Unionism brings Montreal bank employees from bottom to top

Wage gains ranging from $754 to $1,456 per individual, totaling 18% over two years, were won by Local 434 for its 1,000 members at the Montreal City & District Savings Bank and its 87 branches—the OPEIU’s first all-unionized bank in Canada.

Unit members overwhelmingly ratified their third contract with the Montreal bank making them “the best-paid and best-protected employees in the Canadian banking field,” according to OPEIU Vice President Remo Corbell and Local 434 President Robert Desharnais who headed the union negotiating team. “Negotiations were conducted in a firm manner, with both parties displaying a respect for each other and understanding,” the union leaders said. Before unionizing, the members were the lowest-paid bank employees in Canada.

Wage increases retroactive to Jan. 1, 1972, range from $7.25 a week in the lower grades to $14 in the top brackets, with similar boosts to take effect on the same 1973 date. Job upgrading for 302 unit members brought additional gains of $3.25 a week for 114 senior cashiers, and $4.35 for 107 assistant-accountants and 81 bank monitors.

An improved vacation plan calls for two summer weeks, or three winter weeks, after one year of service; three summer weeks, or four winter weeks, after five years; four weeks after 15 years; four summer weeks, or five winter, after 20 years, and eight weeks when an employee completes 25 years of service. (Summer period is June 1 to Oct. 31. Winter period was extended by one month from Nov. 1 to May 31.)

The bank agreed to pay full costs for an insurance plan providing 100% of salary for six months in event of sickness or accident, and 85% thereafter until retirement if an employee becomes disabled. After 15 years’ service, the 100% salary will be paid for 12 months instead of six.

The agreement also provides 100% of fees for educational courses approved by the bank; a 50% reduction in the current rate for personal loans; home mortgage loans at 3% below the current rate; this benefit to be maintained as long as an employee remains with the bank or until retirement on pension.

In case of cash shortage, a cashier will pay back 10% during the first 30 days of employment, and 25% thereafter, but not to exceed $10 per month for an employee.

Other improvements were made in language covering provisions for maternity leaves of absence, union security and seniority clauses. The bank agreed to increase advance permanent lay off notice to three months.

Field reports from the U.S. and Canada show increasing activities by various locals in organizing office employees at educational institutions. Notable victories were scored in New York and Montreal at campuses and school boards, adding 300 to OPEIU unions a month for mining technicians in the top classification.

Local union organizers score at campuses and school boards

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An initial two year contract negotiated by Local 15, Vancouver, B.C., for its new 75 member unit of office employees and mining technicians at Gran- duc Operating Company, Ltd., in Stewart, B.C., won wage increases averaging 14% effective last April 1.

Grande, near the Alaskan border, is a $200-million copper mining complex which is jointly owned by the American Smelld- ing & Refining Company and the Newmont Mining Corporation.

Employees on continuous op- erations shifts are also entitled to the premium pay. All em- ployees received $175 each in lieu of retroactivity. The agreement establishes a $4.50 monthly minimum salary for clerk- typist, the lowest office grade, and sets salaries ranging from $750 to $1,000 for a month for mining technicians in the top classification.

Vice President Remo Corbell reports that Montreal Local 57 has been certified for a 30- member office unit at the Pro- estant School Board of St. Mar- tin in that city. Representative Marc Boudard was the or- ganizer. Local 57 Representative Michel Rousseau has organized various units totaling 25 em- ployees at Regional Schools on Montreal’s south shore and has applied for certification of another 20-member unit at the Chaise Populaire St. Grégoire, also in Montreal.

Vice President H. R. Marku- sen reports that Twin Cities Local 12 in Minneapolis, Minn., has petitioned for a unit of office clerical employees at School District 832 (Mahto- med) in his area and hopes to expand the drive to other schools.

The latest tally shows that the OPEIU is now bargaining repre- sentative for office employees at eight colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada, and for some dozen units at Boards of Education.

New York’s Local 456, char- tered last year to unionize em- ployees at non-profit institutions in the metropolitan area, reports winning a 51-member unit in an NLRB election at Lutheran Community Services, Inc., State Island. The organization operates the Bethlehem Luth- eran Home, a child-care residen- tial center.

The unit includes clerical, maintenance and staff coun- selors who voted for the OPEIU by a three-to-one margin. Ju- lian Zaretzki led the organizing campaign. It is believed to be the first institution of this type to be unionized.

Detroit Local 42 won recog- nition by Michigan State Em- ployment Relations Commission as bargaining agent for the of- fice-clerical employees at Wood- hams, Blanchard & Flynn, pot- ent attorneys in Kalamazoo, Mich. Local 42 Representative Norma Tackett, who led the campaign, says this legal firm is the first to be unionized in Kalamazoo.
Montreal points the way

We would like OPEIU members to call the attention of bank employees in their own communities to the greatly improved salaries and fringe benefits they, too, can obtain through collective bargaining. As proof, we cite the third OPEIU contract just signed by Local 434 with the Montreal City & District Savings Bank covering its 1,000 employees.

Added gains in the new contract bring these unionized Canadian bank employees salaries ranging from about $5,200 annually, in the lowest grade, to more than $14,000 in the top grade. Almost one-third won promotions carrying additional raises of $13 to $17.40 a month for these individuals.

Besides very liberal vacations, sickness and accident insurance, and retirement pensions, these bank employees get extra goodies in the form of preferential treatment for personal loans that all bank employees, in both the U.S. and Canada, should and could enjoy through collective bargaining.

Unique gains are that the bank will pay 100% of all costs for approved educational courses for an employee’s self-advancement. It cut by 50% the interest rate for personal loans to buy a new car or TV set, for example. Employees wishing to buy their own homes get mortgages at 3½% below the current rate, this benefit continuing as long as they remain with the bank or until retirement. For instance, on a $15,000 mortgage this represents an annual savings of $450 in interest charges.

It goes without saying that OPEIU officials in Canada have reason to trumpet that these employees now are “the best-paid and best-protected” in that country’s banking industry. Formerly the lowest paid, they are now on top, proving to underpaid bank employees everywhere in North America that unionism and collective bargaining pay off. Bank employees: Try it. You’ll like it!

Song of Norway—bank employees’ stanza

A recently issued U.S. Department of Labor study on labor conditions in Norway reports that in September, 1969, the average unionized Norwegian bank employee earned $385.71 a month against $267.80 a month for the average non-union American bank employee. Because of the 1971 upward realignment of the kroner against the dollar, the $385.71 figure is worth $414.20 at present—without counting the regular salary boosts customary in Norway every two years.

In addition, Norwegian employers are required by law to pay 27% of payroll costs for compulsory health, welfare, social security and other benefits. Voluntary fringe benefits, negotiated by unions, boost this as high as 37.2% for salaried employees. Legally, all Norwegian workers are entitled to one month’s paid vacation annually, in addition to 10 legal holidays. Voluntary fringe benefits they enjoy include sick leave, vocational training, free or low-cost medical services in company cafeterias, employer-paid medical services, employee leisure activities, and work clothes allowances.

Since 1956, all Norwegians are covered by a National Health insurance plan. If hospitalized, they are entitled to unemployment benefits with all their surgical and hospital bills also fully paid. If married, they get family allowances for all children, the amounts per child rising steeply after the first. No such benefits are available in this country.

Unheard of also in this country, all Norwegians are allowed to take tax-deductions for transportation expenses to-and-from work. Salaried employees enjoy job evaluation and merit-rating plans, with pay and promotions reflecting the greater efficiencies and responsibilities of the individual employee—all the result of white-collar unionism.

Almost a century ago, European white-collar employees realized that if they didn’t unionize they would quickly slide to the bottom of the heap where American white-collar employees are now. Basically, that’s the reason the OPEIU was organized—to advance the cause of all white-collar employees in North America through collective bargaining.
Local 15 wraps up 3 agreements

A 7% across-the-board wage increase was gained in a one-year contract negotiated by Local 15 for its 150 members at the C.J. & C. Health Services Society, according to Business Representative Bill Swanson. The society administers health, wage- indemnity, dental and pension plans in Vancouver, B.C.

An amended vacation plan, providing three weeks in the second year, benefits some 80 employees. Other gains include an employer-paid wage- indemnity plan, providing two-thirds of current salary during sickness or accident. A number of jobs were created.

The OPEIU negotiating team assisting Swanson included Chief Office Steward Lynne Sanders. Other Local 15 negotiations won wage boosts ranging from $115 to $165 per month for office employees at Melchin Auto Transport Ltd., in a one-year contract renewal. It provides three weeks' vacation after one year of service, and four weeks after eight years'—effective Jan. 1, 1973. Chief Steward Judy Struchkak assisted Hudson in negotiations.

With the help of a B.C. mediator, Hudson also negotiated a one-year pact for Local 15's office unit at Coral Cabs Ltd., in Richmond, B.C., gaining a $15 increase in hourly wage boost and a more liberal vacation schedule calling for four weeks after eight years' of service. Chief Office Steward Dalton Smith aided in the negotiations.

NCR owned firm yields package

Wage boosts ranging from 4¾% to 6¾%, plus a newly-created merit system giving further adjustments, were negotiated by Local 385 for office and technical employees at Appleton Papers, Inc., Combined Locks, Wis. The firm, formerly known as Combined Locks Paper Co., is now owned by National Cash Register.

The one-year pact calls for one paid day off for any death of a relative other than in the immediate family and an adjustment in the selection procedure for holidays. It allows employees in the future to accumulate sick leave at the rate of five half-days per year for each year after three years' service, the maximum depending on total years of service. After use of the accumulated half-days, an additional 10 paid holidays and accident program provides 26 weeks of coverage.

Other gains include a conversion rate to be paid to any technical employees who change their scheduled workweek on a permanent basis, and pro-rated credits for paid vacation. The grievance procedure was also changed to assure a prompt reply from management.

Legal services bill backs on legal services

Legislation to allow unions to establish group legal service plans through collective bargaining is being strongly backed by the AFL-CIO Executive Council. It specifically supports a bill jointly introduced by Sen. Harrison A. Williams, D-N.J., and Rep. Frank Thompson, Jr., D-N.J., which would permit establishment of joint labor-management trust funds to finance such plans. While the concept is not new, a recent Supreme Court decision has cleared the path for the establishment of such plans, the council said, adding:

"Legal services for union members and their families can best be provided through union or community-sponsored prepaid legal service plans. The alternatives, open-ended fee-for-service arrangements, permit no effective cost controls and would lead to the same kind of runaway cost escalation many unions have suffered in fee-for-service medical programs."

Local 12 wins raises for 47

A 7% across-the-board wage increase for office employees, and a 4½% boost for store employees were won in a new one-year contract by Twin Cities Local 12 for its 47-member bargaining unit at J.T.T.-Continental Baking Company in Minneapolis, Minn., Business Manager H.R. Markstrom reports. Retroactive to Jan. 1, the pact expires next Dec 31.

Other gains were a more liberal retirement clause and a new one governing arbitration procedures. Clauses pertaining to union security and work stoppages were clarified.

Assisting Markstrom in the negotiations were Stewards Paul Horton and Larry Mottomet.
Paper plant layoffs are topic
at Mid-Canada Council meeting

Vice President Romeo Corbel, at left, meets with rehired Mid-Canada Council officials G. Goulet, treasurer; G. Pasheau, president, and P. Hobb, vice president. At right is Mid-Canada Council Representative Emil M. Stencer.

The job security of office employees in the Canadian paper industry is in jeopardy due to layoffs and plant shutdowns. OPEIU Vice President Romeo Corbel warned 56 delegates attending the Mid-Canada Council at the Labor Day weekend at Thunder Bay, Ontario. He strongly urged government intervention to prevent the plant shutdown.

He also discussed the Quebec general strike where many unions formed a common front to obtain a $10.00-a-week minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, and a general increase of 7% in wages.

Present at the two-day conference were delegates from Local 81, Thunder Bay; 219, Marathon; 236, Abitibi; 257, Domtar, Red Rock; 321, Domtar, Beardmore; 386, Great Lakes Paper; and 454, Board of Education, Thunder Bay.

The Mid-Canada Council will hold its next conference in October. Ineligible officers were reelected to another term.

Ammo firm pact reached by 303

A new three-year contract for 200 office employees represented by Local 303 at the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant in Texarkana, Texas, provides across-the-board wage boosts totaling $15,000 and greatly improved pensions and health-welfare plans. The plant is operated by Day-Zimmerman, Inc.

Subject to Pay Board approval, the first year 5% increase is retroactive to April 15 with similar increases to take effect in each of the following two years.

Monthly pension benefits under the agreement are increased 9% from $3, with a 30-year maximum. The pact calls for an increase in major medical coverage to $25,000 (was $15,000) and double indemnity for accidental death under each employee's $7,500 insurance policy.

Employees and their dependents will receive $35 per day for hospital room costs (presently $25) under the hospitalization plan. The maximum benefit formiscellaneous hospitalization will be increased to $500 (was $300), while surgical coverage under the new plan goes to $525 from $325.

The new agreement runs to April 15, 1975.

Small firms freed of controls

Most small businesses with 60 or fewer employees, except in the health services and construction industries, are exempt from wage and price regulations under a ruling announced by the Cost-of-Living Council. Also exempt are local government units with 60 or fewer employees.

The exemption affects approximately 5,000,000 small firms with some $500 billion in annual sales, and 19 million employees according to Council figures.

An estimated 67,500 government units and 370,000 employees are exempted.

Companies in health services and construction, sectors the CLC cites as having "serious inflationary impact," continue subject to controls.

Pair win reinstatement with $4,445 back pay

Mrs. Helen Press and Mrs. Sophie Rybowski, OPEIU members in Calgary, Alberta, whose work as office employees was "discontinued" by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, were awarded $4,444.86 in back pay when Local 379 brought their case before a Canadian arbitration board.

Both employees were laid off on January 1, 1971, by an official of Carpenters Local 2103. Three days later this official hired his wife and, together, they continued to do the work formerly performed by the two laid-off office employees. Local 379 immediately filed a grievance that this was a violation of its contract.

After the arbitration board decided in favor of Local 379, with the back pay award, both employees were rehired but the employer union refused to make them whole for their back pay on the ground that the board "recommended" but did not "order" it.

Local 379 then applied to the Supreme Court of Alberta to have an order enforcing the arbitration board's award. Justice Riley issued an order to this effect, granting at the same time an additional $100 to the Calgary Local to cover court costs.

1st year increase of 9% negotiated by Local 9

First-year salary boosts ranging from $683 annually in the lowest grade to $874 in the top classification were gained by Local 9 in a two-year contract covering its unit at the Milwaukee & Suburban Transit Corporation.

The first-year increase of nearly 9% includes a previous 1971 hourly cost-of-living increase frozen into the basic wage scale, according to Business Manager Edward J. Kubicki. In the second year, the pact calls for a further 4½% wage boost together with a cost-of-living escalator of 14¢ an hour for each 0.6 point rise in the Consumer Price Index above the 123.8 February base.

The contract establishes salaries for typists, in the second year, ranging from $571 a month to a $638 maximum; $701 to 5790 for Class A stenographers, and $822 to $928 for general bookkeepers.

In 1973, a new vacation schedule calls for three weeks after five years (was seven), and four weeks after 12 years (was 15).

The employer agreed to pay an additional $10 a month for each employee into the health-welfare fund, plus a further $5 monthly in 1973. An extra $4 monthly will be contributed to increase health coverage for retirees, including major medical.

Local 277 pact cuts work week

A 5% across-the-board wage boost, a shorter work week, and a denial insurance plan covering employees and their dependents are the highlights of a two-year contract negotiated by Fort Worth Local 277 with Owens-Illinois Glass in Waco, Texas.

According to President Business Manager J. B. Moss, the work week was reduced to 38½ hours from 40. Other gains include a 9¢ paid holiday, a company-paid long-term disability program, a pension plan and a liberal sick leave program.

NOTABLE ATTENDANCE RECORD: Local 382 member Jules Hostet displays gift from fellow employees on the occasion of his retirement from American Can Company in Houston, Texas. He was employed there for 30 years and was absent only three days during that time and then because of illness. He is flanked by Rosemary Oates and Al Fraser.

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$25 plus 8½% won for Local 29 unit

New pay scales start at $475 per month in the lowest bracket, rising to $525 after two years. In the top classification, the new starting rate is $530 rising to $600 in two years.

An improved vacation schedule calls for two weeks after one year; three after two; four after four; and five after 15. An additional paid holiday (employee's birthday) was gained, bringing the annual total to nine. Other gains were sick leave cumulative to 60 days; a union shop, and dues checkoff.

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