

CAMPUS CANADA

NFU boycotts Kraft for bargaining power

REGINA (CUP) - The boycott against Kraftco Corp. gained momentum last week as members of the National Farmers Union picketed grocery chain stores in major Prairie centres and in the Peace River Country of Alberta.

The purpose of the picketing was to persuade consumers to boycott Kraft products thus helping dairy producers in their battle for collective bargaining.

Kraft has been chosen as the target of the boycott because

it is the largest corporation in the food-marketing field in Canada.

In Regina, 52 picketers covered ten stores on Saturday (Nov 20). The Co-op and Safeway allowed the picketers - mainly female members of the NFU - to stand inside their buildings and distribute material, however Loblaws and Dominion would not allow them to enter.

In Edmonton, 150 picketers covered 20 stores but weren't

allow to enter any. In Saskatoon 125 picketers covered 14 stores.

Pickers reported favourable response from consumers, and clerks at some stores told them sales of Kraft products were noticeably down.

NFU locals in Saskatchewan plan to picket grocery stores at smaller Prairie centres in the next few weeks and to distribute boycott material. Similar picketing has already taken place in Ontario and boycott activity

will move next to British Columbia and Prince Edward Island.

At an evaluation session following the Saskatchewan picketing, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour promised the NFU its full support in the boycott. The Regina Labour Council and the Regina Students' Union have also voiced support of the boycott.

National co-ordinator of the campaign, Don Kossick, has discounted stories and editorials appearing in the commercial media that the boycott is throwing labour union members out of work. Workers at Kraft plants are not unionized, and the NFU has lifted the boycott against products from two of

Kraft's subsidiaries, Sealtest and Dominion Dairies, because they are unionized.

Kossick said farm union and labour union people are united in this boycott because Kraft is their common enemy. The unorganized workers at Kraft plants who cannot bargain collectively to obtain a living wage are in the same position as the farmers who are at the mercy of international corporations like Kraft or Carnation who use provincial marketing agencies to set prices and quotas.

Kossick said consumers would also benefit if farmers gain the right to collective bargaining, since this would put some controls on such firms.

General strike - maybe

MONTREAL (CUPI) - The first general strike in the history of the Quebec labour movement may be called within the next few days.

At a special meeting Saturday (Nov 13) called to plan strategy in the four-month-old La Presse conflict, 300 delegates to the Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Trade Unions voted by an overwhelming majority in favour of a motion to launch plans for the strike.

Unless there is a break in the management-labour stalemate at the Power Corporation-owned daily newspaper, the CNTU's 70,000 Montreal members will almost certainly walk off their jobs for a period of one hour to one day.

CNTU leaders have contacted Quebec's two other large trade union centrals, the Quebec Federation of Labour and the Quebec Teachers' Corporation, in attempt to have them join in the work stoppage. QFL president, Louis Laberge said it was possible some of the unions affiliated with his organization would participate. "It will be upto them to decide, on the grassroots level," he added.

Fernand Daoust, the secretary-general of the QFL, said that recourse to a general strike "would indicate to what extent the conflict at La Presse concerns not just the union members involved but the whole working class."

Quebec Teachers' Corporation president Yvan Charbonneau, said that his central was "very seriously" studying the idea of a general strike. "We might well recommend such a strike for a duration of at least an hour, but it will be up to the individual unions, at the base, to decide."

The three labour centrals have a combined membership in the Montreal region of about a quarter million workers.

Plans set in motion at the CNTU's Saturday meeting call for general assemblies of all CNTU-affiliated unions to be held this week. These assemblies would discuss the idea of a general strike and decide exactly what form it should take. Strategy committees will be formed and the assemblies will report back to the CNTU central by Friday.

On Tuesday Nov 23 leaders and the most active members of the individual unions will come together at the Paul Sauve Arena and the strike will begin shortly thereafter.

"The machinery (for a general strike) is now in motion," declared CNTU president Marcel Pepin, adding that it will not be stopped unless the situation at La Presse changed drastically.

A drastic change does not seem in the cards at this time. The latest management offer, relayed to the unions by Quebec Labour Minister Jean Cournoyer, contains one major

concession, but many difficult issues remain unresolved and the unions are far from being convinced of Power Corporation's good faith.

The new offer would give jobs security to the four "legally locked-out" unions. The threat of layoffs due to technological change was the

main issue in the dispute with these QFL affiliated unions.

However, negotiations have not yet begun with the seven unions that have been illegally locked-out since La Presse shut down three weeks ago. Their collective contracts expire at the end of December and they won't go back to work until certain major issues are settled. They are waiting for management to sit down and negotiate "seriously and quickly" with them.

The La Presse Journalists' Union is in a similar situation. Two planned negotiation sessions were cancelled at the last minute by management.

The eleven unions have formed a common front and agreed that no union will return to work until the grievances of each union have been settled.

 * "French Club Tilley Hall Room: 230 *
 * (Language Lounge) - 8th of December *
 * 7:30 p.m. *
 * Professor S. Lieutaud will speak about *
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 * batical year in France. *
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