

# MAY DAY PERSPECTIVE

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## We'll Never Stop Fighting for Social Justice



### Solidarity in Action

Last fall, the “Occupy” movement struck like a bolt out of a clear blue sky. After years of bail-outs for big corporations and austerity for everyone else, the discontent simmering under the surface in the United States boiled over. From the most unlikely of sources, Adbusters, an alternative magazine from Canada, came a call for 20,000 people to flood Wall St and stay there until major changes were made. Underlining the disparity between the haves and the have-nots, the slogan was simple, yet powerful: “We are the 99%”

On September 17th, the first day, 1000 people turned up. Police presence was heavy. The New York Police Department (NYPD) refused to allow protesters to set up tents, citing loitering laws. They arrested anyone who wore a mask, citing an obscure law which dates back to 1845. Over the next few days, constant police

harassment made organizing difficult. On September 24th, the protesters decided to hold a march through the financial district of New York City. Though the demonstration was entirely peaceful, police brutality was rampant. Many people were beaten or pepper-sprayed and at least 80 were arrested. Within hours, videos of unprovoked attacks by police started to surface online. They went viral and helped to boost the Occupy movement.

The Occupy movement, fuelled by earlier uprisings in Spain and the Middle East, started to spread internationally. Occupations emerged in parks and public squares across North America and around the world. On October 1st, when the occupiers, joined by organized labour, tried to march across the Brooklyn bridge, they were met with more

police brutality. The police strung nets across the bridge, trapping the peaceful demonstrators. Over 700 were arrested. This put Occupy back on the front pages and only served to build the movement and outrage the public. By October 15th, there were occupations in over 1,000 cities worldwide. When the Canadian Union of Postal Workers held its convention in Toronto, we passed a resolution in support of the Occupy movement and, as an expression of solidarity, organized a march with Occupy Toronto. Six hundred postal workers marched through the financial center of Canada behind a banner that read “Capitalism Doesn’t Work for Workers.” Through these types of actions, CUPW reaches out to the wider social justice movements and builds effective solidarity.

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# Why demonstrate on May Day?

struggle, one between capital and work. Every day, we see sustained attacks by big business, supported by the Harper government and most provincial governments. Since the Conservatives came to power in 2006, Canada has lost more than 400,000 manufacturing jobs. Harper wants the same kind of slash in the public service so his cronies will pay even less tax.

unbridled capitalism can find anyone who is ready to serve it with blind dedication. And this is where we are at right now in this country. We know the enemies we are facing and we know what they are up to, and it has to stop.

demonstrations in the streets to show our solidarity on May 1st. We called for developing local and regional coalitions to get our points of view across and build a unified struggle. We know what we want: a society with a human face that puts the welfare of people before the interests of big business.

## Time for a change

Things need to change. Last year, we went out on strike for three principles: respect, equality and sharing the benefits of new technology. Let's remember all the support we received. It came to us because our demands resonated with the public – we got it right. Others are now in the same situation. Think of workers at Rio Tinto, Caterpillar, Air Canada, Couche Tard convenience stores in Québec, teachers in British Columbia, and so many others. Our struggles are the same. We need to fight for them and for future generations.

This is why, in early March, we launched a call for widespread

**So, on May 1st, International Workers' Day, let's take to the streets to:**

- say NO to the Harper government's austerity agenda;
- let the public know about our demands for protecting our universal, public postal service;
- show we are united in the struggle being waged here and around the world to build a just, democratic and egalitarian society.

## The struggle continues.

In Solidarity,

**Denis Lemelin**  
National President

**On May 1st, International Workers' Day, we will take to the streets to strongly express that we are ready and determined to fight for good jobs, benefits, pensions and public services – demands that are shared by all grassroots organizations.**

poorer, all in a race to the bottom, in the name of greater productivity and saving the economy.

For them, the ends justify the means: anti-trade union laws, unjust back-to-work legislation, changes to pensions and universal programs, reduced public services and downward pressure on wages. No worker, unionized or non-unionized, is spared by these measures. The working class cannot put up with this any longer. We need to develop a working-class response.

## The fight is on

We knew that with a majority Conservative government, the labour movement would become the real opposition. We are now waging a struggle, a class

When the economy slows down, workers are asked to tighten their belts to the save the gigantic capitalist machinery that serves to load up CEO salaries and bonuses and bail out banks “too big to fail.” All the while, Harper buys overpriced fighter jets and spends recklessly to build warships, but never once hesitating to crush the poor and the vulnerable, who are left to pay the bill. The approach is the same, wherever

On that day, we need to vocally demonstrate against the policies of the Harper government and provincial governments that are in the pockets of big business and international capital, governments that have lost all respect for the 99% of us and that are only serving the other 1%. So the rich get richer and the poor, even

## CUPW PERSPECTIVE

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- Does not violate CUPW policy opposing discrimination and harassment against women, people of colour, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender individuals, people with different abilities, and/or CUPW policies and principles.

- is typed or written neatly.
- includes the author's name, address, local and a phone number where they can be reached if there are problems.

Perspective will withhold the author's name if necessary. Otherwise, the author's name and local will appear.

Perspective will contact authors if there are problems with their letters. We accept letters by mail, fax and electronic mail.





**On February 1<sup>st</sup>,** CUPW members across the country rallied with members of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) to demand the reduction of tuition fees. The CFS showed great solidarity with CUPW during the urban lockout last year, marching with us in rallies and on picket lines, so we were happy to reciprocate. We also produced a joint publication with the CFS in support of this day of action. Thousands of students walked out of class to join the demonstrations. In Québec, over one hundred thousand students struck against fee hikes that will nearly double tuition costs.

Governments have dropped the ball on education and the cost of investing in our future is falling increasingly on those students least able to pay. Twenty years ago, public funding accounted for 81% of university and college budgets: today it's down to 57%.

Universities increase students' tuition to bridge the funding gap. Post-secondary education is becoming inaccessible for working class people. Tuition fees have skyrocketed in almost every province in Canada. Students are now graduating with an average debt-load of \$25,000. By the end of this year the Federal Government will be owed 15 billion dollars in student loans. And while their debts are growing, students' job prospects continue to worsen.

CUPW is proud to stand with our sisters and brothers in the Canadian Federation of Students to demand tuition reductions. We are told by governments that there is no money for tuition when the cost of the Conservative Government's new fighter jets alone would pay every student's tuition for ten years! It's a question of our future. It's a question of our priorities.



# Labour Rallies for Caterpillar Workers

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, workers at London's Electro-Motive Diesel plant were locked out. The bosses were demanding a 50% wage cut and the gutting of the pension and benefits package. The company which builds engines for trains had been operating in London for over 50 years. Caterpillar had recently purchased the plant and immediately demanded massive concessions from the workers. This disgusting assault against members of the Canadian Auto Workers was enough to rally the labour movement.

On January 21<sup>st</sup>, the Ontario Federation of Labour organized a mass demonstration in support of workers at EMD. Busses from across Ontario brought supporters to London to demonstrate their outrage over the attacks from Caterpillar. Over 15,000 people rallied in support of the locked-out CAW members. Some stores even pulled Caterpillar products from their shelves to protest the



heavy-handed tactics of this multi-billion dollar company. This mobilization showed massive public support.

In early February, Caterpillar announced they would permanently close the EMD plant in London. Despite the unprecedented show of solidarity, Caterpillar decided to take advantage of cheap labour in other countries. The closure highlights the failure of Stephen Harper's Conservative government to deal with the crisis in Canada's manufacturing sector.

In 2008, Stephen Harper himself visited the EMD plant for a photo-op involving what amounted to a 5 million dollar tax-cut for EMD. We need to hold this government accountable for Caterpillar's theft from the working people of this country.

