In Brief

• Three Occupy activists settled with the city of Fredericton on December 27 as a lawsuit filed pertaining to the dismantling of their camp at Fredericton City Hall in 2011. The out-of-court settlement package included $14,350 in damages and an apology from Mayor Brad Woods. Julian Renaud, Dana Harti, and Alex Davenport filed a small claims suit against the city, Mayor Woodside and the city’s director of engineering and public works Murray Jenner in April 2012.

• BWS Manufacturing of Centreville, New Brunswick, stands accused of union busting. Twenty-six skilled workers who make parts for heavy-duty trailers were laid off just before Christmas. According to union organizers, 24 of the 26 laid off workers had just signed union cards. BWS Manufacturing, owned by Premier David Alward’s cousin, received $1.5 million from the government in 2013 to expand its operations. Their plan was to hire 30 more workers. Mario Fortunato, an organizer with the United Steelworkers, told the New Brunswick Labour and Employment Board in early December that BWS workers stand a union drive in September after complaining of low wages and poor working conditions. The Board will take months to make a decision on whether BSW had grounds to lay off the workers.

• At least 4,000 children died in Canada’s residential schools, according to a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) investigation. Over 150,000 indigenous children lived in boarding schools from the 1860s to the 1990s and “educated” in the goal of “killing the Indian in the child.” The reports indicated the children suffered and died from fires, abuse, disease and suicide. Children were buried in unmarked graves near the schools because the Canadian government refused to pay for their trip home. Many parents were told what happened to their children.

• For the first time in the history of the University of New Brunswick, its professors are on strike. On January 13, professors and teaching assistants filed a complaint against the University of New Brunswick (UNB) and members of the Association of UNB Teachers (AUNBT), set up picket lines outside the Fredericton and Saint John campuses. The professors are fighting for comparability with wages of their counterparts at 14 similar sized universities across the country. “Some of us profit, but certainly not all, and I don’t think the number is as high as the number of teaching assistants, estimates $100,000+,” It is a lot of money, but at UNB that is only after years of service and includes the many standard promotions someone would get within the company. To earn that money, teaching assistants have to complete 9 additional years of education beyond high school (often closer to 10 or 11) - think 9 years of tution and lab fees, and 9 years of not earning a full-time salary and getting promotions. On January 19, a vote of 52% of UNB Saint John on January 16. Moir noted that nearly 50 teaching and librarian positions have been cut in the last two years, many of which have been added to the university’s management.

• The UNB students brought cookies and sandwich wraps to their striking professors on January 15. “We totally appreciate the support—and the treats!” The students in Canada’s oldest A-Level signed Aw,” posted AUNBT on their Facebook page. Photo from AUNBT’s Facebook page.

On work and struggle at Canada Post

By MIKE PALECEK

I remember my first day at Canada Post. I stepped into an elevator with an elderly letter carrier who proudly proclaimed that he had the highest seniority in the country. I have no idea if it was true, I told him it was my first day. He laughed and said, “Don’t worry, it’ll be rough at first, but they say the first forty years are the hardest.”

He was still laughing when I stepped out of the elevator and watched the door close. I was twenty-two, a recent graduate of the two-week letter carrier training course where the first words we said to us were, “Welcome to easy street.” I had been working construction before this. Sure this would be easier than hanging vinyl siding while standing on a plank suspended between two ladders three stories up with no harness.

I told the crew at work that word had spread at Canada Post, everyone shook my hand. Congratulations all around. They all believed I just landed the best paying, easiest job on the planet. I had won the lottery. I remember one carpenter told me about a letter carrier who knew he delivered the odd side of the streets one day and the even side of the streets the next, so he never had to work more than four hours. Of course, it didn’t take me long to realize that these stories were just urban legends. I delivered to a lot of streets, but not Easy Street.

I had actually taken a pay cut to come work at Canada Post. I made more working construction. But I knew Canada Post was stable, whereas the construction business goes up and down. I knew they had benefits, and paid vacation, things that don’t exist in the construction industry (BC). I would love to work these famous short hours. Turns out those didn’t exist either.

The next two years as a term letter carrier, I worked long hours. Never less than fifty hours a week. I worked eighteen hours straight my first Christmas Eve at Canada Post. I volunteered for pre-shift overtime, which meant I started at four a.m. I then got sent to a different station to cover one of the worst routes in the city for the day. I didn’t finish until ten o’clock at night. I didn’t mind. The overtime was nice. I could never have afforded it. I knew I was in it for the long haul. I got the mail out. I knew I was carrying lots of Christmas cards.

The truth is I was proud of my job. I was proud to be a little part of the iconic public image of the smiling letter carrier going door to door, delivering the odd side of the streets one day and the even side another. I was proud that my work was not just another priority was customer service. But letter carrier training was a funny thing. The supervisors were assholes and they treated us like the enemy. Upper management was too busy fighting the class war to worry about anything else. It was surreal. I had organized unions before, I was an activist. I became a shop steward the day I passed my probation period, even without a permanent position. Still, this environment was unlike anything I had ever encountered. They had lost all sense of work ethic. It was like getting their work was a secondary task - something they had to do so they could get back to the real work: sticking it to those union guys.

Really, “those union guys” were one of the reasons I kept applying at Canada Post, I was proud to be a letter carrier. And I was proud to be a member of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). I knew their history. They shook the Canadian government to its very foundations. Many of the rights workers have today are a result of struggles led by the postal workers. I now really see why CUPW would probably wouldn’t have maternity leave and the public sector wouldn’t have the right to strike among other things. They had the reputation of being the toughest union in the country and I knew that’s where I belonged.

That was eight years ago. I’m still one of the “new guys” by most people’s standards. Yet so much has changed since then. More and more strikes. Reducing your customer service has disappeared completely. Management is entirely focused on crushing the union. They don’t care if they destroy themselves in the process—in fact, that is the goal. We’re working for a corporation whose leadership is trying to destroy the union, then raze the entire house, and the people at the ground hand over the infrastructure to the private sector. Prime Minister Harper, a thousand every day, falls from the sky. The largest retailer in the country, the list goes on. Canada Post is a terrifying target for these neoliberal vultures intent on looting the public sector.

And they can’t accomplish that without first destroying that iconic public image of the smiling letter carrier going door to door, without destroying the public service we provide.

Two years ago, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers saw it fit to elect me as a National Union Representative to the union executive. I had an, that is almost unheard of. But it is also a great challenge. It is once again up to us to keep our people united against the right-wing austerity drive. We will defend our union. We will fight the battle against the right-wing austerity drive.

Two years ago, me and on whether municipalities make reasonable zoning decisions that respect the rights and interests of sex workers and others,” says Hughes.

Nicole Saulnier is a third year political science student at the University of New Brunswick. She is doing an internship with the NB Media Co-op through the UNB Arts 3000 program.

Protests against cuts to the postal service were held across Canada on January 25-27, prior to the opening of the Canadian Parliament. Photo from Tony Seed’s weblog.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

NB Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper every month. To list your event, email: info@nbmediacoop.org.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art, not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community-based, documentary-screening network in the world. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays during the fall and winter at 7pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. in Sackville, films are screened monthly at Mount Allison University. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

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Struggle for sex worker rights not over (continued from page 1) ... that affects the lives and working conditions of sex workers outside of federal laws. "Much will depend on whether provinces open up the right to collect and analyze data on sex worker movements and on whether municipalities make reasonable zoning decisions that respect the rights and interests of sex workers and others,” says Hughes.

"Sex workers across Canada have provided the country with a more meaningful conversation about the oldest profession in Western society. ‘The absence of sex worker voices in the media is a huge loss, not only because they could counter the public stigma that makes traffickers and exploiters of sex workers look so much about the way the world really works,’ writes Gayle Middlebrook in an editorial of the 2011 book, Sex Workers in the Maritimes Told Black.

"It’s important to stress that Bedford is not a panacea for the stigmatisation of sex workers and the stigmatization of sex workers do not exist in a vacuum: the absence of sex worker voices in the media is a huge blow to combating social conditions that are legislated as well as enculturated," writes Fennie Hustle in a blog post for the NB Media Co-op. "We must all use the power of film and other media tools to legitimate our communities, with our families, friends and lovers."

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