

APTS WEST-CENTRAL MONTREAL

OUR UNION BATTLES



No 01



**A story to be
followed and
continued**

The trade union movement has made a major contribution to improving the living and working conditions imposed by employers. The demands put forward by trade unions have contributed to social progress, and have often resulted in laws and social measures that benefit everyone. In Quebec, we need only mention hospitalization insurance, the Act respecting occupational health and safety, the Quebec parental insurance plan, access to health care and social services, and pay equity. These gains would have been impossible without massive mobilization. This collective leverage is at the root of major social change.

The gains achieved are not immutable. For some thirty years, Quebec's health and social services system has been subjected to neoliberal reforms that have had a major impact not only on you, the workers, but also on its ability to serve the population well. Even today, we are at the dawn of a new "refoundation" reform of the health and social services network with Minister Dubé's Health Plan. What's more, at every round of bargaining, the government tries to chip away at our gains and extract concessions from you. Every day, you have to be tenacious in order to protect your gains and ensure that your rights at work are respected. We need only think of the loss of professional autonomy you have suffered in recent years, the work overload experienced by many of you, and so on.

Reminder of major events



When people lived mainly in the countryside, unionism was virtually non-existent. In the 1800s, the industrial revolution transformed society. More and more people left the countryside to work in the cities, especially in factories. Two new social classes emerged: bourgeois industrial and blue-collar.

Working conditions were difficult, and employers had almost unlimited power, fueled by the abundance of available labor. Workers are totally exploited.

To ensure the family's survival, the wife and children become employees. This was a major advantage for the bosses, as they could employ them cheaply and easily. In those days, a woman earned half as much as a man, and a child three times as little. The exploitation of children was an endemic problem. From an early age, they perform menial tasks in conditions just as bad as adults. Accidents are rife. For male and female workers, life becomes too difficult. Unable to make themselves heard by the bosses, they decided to unite and help each other defend themselves and improve their living conditions by creating the first trade unions.

At the time, union organizations were not yet recognized, if not outlawed. Abuses by employers led to conflicts of rare violence in Quebec.

Over time, the unions reached more people and became better organized. They forced governments to pass the first labor laws and employers to sign employment contracts.

By dint of relentless struggle, workers' lives are improving. improved: wages rose, working hours fell, working hours were cut, and young children were no longer are no longer forced to work.



The reduced workweek: 1872

Reducing working hours became a union demand very early on, leading to numerous social struggles. In those days, life consisted of working to survive, and working time was often limited to the worker's physical stamina.” Medical reports reveal that these appalling working conditions were the cause of significant morbidity, particularly among women and children.”

To put an end to this hecatomb, the workers first mobilized to obtain an initial law to regulate child labor.

As for minimum working hours for other categories of workers, i.e. men and women, it was in 1872 that Ontario and Montreal massively supported the “nine-hour workday” movement, which sought to reduce the working day from 12 to 9 hours. It was this movement that gave rise to Workers' Day.



Next edition:
The history of the minimum wage in Quebec
divided into three major stages

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