance.

"Farmers did not ask for this reform, and it is not in their interest. The impacts will be devastating and far-reaching. Canada's NFU supports Indian farmers in their opposition to these reforms," Ward stated, "We object to the suppression of democratic protest taking place in India this week. We stand with Indian farmers, and their right to protect their livelihoods by protesting the imposition of these unjust laws."

Why India's Farmers Are Protesting (NFU Backgrounder)

India has 164 million farmers, and many have small farms where they grow food to feed themselves and sell locally to feed their communities. Over half of India's workforce is involved in the agriculture sector. Hundreds of thousands of farmers are protesting impending changes that will result from three controversial laws. Farm leaders have been in talks with government, demanding that these laws be repealed. Tens of thousands of farmers are in New Delhi itself, and more camped out around the city, blocking entrances. Protests are occurring all across India, with the support of non-farmers in other sectors such as transport. On December 8, the farmers called for a peaceful national general strike in support of their demands.

New Laws Passed in September Set to Go into Effect in December

In June, 2020, the Indian Cabinet put forward three controversial agriculture reform bills in conjunction with its suite of COVID 19 measures. In September, these bills -- *The Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill*, *The Essential Commodities Act (Amendment) Bill* and *Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill* -- were passed by the Indian Parliament in a rushed process, without allowing for extended debate or careful examination by a committee. The final vote was conducted by voice rather than ballot, making

it impossible to have a clear count of the votes. The bills will become law once they are approved by President Ram Nath Kovind...

The Bills

The Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill -- This bill allows for direct contracting between farmers and buyers prior to sowing, but does not require these contracts to be in writing, does not penalize companies that fail to register their contracts, and does not set a minimum price. The farmers can thus be left with no recourse if terms of the contracts are not fulfilled.



The Essential Commodities Act (Amendment)

Bill -- This bill removes all limits that have, until now, prevented companies from hoarding basic food items including cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onions, and potatoes, even in the event of war, famine or natural disaster. This change was made at the request of food processing and food exporting corporations.

Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill -- This bill deregulates trade by allowing farmers to sell outside of their own state's Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee (APMC) markets, and prevents states from collecting fees from the markets to fund their operation. This will allow corporations to set up their own, unregulated markets.

Implications for Farmers

Direct contracting increases the power of buyers. To reduce costs of obtaining supplies, companies will purchase from the largest farms and/or look for the lowest prices. This will lead to small farms no longer having access to any market. As small farmers are forced out, land holdings will become larger and more concentrated. Vertical integration of farms with processing companies will accelerate this process, as risks and debts are offloaded onto the least powerful in the value chain.

As small farmers lose their land or are no longer able to survive on lower, deregulated prices they will be forced to leave villages and move to cities, where employment is uncertain. Small farmers produce food for themselves and communities. By shifting from public markets to corporate buyers who operate nationally, food will move to larger markets. There will be less food available locally and it will be more expensive.

Allowing corporations to hoard food empowers them to buy up supplies at low prices when there is a good harvest. It shifts the public "strategic reserve" meant to buffer volatility and prevent hardship and instead creates private control of the food supply. Companies will be allowed to export hoarded food, even in the event of natural disaster, war or famine in India.

The new laws create a positive environment for consolidation of farmland, concentration of

ownership in agricultural companies, greater control of markets and prices by large processors, retailers and exporters, and increased sales of commercial seed, chemical inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides, and digital technology for data mining, surveillance and automation.

Which Powerful Corporations Stand to Gain?

Some of the same multinational food, agribusiness and technology companies active in Canada are also active in India: including Bayer, BASF, Dow Dupont, Nestle, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Amazon, IBM and Microsoft. Some of the large agribusiness corporations are also Indian, such as Tata, Bharat Group, Atul, and Nuziveedu Seeds.

Why Does This Matter to Canadians?

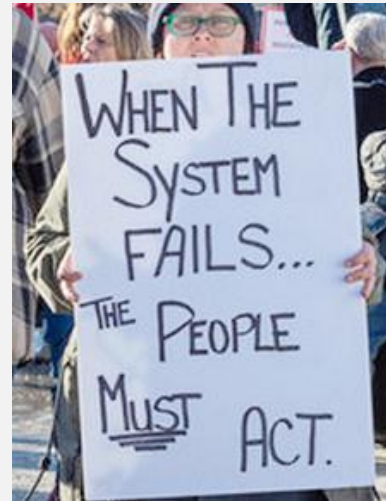
If allowed to go into effect, these laws will increase the power of the world's largest agribusiness corporations. It will embolden them to demand similar changes in other countries. The ability of large corporations to force down prices to Indian farmers and to demand adherence to corporate priorities as a condition of making a living will affect farmers around the world.

As Canadians and fellow-farmers we recognize the harm that the Indian laws will do to Indian farmers and their families. We want to live in a world where human lives are respected, where people can democratically shape their future together, carry forward their food cultures intact, and have hope that our children will be able to live well as farmers if and when they choose to.

We are stronger when we act together, whether it is by marketing our products or standing up for our rights

Random Thoughts:

The huge rallies in India protesting the impending destruction of farming by private corporate interests reminds us all once again of how critically important farming and farmers are to the well-being of society. Let us count some of the ways. They provide our food and our food security, as well as fodder for livestock. They create jobs, both direct and spin-off. They supply raw materials for other industries. They supply goods that help keep the transportation industry operating. They can help heal the environment, e.g., by crop rotation. Their produce contributes to the national income. They provide exports to other countries which benefits both countries. Overall, they contribute a great deal to the general economic development of the nation.



➤ As Daniel Webster once said, *“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.”*

CUPE 3911 Monthly Grievance Summary Report

by Barret Weber, Grievance Officer

A grievance results from a violation of the Collective Agreement, Human Rights, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Labour Relations Act, or other University policies. If you feel there has been a dispute or difference of opinion or interpretation between yourself and the employer you should contact your administrator and/or your executive immediately. If the matter cannot be resolved informally then a grievance can be filed.

There are three types of grievances: individual, group, and policy.

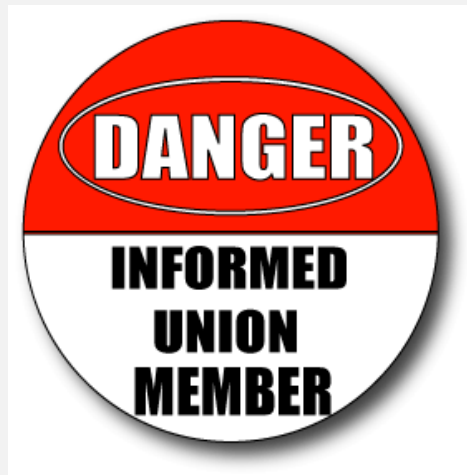
- An individual grievance is a complaint that an action by the employer has violated the rights of an individual as set out in the Collective Agreement, law or by some unfair practice. E.g., discipline, demotion, timesheets etc.
- A group grievance is a complaint by a group of individuals all affected the same way, e.g., all employees in a particular department.
- A policy grievance is a complaint by the Union that an action or failure or refusal to act by the employer is a violation of the Collective Agreement that could affect all members covered by the agreement.

Grievance Committee Activity Report for January 2021

CUPE 3911 is working hard on a number of individual, group and policy grievances on behalf of members. Here is a brief summary of the recent activity. Note that activity does not mean that previously listed grievances were not active but just that they were not active this month. Many of these activities were carried out in collaboration with our CUPE National Representative

- Continued work on grievance for new IST hire around concerns related to Article 30 - Seniority. Considering next steps.
- Investigating a historical grievance regarding a termination that was conveyed to arbitration, a settlement offered, but was never scheduled nor settled. Found union nominee to resume process.
- Informal discussions with employer on another potential Article 30 grievance. Met with employer, now considering next steps with the member.
- Continued work on two grievances filed in September; one individual grievance settled without precedent or prejudice; the second is going to arbitration; nominee found.
- Filed iPhone grievance. Step 1 scheduled for February 22.
- Organized February Grievance Committee Meeting.

The union currently has 2 active grievances, 2 grievances going to arbitration, and several areas of discussion with the employer.



Announcements

IWD Solidarity Pickets March 4, 2021 2 – 4 pm

CUPE AB Convention Online March 17 – 19, 2021

CUPE 3911 Monthly General Meeting. March 20, 2019

CUPE 3911 Website. We have a new CUPE 3911 website which we urge all our members to visit and use. The URL is CUPE3911.ca

Editorial Policy: The Outsider

The Outsider is the voice of CUPE 3911. It is our vehicle for communicating with our members, on a regular (monthly) basis, about the issues that concern and confront us as workers. The Outsider is also the voice of our members. We encourage and welcome relevant contributions from members. While contributions are welcome, they need to contribute positively to the welfare of our union local and our members. They also need to contribute positively to the advancement of public post-secondary education in Alberta. We will not accept or print attacks on any of our members or our union leadership/executive. We also reserve the right to reply to any submissions that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of CUPE 3911 and its policies. Please direct all articles, letters, comments, and ideas to our administrator.