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CANADA EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION UNION



NEWSLETTER

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10 YEARS AFTER...

Ten years ago this month, over 40,000 PSAC members in the CR Bargaining Group went on strike in support of their contract demands. While amazing in itself, a strike of this magnitude is even more amazing when one realizes that 3/4 of the strikers were women who worked in some of the lowest-paying jobs within the federal public service, and that these strikers belonged to what had heretofore been viewed as a "company union" by many trade unionists, both within and outside of the PSAC.

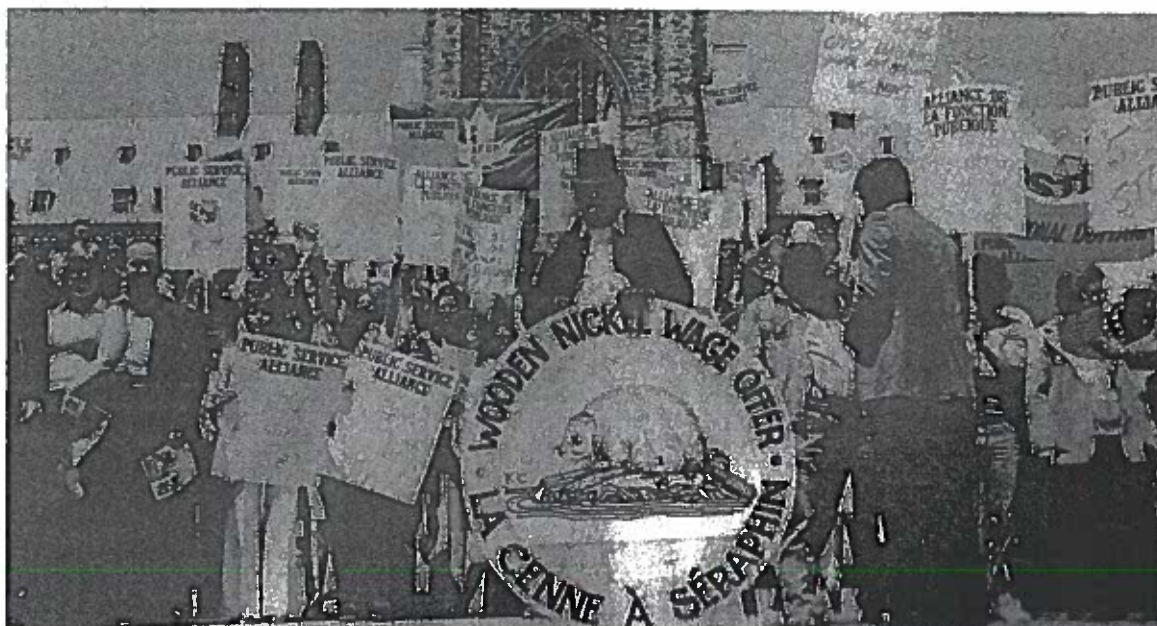
Despite these obstacles, the CR's built a militant, grass roots organization in the spirit of The Fight Continues. They did this through local organization and education, and in the process, they laid the groundwork for the transformation of the PSAC. The effects of this transformation can be seen everywhere within the PSAC and its components.

Before the CR Strike, there was very little talk of women's issues within the union or of how the PSAC/component could be changed

to ensure that women could play an equal role to the men within the union's ranks. Before the CR Strike, the majority of local, regional and national leaders within the union were male, and they came from the "officer level" Bargaining Groups (i.e.) PM's, AS's. Before the CR Strike, the majority of the PSAC's members had waived their right to strike as a method of settling collective bargaining disputes. Before the CR Strike, the majority of PSAC members had little or no understanding of concepts such as "solidarity" and "struggle".

In ten short years, we have made great strides as unionists, and we are proud to say that CEIU has been in the forefront of these changes. It is important to realize, however, that while our component has been one of the agents of this change, the catalyst came in the forms of our sister and brother CR's, within CEIU and within the Alliance as a whole, and the struggle that they waged in 1980.

In this Newsletter, we remember their struggle.



CONDITIONS FACING CR's IN 1980

The previous collective agreement, which expired in November 1979, had provided for total wage increases of 14% (6% in 1977, and 7.5% in November 1978). However, over the same period of time, the cost of living had increased by 19%. By September 1980, CR's had been without a raise for 22 months, and the cost of living had risen by a further 18%. During this same period of time, other public employee's unions (i.e. CUPW, LCUC) had won larger wage increases as well as COLA clauses.

A CR's average annual salary of \$12,815 was a mere \$200/year above the poverty level for a family of 3. The vast majority of CR's (86%) earned between \$8,246 and \$14,141 per year. Many were single parents, 76% were women, 57% were under 35 years of age, and 68% of them had less than 10 years of service with the government.

BUILDING THE STRIKE

From the very beginning, the CRs' bargaining demands centered around three issues. They wanted a decent wage increase to make up for their previous losses, as well as protection from the rapidly-escalating cost of living through a COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) clause. In addition, they were asking for a 35-hour work week.

Negotiations were stalled in January 1980, with Treasury Board not willing to meet any of these demands. The employer's position was no COLA, no change in working hours, and increases of 5% per year in each year of a two-year contract. This position remained unchanged for five months.

The PSAC organized an educational program, as well as a series of rallies in April, May and June in order to convince the government of the seriousness of the issues involved. Thousands of CR's across the country supported their Bargaining Demands and Bargaining Teams at rallies and demonstrations from St. John's, through Montreal and Ottawa, to Saskatoon and Victoria. There were 45 rallies organized in May and June alone.

Misjudging the level of determination and solidarity among the CR's, Treasury Board limited its response to all this to one small change in their bargaining position. At the end of May, they increased their wage offer to 7% in each year of a two-year contract. Everything else remained the same.



CONCILIATION

Under the provisions of the Public Service Staff Relations Act, which governs the collective bargaining process for most PSAC members, a Bargaining Group cannot strike until all issues in dispute have been reviewed by a Conciliation Board (normally composed

of one union nominee, one employer's representative, and a chairperson). Before such a Board can be established, the two sides must agree which members of the Bargaining Group will be prohibited from striking because their functions have been designated as essential for the maintenance of public health and safety. The Board issues a Report when it has finished its review. Theoretically, the parties will use the Report (which will be supported by two or all three of the Board members) as the basis for a resumption of negotiations. However, the law also allows the Bargaining Group members to strike any time after a minimum waiting period of seven days from the time the Board Report is issued.



The PSAC, realizing the lack of good faith on the part of the employer, applied to the Public Service Staff Relations Board in April for the establishment of a Conciliation Board. In June, the employer finally provided a proposed designations list and the PSSRB set up a Conciliation Board.

The Conciliation Board held hearings in Ottawa on July 31st and August 1st. The legislated deadline for the Board to issue its Report was August 14th, however, the Staff Relations Board granted two extensions—one to August 22nd and another until September 2nd. Finally, a majority Report of the union nominee and Chair, was released on August 29th. Among other things, it rejected the COLA, while recommending a 36 1/2-hour work week, and wage increases of 10% and 9% in a two-year agreement. Originally, the Alliance Executive supported the Report, and recommended that CR's vote in favour of it. However, because the Report did not meet any of their major demands, most CR's were opposed. Ultimately, the issue of whether or not the Union and/or its members supported the Report lost any importance, as Treasury Board rejected it and refused to consider it as the basis for any settlement.



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WILDCATS!

On September 5th, Treasury Board sent an open letter to all CR's, in which they claimed that the PSAC was asking members to ratify a package that did not exist, because the Majority Report was not acceptable to the employer. They ignored the fact that the union was asking the CR's simply to pass judgement on the Report and implied that the Alliance was misleading its members.

Many CR's saw the letter as a blatant attempt by the employer to interfere in their union's affairs. It was becoming clear that a strike was the only solution to the problem.

A series of spontaneous local strikes began on September 8th. These walkouts were neither sanctioned, nor supported by the PSAC national leadership who called for a return to work. However, the number of walkouts snowballed, as CR's in one location heard what was happening in other locations. Many CEC's were affected by the wildcats, and postal CR's succeeded in shutting-down the major letter sorting plants in Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City. The disruptions increased as the week went on, and militants began planning for a major escalation of the campaign on September 15th.

In view of the intense pressure created by the wildcat strikes, the PSAC National Board of Directors held a special meeting on September 13th, and decided to speed up the strike Conciliation Board Report votes. At the same time, the NBOD reversed the PSAC's official position, and urged the Clerks to reject the Conciliation Board Report. All members were advised to return to work until after the national strike vote had been completed.

As a result of these decisions, most members went back to work, although some of the walkouts continued on September 15th. All work stoppages were halted after that date, but many CR's began workplace campaigns (work-to-rule, slowdowns) to express their dissatisfaction with the employer. By September 22nd, both votes had been completed. The Conciliation Board Report was rejected, and 90% of the CR's voted on the strike question, with 75% voting in favour.

On September 24th, negotiations resumed and Treasury Board tabled another offer--10% and 9% over two years, but still no COLA or reduction in the work week. This proposal was rejected by PSAC negotiators.

The government followed this with another proposal on September 26th. This time, they offered a one-time lump sum payment of \$1,500 or 10%, whichever was greater, which would not be added to the base salary. This would be followed by a 20% increase based on 1978 salary levels in the second year of the contract. PSAC

negotiators determined that this revised offer would provide the average CR with \$12/year more than the September 24th offer. Negotiations terminated, and a national strike was authorized to begin on Monday, September 29th.

In a last gesture of bad faith, local management in some areas decided to withhold the CRs' last paycheque (due that week). Consequently, CR's in several worksites across the country staged sit-ins in their local offices in order to obtain their final paycheques before the strike.

A message to federal government clerks: **Figures can lie.**

The Public Service Alliance of Canada sets the record straight on the latest contract offer of Sept. 26.

Treasury Board's latest offer is unrealistic and fails to provide you economic justice.

Treasury Board hasn't told you:

that the latest increase is added to your 1978 salary.

Treasury Board hasn't told you:

that the difference between the last two offers is, on the average salary, an increase of only \$12 over the life of a two-year agreement to expire November 1981.

Treasury Board hasn't told you:

that the \$1,500 or 10% of your salary, whichever is greater, does not become part of your salary. It is not added to your salary rate.

Under the Sept. 25 Treasury Board offer the first 10% would be added to your salary and the second 9% would be added onto that.

The new Treasury Board offer is designed to confuse people. The offer would raise your average salary by only \$12. Because of the lump sum payment only \$12 would be reflected on your salary.

Don't be fooled by the lump sum payment. This does not replace a Cost of Living Allowance. Clerks in levels 5, 6 and 7 would have received the same retroactivity with the straight 10 per cent increase. CRs in the lower levels would benefit slightly but the benefits would not be enough to improve your salary.

The wages of federal government clerks are 16% behind those of clerks in the private sector. Treasury Board's offer won't improve your position. The offer means you'll remain 16% behind.

Reproduced below is a comparison of Treasury Board's last two offers based on the average salary of a clerk: \$12,815.

	Treasury Board's Sept. 26 offer	Treasury Board's Sept. 25 offer
Nov. 1979	*Lump sum \$1,500 or 10%	10% increase on 1978 salary
Effect on salary	NIL	\$14,097
Nov. 1980	20% increase on 1978 salary	9% increase on 1979 salary
Effect on salary	would increase average salary to \$15,378	would increase average salary to \$15,366

Difference

Lump sum payment is only a one-shot deal that does nothing to raise your salary. It is simply in lieu of retroactive pay.

\$12

SUPPORT THE FEDERAL CLERKS

PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA



ALLIANCE DE LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DU CANADA

Monday, September 29th, saw 10's of thousands of CR's taking to the streets. Approximately 90% of the 43,000 who were eligible to strike walked out. Morale was high and the attitude of the clerks was that they would not go back to work without a decent contract.

It quickly became apparent that the employer was prepared to wait for the strike to fall apart. Consequently, after several days, the Alliance began warning that the strike would be escalated to include other PSAC members. On October 3rd, 20,000 CR's and their sup-

porters marched in Ottawa to reinforce the clerks' demands. That same day, PSAC National President, Andy Stewart, called on all Alliance members to honour the CR picket lines, effective October 6th.

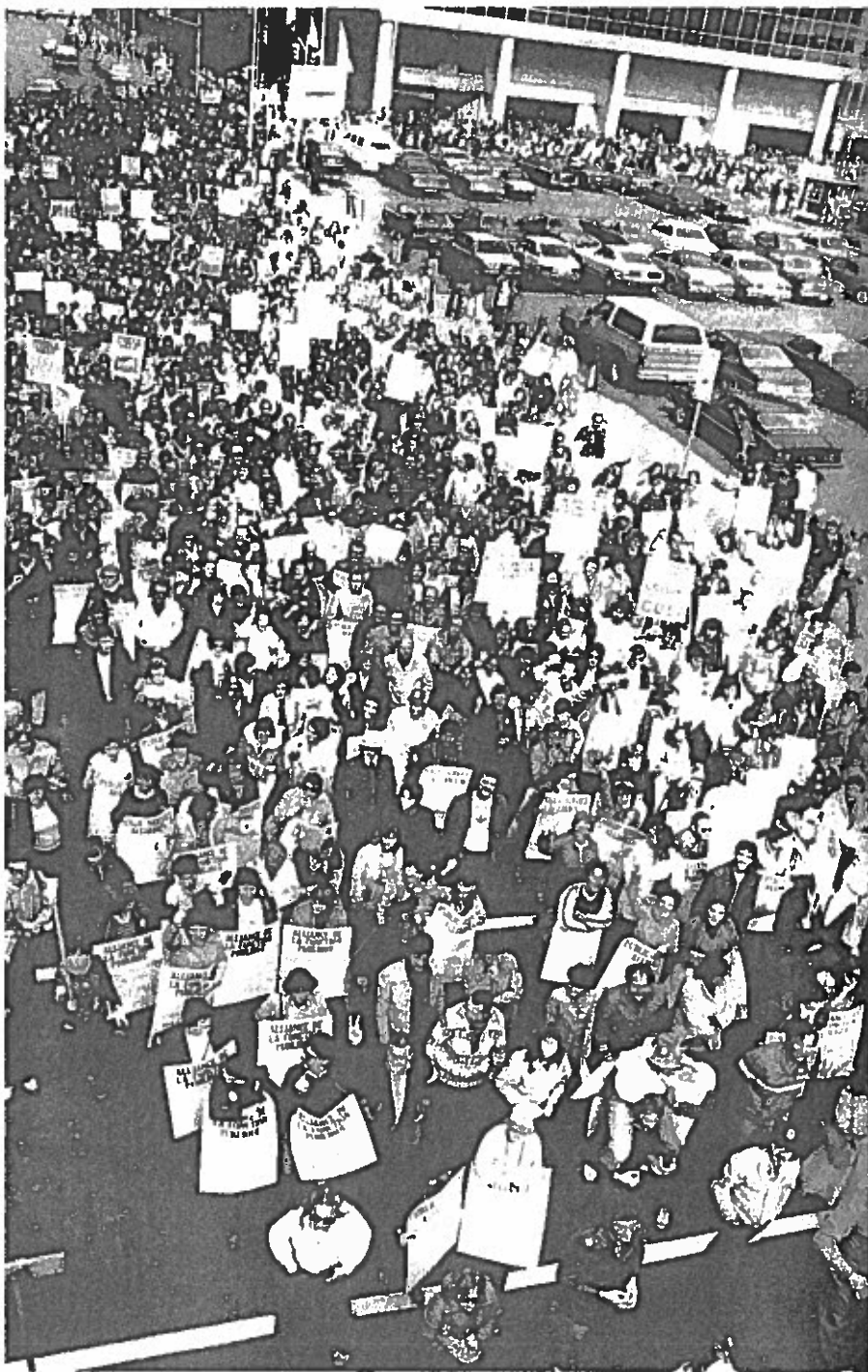
On October 4th, postal facilities in Vancouver, Victoria and Quebec City were shut down by CR picket lines, and approximately 1,000 CR's demonstrated in Winnipeg.

Also on October 4th, the PSSRB, at the urging of the employer, declared that any refusal to cross CR picket lines by designated CR's or members of other bargaining groups would be illegal. The next day, the government announced that any PSAC members participating in the October 6th sympathy strike would be severely disciplined, with 3-day suspensions for the first day of work missed, and 5-day suspensions for the second day missed.

Despite these scare tactics, thousands of PSAC members (non-CR's, and designated CR's) walked the picket lines. Airports were closed in several locations (including Regina, Sault Ste. Marie and Whitehorse), while airport operations were halted or delayed in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Mirabel. Many CEC's were closed, and there were huge traffic tie-ups at Border crossings. However, in Ottawa, where a government-wide walkout would have had the strongest impact, the PSAC adopted a policy of selective picketing. Consequently, many buildings were not picketed, which meant that all those members who had been asked to honour picket lines went in to work, because there were no picket lines to honour.

The massive walkouts elsewhere across the country, encouraged the Federal Court to grant the employer's request for an injunction against the sympathy strike. The Court ordered designated CR's to return to work, or else face contempt of Court charges with maximum penalties of 1 year in jail or a \$5,000 fine.

At 4:30 p.m. on October 6th, the two sides resumed negotiations, which would last 30 hours and would conclude with a tentative agreement. The PSAC and the employer agreed that the talks would be assisted by former PSSRB Chair, Jacob Finkelman.





TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

Negotiations continued during the night of October 6-7th. By 7:30 a.m. on October 7th, agreement had been reached on a wage increase, and the two parties had dropped the issues of a COLA and a reduced work-week.

The only issue that remained was that of amnesty for those who had honoured the CR picket lines. Not only were these PSAC members facing substantial penalties, but the PSAC had promised its members that they would not incur any financial penalties as a result of honouring the picket lines. Treasury Board took the position that while they would agree to a reduction in the penalties, they would not agree to an amnesty, and they were willing to see the strike continue on that point alone.

While these discussions were continuing, the Federal Court granted another injunction against the non-CR's who had honoured the CR picket lines, with penalties similar to those in force against the designated CR's.

In the face of these pressures, the PSAC agreed to a proposal by mediator Finkelman which allowed the employer to apply disciplinary sanctions against those who had honoured the CR's picket lines. Employees then would have the option of filing grievances, or of referring complaints vis-à-vis these sanctions to a joint union/management committee for review and possible modification. However, once an option was chosen, the employee would not be able to change.

Following this, a tentative agreement was signed at 11:00 p.m. on October 7th. The agreement provided for a 10% wage increase effective November 1979, followed by a 9% increase effective November 1980, and a 4% increase effective May 1981, which represented a compounded increase of 24.7% over a two-year period. In addition, a one-time, lump sum payment equal to the difference between the first 10% increase and \$1,500 would be given to those CR's whose 10% increase would be less than \$1,500. The new agreement also provided significant new advances in the area of family leave.

Many CR's were angry with the tentative agreement because it did not provide for a COLA, nor did it give an amnesty to those who had supported them. Despite this anger, however, significant numbers voted in favour of the agreement. The final results indicated a turnout of 83.9%, with 71.2% voting in favour.

AFTERMATH

The example of the CRs' struggle was not lost on the employer the next time they came to the Bargaining Table. Rather than face another strike, the Treasury Board agreed to a 26-month contract with wage increases of 13% and 12.25%, in addition to other gains such as 17 weeks' fully-paid maternity leave.

The government then turned around and demonstrated why it is so important that union members remain militant in order to protect the gains that they have made. It was this government which imposed the hated "6 and 5" program on all federal public employees, and in the process, rolled back the 12.25% increase which was due to the CR's in the second year of that contract.

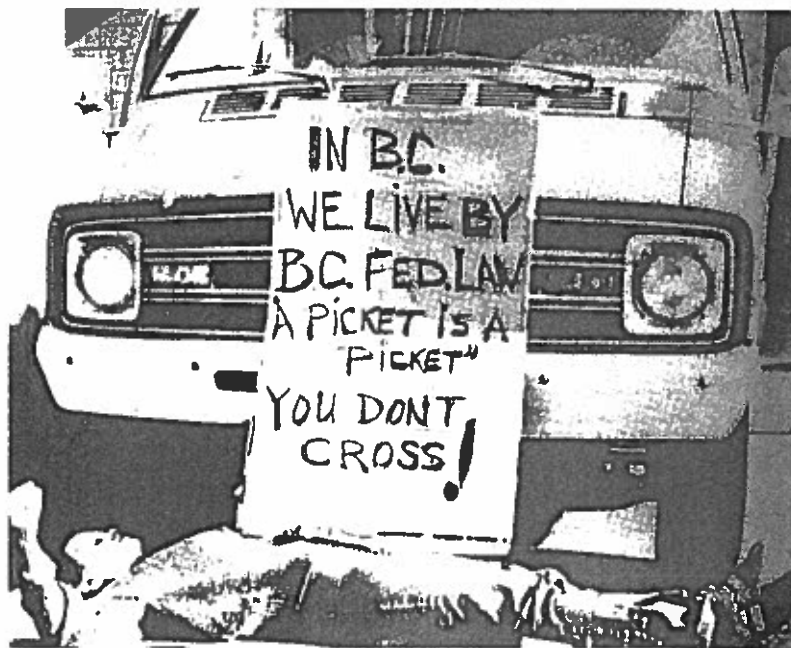
The Struggle Continues.



LABOUR SOLIDARITY

Prior to the CR Strike, the PSAC had been viewed as nothing more than a "company" association by a majority of Canadian unionists. Nor was this image entirely unfair. Historically, the PSAC and its components had been inconsistent at best in terms of lending support to other workers' struggles across the country. In addition, most PSAC members had preferred binding arbitration with no right to strike as a method of settling collective bargaining disputes. This lack of labour solidarity and unwillingness to fight for their own collective agreements combined to give PSAC members the image of passive, uncomplaining, uncaring, reluctant members of the House of Labour.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the Canadian Postal Service. At the time of the CR Strike, postal employees were split between two large unions, CUPW (most inside workers) and LCUC (letter carriers), as well as the PSAC, which represented administrative and support workers. In the decade prior to 1980, CUPW had waged two major national strikes and had been successful in obtaining better collective agreements than those of PSAC members. During the course of those strikes, Alliance members had done little to show their solidarity with CUPW—most had crossed CUPW picket lines, and some had worked actively against CUPW. Consequently, there were bitter feelings on the part of many CUPW members towards the PSAC.



*My best wishes to you all — as an equally underpaid hospital worker (we keep the paper work going so that the wheels keep turning!) my heart is with you in this fight. I wish I could do more — but at least have a few cups of tea or coffee with me by using the enclosed.
A Fellow Worker.*

Despite this bitterness, and despite their reluctance to support the CR's, many postal workers (both CUPW and LCUC members) risked disciplinary sanctions by honouring CR picket lines when they appeared in early September. However, postal workers and other unionists continued to question why they should support the CR's when the vast majority of PSAC members were crossing CR picket lines to go in to work.

In view of this fact, as well as the fact that some provincial federations of labour refused to support the honouring of picket lines in cases where the striking union's members (with the obvious exception of scabs) did not honour the lines, the PSAC promised not to disrupt postal services or to request that other unions honour the CR's picket lines, when the strike call for September 29th was made. Despite this fact, CR lines were honoured by many individual trade unionists, with support becoming widespread throughout the CLC and its affiliates. After the PSAC called on all Alliance members to walk out on October 6th.

CONTRACT IMPROVEMENTS 1980 CR STRIKE

****DEFINITIONS****

Recognition of Common-Law Spouse

****DISCIPLINE****

Disciplinary Record removed after two years
Right to Union Representation at Local Hearings

****LEAVE****

Annual Leave Retroactive Improvements
Maternity Leave--Two weeks' paid
Maternity Leave--Improvements to Leave Without Pay
New Clause--Adoption Leave
New Clause--Paternity Leave
New Clause--Care and Nurturing Leave
New Clause--Family Related Leave
New Clause--Personal Needs Leave
New Clause--Spousal Relocation Leave
Sick Leave--Increased Number of Casual Sick Days

****NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL****

NJC Grievance Procedure in Contract
NIC Policies made part of the Contract

****PAY****

Meal Allowance increased
Severance Pay improvements for Retirees and those released for Incapacity
Shift Premium and Weekend Premium increased
Stand-By Pay increased
Wages--10% or \$1500 increase in the first year
Wages--9% increase in the next six months
Wages--4% increase in the final six months

PUBLIC SERVICE
ALLIANCE

Shift Workers

1st Line Employees

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P.S.

F.P.

LA FONCTION
PUBLIQUE

5% RAISE
THEN YOU
GET 5% WORK
TRY ME