

Superstore Negotiations

Why so long?

What can workers do?

Negotiations for new Union contracts, many Union members complain, take too long. We are approaching the first anniversary of the expiration of the Superstore Collective Agreement.... why haven't we got a new Collective Bargaining Agreement yet?

The "Pro Employer" reality of Alberta Labour Law means that a Union can't force a company to the bargaining table as early as workers would like. Superstore was in no hurry to commence negotiations.

When Superstore management arrived at the bargaining table, they immediately moved the process backwards, proposing "take-aways" for their employees. The Union Bargaining Committee has been forced to try to bargain out of a hole, instead of from the proper starting line.

The Company is showing no motivation to negotiate, even though they say that they want a deal, their actions do not reveal that they do. Instead of negotiating in good faith, they have been "throwing" nominal wage increases at brand new employees for months- just enough to bring in enough staff. This matter and others have been brought to the Labour Relations Board. Months of litigation have drained Union resources and energy. The Company says "not guilty" but they have already, in past negotiations, been found "guilty" of breaking Alberta Labour Laws.

The Company Bargaining Committee is small and seems to be uninformed regarding the realities of the operation. They have refused to share relevant information at the bargaining table and are slow or unwilling to make offers or counter offers in the bargaining process. The Company has refused to send Senior Officials and more Operations people to the table.

Company negotiators have refused Union demands for a wage offer. After a year of bargaining, they refuse to even indicate whether or not they have done any homework in the area! While the Union has insisted on a fair, informed and full discussion and has not threatened a strike, the Company insists that it will not give up its right to lock out its employees.

Many Company demands are tailor made for rejection and the company has failed to implement the recommendations of a mediation process that the Company itself offered as a solution to some bargaining issues.

Union members understandably want to know more. Where are my dues going they ask? The Company seeks to restrict Union access to you and to censor information so you don't know your rights. The Company wants to further limit Union Representatives access to your workplace, censor your Union Bulletin Board, prevent you from receiving information about your Union and Human Rights when you are hired, and drive up the cost of your Union dues by making it more expensive for your union to get their message to you. "Divide and conquer" was their strategy in the last set of contract negotiations- it is the same this time around! They don't want you to know what the Union does for you.

The Company complains that the Union has too many proposals; but why would the union throw your proposals away while the Company seeks concessions and has offered no wage increases in the rich Alberta economy? It is no surprise that the Union has a lot of proposals- thousands of employees want to fix the many problems and injustices in the stores. Even new Company leader Galen Weston Jr. has openly admitted that the Company has problems at virtually every level of its operation and a serious problem with accountability. He knows that many things need to be fixed. Our Union does not want to have a strike; but companies get the unions that they deserve. In other words, no union that is worth anything will rush into a strike, but no union that's worth anything will let its members be pushed around without fighting back.

THAT FIGHT BACK CAMPAIGN IS COMING.!

Productive Superstore employees need to survive economically and need to be treated with respect. Rich companies might call their workers “colleagues” like Superstore now does, but they can’t be allowed to give their workers empty job titles accompanied by poor wages and no future.

Superstore employees have told us that they want a stronger union and a “fight back” campaign. Union members on a special union finance committee- that includes superstore workers- are considering a possible union dues restructuring that will give you the economic means to send a stronger message to Superstore. Stand by for more information on that issue.

Other plans to speed up bargaining include a consumer campaign and a possible Strike vote. When forceful and reasonable argument, appeals to business principles and reference to ethics and morality do not work in negotiations, the Superstore employees Union will ultimately turn to its greatest strength- you! As an individual, your power is limited, but without you and your fellow union members, no merchandise or food can be ordered, stocked, or sold!

Will you continue to sell your hard work and services to this company for what they give you? Will you quit? Will you invest in a stronger union and fight back? Important choices will soon need to be made.