

A DIRECT IMPACT SPECIAL
COMMEMORATIVE PULLOUT

YEARS OF
**SOLI
DAR
ITY**

LOOKING BACK AT THE EVENTS
THAT SHAPED OUR UNION
(AND HOW OUR UNION HELPED SHAPE ALBERTA)



1976-2016



I hope you enjoyed your summer and are looking forward to another year of AUPE strength and solidarity.

This is a very special issue of *Direct Impact*, one that packs in four decades of activism, solidarity and victories for AUPE as we grew from our predecessor, the Civil Service Association of Alberta, to the union we are today.

AUPE was born 40 years ago out of a necessity to have a stronger, more united front when it came to bargaining with the government as the employer.

Over the years, we've seen our members band together to fend off attacks on their collective bargaining rights and the public services that make Alberta such a wonderful place to work and call home.

We overcame orchestrated attempts to sabotage AUPE's effectiveness and unprecedented attacks on your rights as this province's working people.

When Alberta underwent a wave of deep austerity under Ralph Klein, decimating AUPE's ranks in the process, we didn't lay down without a fight.

Those were hard times. But life's most important fights aren't easy. We defended Alberta's public services and working people – all of you.

We grew larger and stronger in our solidarity, becoming Alberta's largest union – a union known for fighting on the frontlines to protect the services that Albertans rely upon.

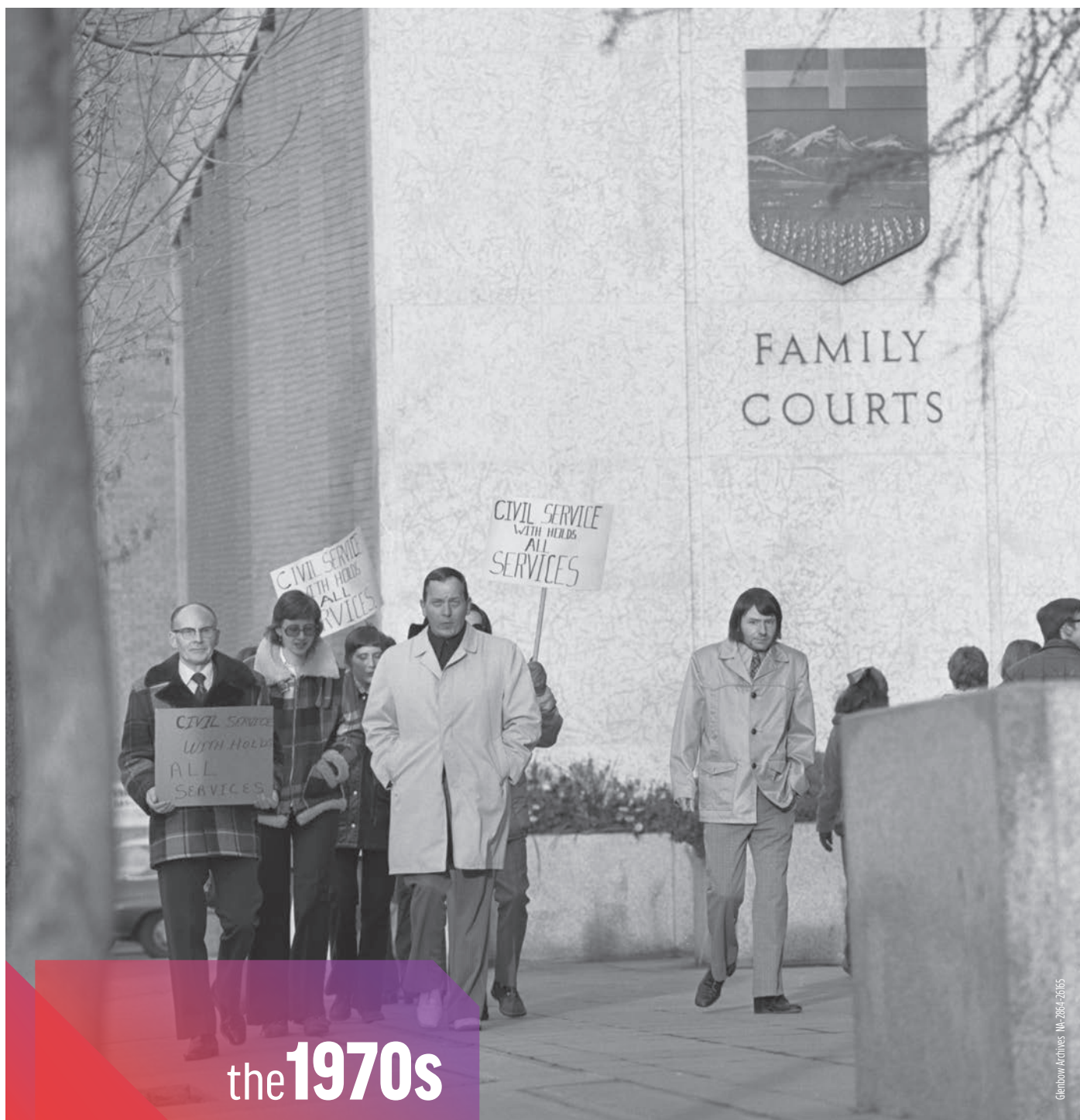
Inside this special commemorative pullout, you'll find a trove of AUPE history, stories and profiles of the members and staff who helped shape our union into the strong defender of public services and jobs you see today.

Take some time to look back on AUPE's history of accomplishments, reflecting on those who struggled so hard to bring us to where we are today. I know all of you will help keep us strong and united as we begin to face the unknown challenges that lie ahead.

Learning our history can help us prepare for our future – a future where AUPE remains strong, united and on the forefront of protecting and defending Alberta's vital public services.

In Solidarity,

Guy Smith
AUPE President



Glenbow Archives NA-2064-2065

The Progressive Conservative party was newly elected to government and trying to find their feet following 36 years of Social Credit rule. At the same time, government employees in the Civil Service Association of Alberta were getting frustrated with arbitrary decisions and being treated like servants.

Wildcats and job actions through the early part of the decade forced the Lougheed government to establish a task force to examine the relationship between the government and its employees. That task force led to the creation of AUPE out of the CSAA, but it was also a front to justify regressive labour legislation that deprived government employees of many of their bargaining rights. At the same time, women were becoming a force to be reckoned within the labour movement. The stage was set for change.

Above: CSAA members picket in October 1974. The entire government general service walked out for three days to protest government sabotage of collective bargaining.

BORN IN CONFLICT

Growing militancy among provincial employees leads to birth of AUPE

For decades, Alberta's Social Credit government treated public employees as servants. In fact, it's what the government called its workers – civil servants.

There was an expectation government employees should be grateful to have jobs and accept whatever wages and working conditions their employer chose. The government assumed public employees had no right to strike and that their right to bargain did not go much beyond begging.

This image of obedient servant began to unravel in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Growing dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions led public employees and their organization, the Civil Service Association of Alberta (CSAA), into uncharted territory of job actions, civil disobedience and strikes.

The first salvos in the conflict were a series of demonstrations by Alberta Liquor Control Board (ALCB) staff against wage rates imposed by the legislature in 1971. These culminated in the largest demonstration in CSAA's history when 500 rallied on April 15.

However, it was a wildcat strike by correctional officers that set CSAA on the path of becoming a *bona fide* union. Unhappy with poor wages and understaffing, correctional officers walked off the job Aug. 27, 1971, three days before the provincial election. It was CSAA's first strike, and it helped unseat the Social Credit Party that had been in power since 1935.

Sadly for public employees, the incoming Lougheed government was not much better. It failed to keep promises of full labour rights and began making changes to wages and working conditions that enraged workers. However, public employees had begun to realize their ability to resist attacks through collective actions.



Above: 500 ALCB workers march on the legislature in April 1971 in the first major demonstration in CSAA history. Inset: Police block protesters' entrance into the legislature.



When the government reclassified its skilled trades workers, costing many tradespersons money, they answered by having study sessions in 1973 that took them off the job for long periods, and by organizing a major rally when the legislature resumed that fall. In the face of their growing protest, the Lougheed government backed down and rescinded the reclassification scheme.

In December 1973, 1,200 psychiatric nurses and aides in Crown hospitals and institutions began job actions over an arbitrary ruling that took away vacation entitlements. After voting down an employer compromise, the workers won full reinstatement of their rights.

In April 1974, ALCB workers went on strike against imposed wage rates. They stayed out for 10 days until a court injunction forced them back to work, but their strike won them a much bigger wage increase than the employer offered.

On Oct. 1, 1974, 12,500 government general service workers went on strike for three days, protesting the government's unilateral wage increase of \$50 per month, just before they were supposed to negotiate a wage reopener with CSAA. Again, the government backed down, agreeing to give workers \$75 per month. This was the largest job action ever by CSAA, and it was a win.

The benefits of collective action were not lost on the membership of CSAA. When they took strike action in 1973 and 1974, they won important gains, despite the constant government attempts to punish workers and CSAA during the disputes. A growing confidence in their ability to create change was crucial to the creation of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees in 1976.

CSAA president Bill Broad credited the job actions with laying the groundwork for a new union at the November 1974 convention: "This year the CSAA became the union of provincial employees in Alberta." ■



BILL BROAD ELECTED CSAA PRESIDENT

1971-1978

Bill Broad was the last CSAA president and the first for AUPE.

FIRST CSAA RALLY AND STRIKE

In April, 500 ALCB members rally in CSAA's first mass action. In August, corrections officers walked out in CSAA's first strike, three days before a provincial election, contributing to a Social Credit loss.

1971

TRADES AND ALLIED WORKERS WILDCAT

1973

12,500 MEMBERS WALK OFF THE JOB DURING GOVERNMENT GENERAL SERVICES WILDCAT

1974

LOUGHEED SECURES LABOUR PEACE

In the lead up to a provincial election, Lougheed established the Joint Task Force to negotiate with public sector workers and their unions to change labour laws. Internal documents would reveal the government had no intention of extending the right to strike, a fundamental premise of CSAA/AUPE's participation in the Joint Task Force.

1975



PETER LOUGHEED BECOMES PREMIER

1971-1985

Before Lougheed ends 36 years of Social Credit rule in a historic election, he promises CSAA that a Progressive Conservative government "would give [CSAA] members the same basic bargaining rights enjoyed by organized labour in the province." CSAA understands the right to strike to be included in that promise.

HEALTH & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ALCB WILDCATS

CSAA MEMBERSHIP
23,200



Courtesy of Alberta Provincial Archives

LOUGHEED'S BETRAYAL

It was a clear commitment from Peter Lougheed, who seemed to want labour peace: Work with us and after the election Alberta's government employees will enjoy the benefit of full collective bargaining rights, like their private sector counterparts.

But behind the curtain a different plan was afoot, one that would lead to a deep betrayal of the province's public sector workers, the effects of which would be felt for over 40 years.

Alberta has had a long and unfortunate history of regressive labour relations laws going back to mere years after its birth as a province. In fact, early iterations of labour laws

deemed any form of bargaining or wage negotiations among public workers grounds for termination.

It was that type of heavy-handedness that led to the birth of the Civil Service Association of Alberta (CSAA), AUPE's predecessor.

CSAA would mount illegal strikes and campaigns against unfair treatment of workers over the decades, but the strife came to a head in the lead up to the 1971 Alberta election that saw Social Credit defeated by Lougheed's Tories.

It was then that Lougheed, as leader of the official Opposition, wrote to the head of CSAA promising that, if he won the election, his government would expand bargaining rights for all public sector workers in the province. That didn't happen.

Instead his government struck a committee, the Joint Task Force on Provincial Public Service Relations, a two-year process that ultimately became the justifica-

tion for ramming through draconian laws that severely limited workers' collective bargaining rights.

On the surface, the task force was meant to create a cooperative approach to collective bargaining that would legalize the right to strike for public sector workers. Lougheed's government used the task force as a shield from criticism during the province's 1975 election that saw his party go on to win a landslide victory.

Internal documents unearthed by AUPE reveal the government never had any intention of giving workers the right to strike or expanding their bargaining rights. It was during the task force process that CSAA officially became AUPE. The task force was so fractured it ultimately produced two completely separate reports issuing vastly different recommendations, but the government still used it as justification for anti-union legislation.

That legislation came on April 28, 1977, in the form of the Public Service Employee Relations Act, or PSERA, a regressive law that failed to extend full collective bargaining rights to government employees. Instead it codified a blanket ban on strikes for public sector workers and instituted an arbitration process designed to favour the government as the employer.

It was a classic bait-and-switch on the very people who had helped ensure Lougheed's government would survive re-election in 1975, solidifying his party's grip on power and ensuring a collective bargaining process that was stacked against unions.

The betrayal was deep and had aftershocks that were felt through the entirety of the PC time in government in Alberta. But in 2015, nearly 40 years after PSERA was made law, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled a blanket ban on strikes violates workers' Constitutional rights to free and fair collective bargaining. The damage of Lougheed's broken promise is finally being undone as public sector workers in Alberta contend with the potential of legal strikes for the first time in decades. ■



Courtesy of Alberta Provincial Archives

Above: Correctional officers picketing in August 1971. This first-ever strike by CSAA members began just three days before the provincial election and helped end 36 years of Social Credit rule.



AUPE FORMED

With the repeal the CSAA Act, the way was paved for the creation of AUPE as an independent trade union. The fledgling union held its founding convention the following year.

1976

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

AUPE takes part in a national day of action against wage and price controls. One million workers across Canada refused to work on Oct. 14, 1976. In 1975 Pierre Trudeau introduced C-73, the Anti-inflation Act (known as wage and price controls), which capped increases on workers' pay.

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ACT

Lougheed government passes the Public Service Employee Relations Act, or PSERA, in May 1977. AUPE president Bill Broad said that PSERA "has one purpose—to hold our members down."

1977

AUPE MEMBERSHIP 34,200



**JOHN BOOTH ELECTED
AUPE PRESIDENT**
1978-1987

1978



AUPE OHS & EDUCATION

AUPE consolidates its member training and servicing programs, including hiring Dennis Malayko as Canada's first full-time union health and safety officer and launching a union education program with a focus on the role of Union Stewards. Support for injured members would be further expanded in 2000 with the introduction of a full-time WCB analyst position.

1979

AUPE MOBILIZATION

AUPE initiates a new wave of mobilization, leading up to and beyond the 1979 provincial election.



Courtesy of Alberta Provincial Archives

WOMEN'S GROWING VOICE IN AUPE

Working conditions for women in the 1970s were quite different than they are now. “When I started in 1970, we had no maternity leave, we had little vacation and we had no long-term disability. As a married woman, you couldn’t belong to the pension plan,” said Lorraine Ellis, a long-time member of AUPE.

Leading up to the 1970s, however, more women were joining the civil service as public sector unions became a growing force in Canada’s labour movement. In 1962, women comprised only 16.4 per cent of union members across Canada, even though they made up 30 per cent of the labour force.

But as public service workers became unionized and pressured employers to join them at the bargaining table, many new union members were women. This demographic shift was also reflected in CSAA/AUPE membership.

CSAA pointed out that the Alberta government was violating its own Individual Rights Protection Act, which included provisions requiring employers to pay women equally for equal work. The government said it would take ten years to implement the law in its own workforce, despite expecting private sector employers to comply immediately. These and other concerns of female CSAA members coalesced at the association’s first women’s conference in October 1975.

While private sector unions were largely male dominated, the growing number of women in the public sector would help transform the face of the labour movement. These new union members were often concentrated in “pink collar” administrative roles where double standards persisted. “You had to quit when you got pregnant,” said Ellis. “You couldn’t wear pants. We had to wear skirts. It was a blessed day when they finally said we could wear pantsuits, but we had to have a matching jacket and pants with a shirt,” she said.

This concentration of women in “pink collar” jobs created pockets of unionized women. Before the creation of AUPE, women were often scarce at union meetings. With the transition from CSAA to AUPE, certain locals were made up of a majority of women, including Local 001 representing administrative workers like Ellis. This shift provided an opportunity for female members to discuss gendered issues and bring forward concerns as a unified group.



Top: Women picketing during the massive October 1974 government general service strike. Inset: The growth of information, health and support services in the 1960s and 1970s brought women into the workforce and the union movement in unprecedented numbers.

Changes in AUPE paralleled larger societal shifts that were changing women’s roles. On the national stage, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada and the activism that crystallized around it would come to be seen as a watershed moment that both raised awareness of the barriers women faced and emboldened the already growing women’s movement.

Unionized and non-unionized women continued to struggle with issues of pay inequity and other forms of discrimination. But through the strength of the countrywide women’s movement, including the influence of women in AUPE, women increasingly voiced demands and fought for their rights. In fact, AUPE’s 1980 convention prioritized equality of women in the workplace. As a union, we continue the fight today. ■



the 1980s

AUPE was brand new and still reeling from the passage of PSERA, but that didn't stop it from flexing its union muscle and calling out the government. An off-hand quip by the finance minister led to a three-week wildcat strike by government employees that taught the government not to take the new union for granted. At the same time, union members were becoming more educated about their role in the workplace and the union.

But with the rise of economic policy through which governments claimed "the market" demanded drastic anti-worker measures, it was clear the new union was in for a big fight. The PC government, securely in place for a decade, began to implement an agenda of more privatization and contracting out, and an expansion of the ban on strikes by public sector workers. The union responded by organizing, working together with other labour organizations and taking their fight to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Above: A massive rally took place July 1980 at the legislature during AUPE's first major strike action.



THE APPLES AND ORANGES STRIKE

AUPE's three-week apples and oranges strike in July 1980 surprised everyone, except the members who walked.

It happened four years after AUPE was born and three years after the Alberta government passed the most regressive piece of labour legislation in Canada at the time. Not only did the Public Service Employees Relations Act (PSERA) ban strikes by provincial government employees and others in its jurisdiction, it also excluded thousands of workers and set up a system of interest arbitration rigged against the union.

AUPE members felt especially deceived after Lougheed promised in 1971 that, if elected, he would grant provincial employees the same bargaining rights as other workers. By 1979, frustrations peaked and the union's convention that year pledged to make the upcoming term a test for negotiations.

AUPE held strike seminars and kicked off a massive information campaign across Alberta.

Soon after convention, Alberta's finance minister issued "guidelines" limiting wage increases in negotiations to between 7.5 and 9 per cent.

When asked how he could justify limiting wage increases for public employees when MLAs awarded themselves a 47-per-cent wage increase, he answered it was "comparing apples to oranges."

That quip would haunt the government. Over 3,000 "apples" went on strike, aware their actions were illegal. It began with 186 Alberta Liquor Control Board workers walking out, soon followed by 1,000 correctional officers at nine sites. Almost 2,000 clerical and administrative support staff walked out from the law courts, land titles, motor vehicles and the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission on July 16.

The walkouts were strategic, limited to places where they would have maximum impact. Lawyers and real estate agents were apoplectic. The RCMP was over-extended in the prisons and the legal system was all but stymied.

Members' determination became clear when courts began to issue injunctions in the second and third weeks of the strike. Most picketers refused to accept, and injunctions were dropped at their feet.

AUPE staff and members stood together on the steps of the Edmonton courthouse, clapping hands and chanting support slogans, while a riot squad assembled across the street.

The "apples" won that strike. Not only did they achieve wage increases in excess of the government guidelines, but the union also disputed a bad law.

In 1987, AUPE challenged PSERA in the Supreme Court but was unsuccessful. However, in 2015 the court reversed its stand, laying the basis for Alberta's Bill 4. It took 40 years, but AUPE members now have the same bargaining rights as most other workers in the province and public sector workers across the country. ■



Above: AUPE members at the legislature during the apples and oranges strike. The strike erupted after MLAs gave themselves huge wage increases while trying to force restraint on government workers. Left: As part of its 40th anniversary, AUPE created a poster commemorating this significant moment in union history.



The union used the apples and oranges theme again in its campaign for better wages in 1982.



APPLES AND ORANGES CAMPAIGN AND STRIKE
See story on this page.

MEMBERSHIP REACHES HIGHWATER MARK OF NEARLY 50,000



MEMBERSHIP DIPS TO 46,000

1980

MEMBERSHIP IS 41,280
HALF OF WHICH ARE WOMEN



1982

AUPE MOVES INTO NEW HEADQUARTERS AT SOLIDARITY PLACE IN EDMONTON



1983

WAR ON 44

AUPE joins the Alberta Federation of Labour's "War on 44" opposing Bill 44, which extended the ban on public sector strikes. The union also launched a series of public campaigns against the harmful effects of government cutbacks, layoffs and privatization.

1985



DON GETTY BECOMES PREMIER
1985-1992

Right: AUPE members joined thousands of other Albertans (and approximately one million workers across Canada) in a one-day nationwide strike against wage controls on Oct. 14, 1976. The Trudeau government's attack on collective bargaining marked the end of post-war labour peace and the beginning of the neoliberal assault on working people.



Courtesy of Alberta Provincial Archives



Top: AUPE rally at the legislature during the apples and oranges strike July 1980. **Above:** The riot squad met AUPE picketers at the courthouse during the apples and oranges strike.

NEOLIBERALISM IN ALBERTA

In the 1980s, neoliberalism emerged as a recognizable pattern of policies that put workers on the defensive. While Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were the best-known leaders adopting this new philosophy, it did not take long for neoliberalism to take root in Alberta.

Public services, which aimed to buffer the impact of major upheavals like the Depression and World Wars, were now in the crosshairs of a neoliberal approach that advocated cutbacks, layoffs, privatization and deregulation. Markets – not governments – could best steer the economy, workers were told. New laws and trade agreements removed barriers for corporations while tightening restrictions on workers' rights.

The oil boom of the 1960s and 1970s that fuelled record growth – and runaway inflation – in Alberta was rocked by a series of crises, and a worldwide recession in 1981 hit Alberta hard. The province led the nation in housing foreclosures, bankruptcies and suicides.

By 1983, the Lougheed government's response was to announce plans for layoffs, contracting out and position abolishment, as well as to extend the ban on the right to strike to hospital workers and firefighters, with heavy penalties for non-compliance. AUPE joined other unions in a "War on 44," targeting Bill 44 that brought in the new restrictions.

When Don Getty took power, cutbacks had already taken a bite out of AUPE's membership, dipping to 46,000 from an all-time high of 50,000 in 1982. With Lougheed's departure from politics in 1985, it was Getty who would represent the first face of neoliberalism in Alberta.

AUPE's members at the Alberta Liquor Control Board (ALCB) were an early target for Getty, despite the fact the ALCB brought in substantial net revenues



1986

ALBERTA LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD (ALCB) STRIKE

Approximately 2,500 members employed by the Alberta Liquor Control Board (ALCB) walk off the job during a summer strike wave that swept across Alberta. In addition to the high profile Gainers strike at an Edmonton meat packing plant, two other meat packing plants, a plywood company, Suncor oil workers and AUPE's own members at ALCB were all on strike during the summer of 1986.

MEMBERSHIP REBOUNDS TO 48,000
due to new organizing primarily in boards,
agencies and local government.



PAT WOCKNITZ ELECTED AUPE PRESIDENT
1987-1993

1987

PSERA CHALLENGE

The Supreme Court rules on AUPE's challenge of PSERA, finding that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does protect the freedom of association (a right that lies at the core of the ability of unions to bargain collectively, including deciding to go on strike to support bargaining). However, the victory is a hollow one because the ruling does not protect the specific objectives of unions or methods of achieving them.

Below: AUPE members at the Alberta Liquor Control Board walked out in 1986 during a summer strike wave that swept across Alberta. Although ALCB brought in substantial revenues for the government, it was an early target for Getty's (and later Klein's) privatization agenda.



Neoliberalism continued

for the government. In 1986, ALCB workers went on strike across the province in a summer that saw a wave of labour unrest.

In 1987, the government announced plans to sell liquor stores to private operators. Although AUPE was able to negotiate provisions to slow down or limit the impact on its members at ALCB, the privatization would eventually be completed under Ralph Klein.

By 1989, AUPE faced mounting financial problems as a result of declining membership from successive rounds of cutbacks and layoffs. The membership was divided over the question of how to respond. President Pat Wocknitz, elected in 1987 as AUPE's first female leader, advocated a more conciliatory approach, trying to convince the government to soften its worst blows. She was narrowly re-elected two times over challenger Linda Karpowich, who called for more direct action by AUPE to confront the government's assaults head on.

Karpowich, and other social workers she represented as chair of Local 006, would begin the new decade with a 22-day strike about concerns over ballooning caseloads as cutbacks spread the work among a shrinking number of social workers.

Along with the 1980 apples and oranges strike, the 1990 social workers' strike bookended the 1980s for AUPE, and their outcomes illustrate how neoliberalism had taken root in Alberta during the decade. In 1980, AUPE forced the government to grant wage increases to offset rampant boom-time inflation, yet by 1990 it was clear the union was in for a much longer struggle. And while Getty may have been an early innovator in Alberta, the next decade would see Ralph Klein take up the mantle as neoliberalism's golden boy. ■

WORKPLACE SAFETY ACTIVISM

Occupational health and safety as we know it today is a fairly recent phenomenon. Worker safety in Canada leapt onto the public radar with the Hogg's Hollow disaster in 1960, when five immigrant workers died while constructing a new water main under the Don River in Toronto. Soon after, legislation at federal and provincial levels began to enshrine the responsibilities of employers and employees to ensure safety at work.

AUPE was still finding its feet as a union when it negotiated a new article into the master agreement on workplace health and safety. Article 43 laid the foundations for the joint occupational health and safety program between AUPE and the government of Alberta. The program encompasses training, worksite committees and statistical reporting, and requires equal participation by the union and employer in keeping workplaces safe. For the last 40 years, the union and the government have been equal participants at the table, and the joint committee has been responsible for the ongoing development of the act, regulation and codes that govern OH&S in Alberta.

AUPE then hired Canada's first full-time union occupational health and safety specialist Dennis Malayko, who joined AUPE on Oct. 17, 1977, and has been with the union ever since. One of his first priorities was to increase knowledge at the worksites. "We realized it wasn't enough to appoint members to worksite OH&S committees. We really needed to educate them. I started traveling the province with a dog and pony show, where I'd spend the morning at a worksite brainstorming with members about the hazards they had, and then spend the afternoon talking about resources available to them to resolve those concerns. I did that from 1982 to about 2009, when we introduced courses through AUPE's education department."

Another watershed moment for OH&S activism came in 1993 when a correctional officer was disciplined and dismissed for refusing to enter a maximum-security unit because he felt his backup was inexperienced and presented an imminent danger to himself and others. AUPE grieved the dismissal, and it was overturned at the Occupational Health and Safety Council. The government then appealed that ruling to the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench, and lost. This decision enshrined a worker's right to refuse unsafe work and be protected from discipline. It was a direct result of increased awareness of occupational health and safety issues and legislation among AUPE members. ■



AUPE HELPS FORM INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

In 1995, AUPE occupational health and safety representative Dennis Malayko attended meetings at the United Nations in New York as an Economic and Social Council representative to the UN on behalf of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

It was at these meetings the International Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job was shaped. AUPE's Malayko was an integral part of the formation of this internationally recognized day, which was first observed on April 28, 1996.

AUPE recognizes the Day of Mourning annually at well-attended ceremonies at union headquarters in Edmonton. The 20th Day of Mourning was marked in 2016 with Malayko as a key speaker at the event.

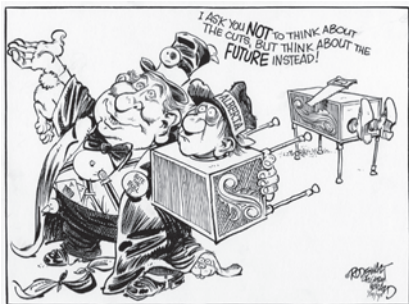


the 1990s

AUPE started the 1990s struggling, as cutbacks and privatization took huge bites out of its membership. Ralph Klein becomes premier in 1992, promising to accelerate a neoliberal program of cutbacks, layoffs, privatization and deregulation. Klein began with liquor privatization, and many more services across the province soon came under the knife.

Rocked by the radical pace of cuts, AUPE was nevertheless able to limit the damage in some important areas. First the union fought off privatization of jails. Then it was children's services. A wildcat by laundry workers in Calgary was a catalyst moment for the labour movement in Alberta, and marked an important partial win against the privatization agenda. But it was a long hard decade, with many battles and limited victories.

Above: Social services members of AUPE's Local 006 confront Minister Mike Cardinal about plans to privatize child welfare services during their 22-day strike in May 1990.



When Ralph Klein became premier in 1992, he aggressively pursued policies of privatization, contracting out and downsizing of public services. AUPE was a leader of several large coalitions protesting cuts.

THE KLEIN ERA

Alberta was already on the path of privatization when Ralph Klein came to power in 1992. But it was Klein who pressed ahead with austerity as Alberta suffered the hangover of an oil price shock and economic downturn. The costs were dramatic.

Many services became hollowed out shells, others sold completely, and thousands of public sector jobs disappeared. Critical infrastructure crumbled as it suffered years of neglect.

Carol Anne Dean, elected AUPE president in 1993, remembers the times as some of the darkest for both the union and province.

"It was like bombs were going off everywhere, every day, all the time," she recalls.

Klein was determined to slay the province's deficit, and for his Progressive Conservative government, that meant widespread cuts and privatization.

The Tory government began with Alberta's liquor industry in 1993 – the first liquor privatization scheme in the country – promising more selection for better prices.

But the reality was not as rosy. Studies found privatization led to a significant decline in government revenues, more liquor store break-ins, increased liquor sales to minors and higher prices.

Klein also pushed public sector workers to take major concessions, including five-per-cent wage rollbacks. The government stoked a culture of fear as workers became convinced they'd have to accept a pay cut or be out of a job completely.

There was a mood of being under constant attack. But as attacks mounted, union activists pushed back. When they learned of plans to privatize Alberta's transportation services, they made calls, held meetings and staged rallies. But before long the province lost control of highway maintenance. The quality of services, like snow plowing, fell rapidly and hundreds of good-paying jobs were lost.

Former AUPE president Doug Knight saw his local in Peace River dwindle from 600 members to barely 50.

After highway maintenance was dismantled, Klein's government did the same with driver's registry and provincial park services.

Before long the union's membership shrunk from 50,000 to 34,000, but in a life-saving show of solidarity, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) helped AUPE out of a financial bind.

"Remaining staff and members gave it their all," Dean says, crediting them with AUPE's survival and the victories the union would go on to win.

It was hard but there were successes – important ones that had real, tangible effects.



22 DAYS IN MAY LOCAL 006 WILDCAT

Local 006 social workers stage a 22-day strike over workload and staffing issues.



LOCAL 003 WILDCAT

Local 003 correctional officers at 10 facilities strike for seven days over issues of pensions and early retirement.

1990

U of A HOSPITAL WILDCAT
U of A Hospital workers walk out for one day.

1991

DAY OF MOURNING

Federal legislation enshrines April 28 as a day to recognize workers killed or injured at work. Canadian unions had been observing the day since 1984, and in 1996 it gains international recognition.

1992

MEMBERSHIP DIPS AGAIN, DRIPPING TO 45,000



RALPH KLEIN BECOMES PREMIER

1992-2006

Klein campaigns on a promise to accelerate cutbacks and privatization. It's a promise he soon fulfills by privatizing retail liquor operations.



CAROL ANNE DEAN ELECTED AUPE PRESIDENT

1993-1997

1993

GOVERNMENT CUTS

Government imposes 5% cutback guideline in government general service bargaining. AUPE succeeds in limiting wage cuts to 2.3% with the remainder in days off.

1994

AUPE'S FINANCIAL CRISIS

Facing a \$1 million overdraft, AUPE takes steps to reduce costs, including suspending rebates to locals. At a special convention on July 31, members are asked to approve a temporary dues increase to 1.5%. The motion was amended to 1.25%. The motion was defeated by one vote.

ANTI-PRIVATIZATION VICTORY - CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

In the early years of the Klein era, AUPE was in a constant battle over privatization. Over a three-year period AUPE fought and successfully halted government plans to privatize Child Welfare Services.

Right: AUPE president Carol Anne Dean speaks with members picketing over privatizing laundry services in November 1995.



The Peace River jail was one of Klein's early targets in the mid-1990s.

The jail employed roughly 130 people, so when Klein set his sights on it, the community reacted swiftly. A crucial component of the struggle was a simple but massively effective campaign.

Small blue stickers were put on currency stating, "This payment made possible by Union Labour." The stickers were soon seen throughout the community.

The point was clear. Without those jobs, this cash might not flow so easily. It worked and the Klein government soon backed off. But it quickly came for a vulnerable group of people: children in government care.

Guy Smith, a youth counsellor and AUPE vice-president, knew first-hand the importance of ensuring child welfare services remained public.

As rumours flew over plans to privatize and regionalize child welfare services, Smith and other AUPE social workers began to speak out and hold rallies. The message resonated with Albertans – so much so that the province's Child and Family Services Minister of the day, Mike Cardinal, instituted a gag order on its employees.

The government's heavy-handedness backfired as the gag order became the subject of constant news articles and scathing editorials.

Klein was forced to stop his plans and core child welfare and protection services remained public.

"The victories of the Klein era were limited and the losses large, but the enduring lesson shouldn't be forgotten," says Dean. "Challenging times could be around the corner.

"The Klein era was not the first time I witnessed the pendulum swing," she says. "No one should ever be complacent. Things can change overnight." ■

LAUNDRY WORKERS WILDCAT

Klein blinks

In November 1995, laundry workers at two Calgary hospitals staged a wildcat strike that quickly gained support from other health-care workers, the broader labour movement and the general public. The strike came amidst the "Klein Revolution," the hallmarks of which were attacks on labour, deep cuts to public services, and a belief in privatization and deregulation. Despite taking a 28-per-cent wage cut in the previous round of bargaining, bringing some wages down to as little as \$9 per hour, laundry workers were told their jobs were being privatized to a company that planned to ship dirty laundry from Calgary to Edmonton for cleaning. They were also told they would receive no severance pay despite many of them having worked in their jobs for decades. Most of these workers were women and immigrants.

The strike, which started with 120 workers, grew like wildfire over the course of ten days to an estimated 2,700 workers at six hospitals and nine nursing homes. In addition, thousands of other health-care workers across the province took action to support the strikers. For example, AUPE bargaining units at Edmonton's Glenrose and University of Alberta hospitals voted to support the strike, declaring they would even go as far as walking out if a settlement was not reached. The public expressed outrage at the employer through letters to the editor and calls to talk radio shows. Public support for the strike grew so quickly that Calgary Health Authority's management and government officials were visibly shaken. Many labour leaders and activists thought the strike could evolve into a general strike.

After ten days, the unions and health authority negotiated a limited agreement, which was accepted by the strikers. It guaranteed laundry workers job security for one year and no reprisals for those who engaged in strike action. It also promised

PRISONS FOR PROFIT

See story on p. 14.

LAUNDRY WORKERS WILDCAT

See story on this page.

HCEU COMES ON BOARD

Health Care Employees Unions (HCEU) merges with AUPE adding 2,200 members.



DAN MCLENNAN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF AUPE 1997-2006

BUDGET SURPLUS

The Alberta government is now running budget surpluses, but still demanding concessions. AUPE defiantly says no, and is successful in winning major gains following wildcat strikes.

HEALTH CARE SURGE

Merger with Canadian Health Care Guild brings 7,000 Licensed Practical Nurses and nursing assistants into AUPE.

1995

MEMBERSHIP CRASHES TO 35,000

1996

RIGHT TO REFUSE

AUPE wins Alberta court decision regarding right to refuse unsafe work. See story on p. 10.

1997

WILDCAT STRIKES BY HEALTH-CARE WORKERS

The late 1990s saw wildcat strikes become a common theme, with health-care workers staging frequent walkouts in the later years of the decade.

1998

1999



Laundry continued

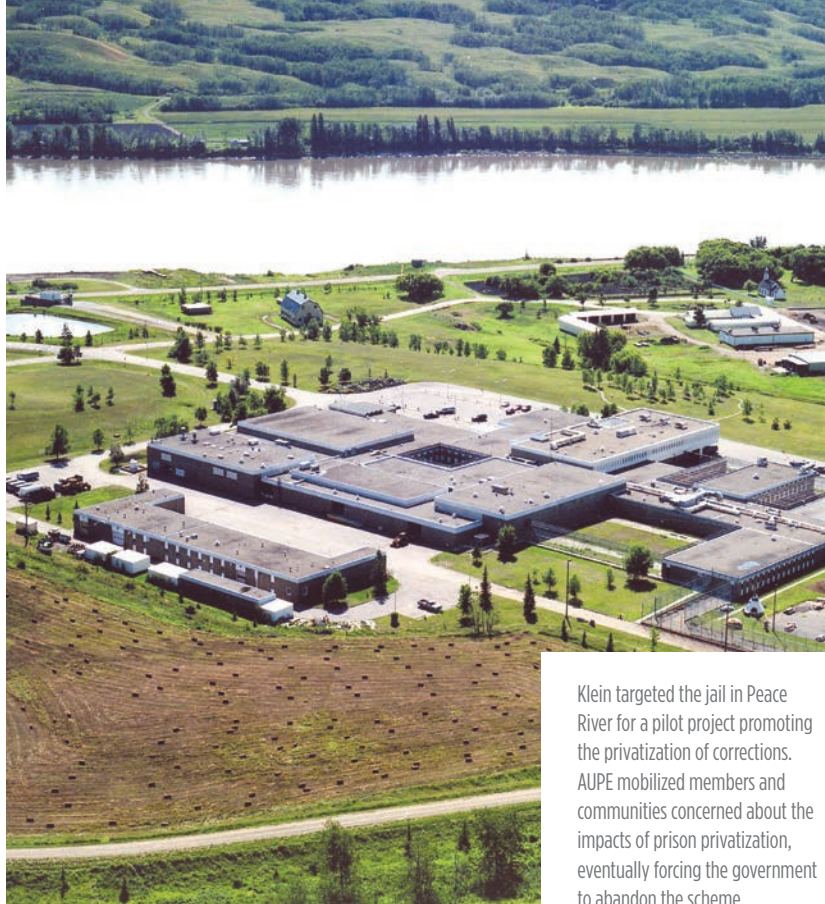
severance pay if their work was ever contracted out, something the government guaranteed other provincial workers would also receive. While the health authority did privatize laundry services 18 months later, this guarantee of severance was a gain Calgary laundry workers won for all provincial public sector workers.

The Calgary laundry workers strike also marked a turning point for the Klein government's neoliberal agenda. Despite the premier insisting that "special interest groups can scream and cry and whine but I won't blink," only a week after the strike was settled the government announced it was cancelling further cuts, including \$53 million for hospitals and \$100 million for physician services. Instead, they planned to invest \$40 million in home and community care. As *Calgary Herald* columnist Don Martin put it, "once he started blinking, Klein couldn't stop."

The strike also reinvigorated and emboldened Alberta's labour movement. In 1998, health-care employees represented by AUPE, the Canadian Health Care Guild and CUPE gained their first wage increase in five years after engaging in job action. Two years later, 10,000 AUPE members, mostly LPNs and nursing assistants, went out on an illegal strike demanding wage equity with other health care professionals. The result was wage increases of between eight and 16 per cent, as well as a guarantee of no contracting out.

The laundry workers strike continues to be a controversial event in the labour movement. From the laundry workers' perspective it can be seen as partial victory with the workers winning only limited job protection. However, when this courageous group stood up to the bullying and threats of hospital management and the Alberta government, they won a broader victory for all Alberta workers. They had forced the government to back down on planned cuts and privatization attempts and to begin reinvesting in a badly damaged health-care system. ■

Top: Concerned Calgarians join the picket as support for the laundry workers' strike snowballs. Bottom: Foothills housekeeping staff walk out in support of their coworkers.



Klein targeted the jail in Peace River for a pilot project promoting the privatization of corrections. AUPE mobilized members and communities concerned about the impacts of prison privatization, eventually forcing the government to abandon the scheme.

FIGHT AGAINST FOR-PROFIT PRISONS

Ralph Klein's time in power brought the constant threat of cuts to Alberta's public services. "Name a government department and the Klein government had plans to privatize it," said Winston Gereluk, who was AUPE's director of education and public relations at the time.

Klein's government passed Bill 41, which gave the province power to privatize public services across the board. Klein soon made moves to deregulate children's welfare services, campgrounds, employment standards, highway rest stops and more. When the intention to privatize certain prisons and shut down others became public knowledge, AUPE locals across the province sprang into action.

The union organized active anti-privatization committees in towns all over Alberta to reveal the dangers of for-profit prisons. Local 003, which includes AUPE's correctional peace officers, brought the issue of privatization in corrections to the forefront. "They scared the hell out of people," said Gereluk, "They brought examples from the United States where people thought they would get an economic boost by having private prisons built in their communities, only to find out they weren't being managed and monitored properly."

Stories of regular breakouts by prisoners and horrible conditions reported from private prisons in the US demonstrated the risks of prioritizing profits in the correctional system.

Public pressure began to mount against the government. MLAs received floods of emails and letters from Albertans who were opposed to the widespread sale and shut down of public services. At the same time, AUPE researcher Tom Fuller produced studies that showed public sector services were as efficient, if not more efficient, than privately owned and delivered services. This data deeply weakened the economic argument for prison privatization.

Discontent around the government's plans continued to build while AUPE crafted strategies for even larger anti-privatization campaigns. "I was sitting in the office one day when I got a phone call from Klein's office," said Gereluk. "They asked if we were still going ahead with the campaign against prison privatization. I said, 'certainly.' They said, 'We've decided not to proceed.'" ■



the 2000s

After finally slowing the pace of incessant privatization, AUPE started the 2000s in a good place. Membership was growing and negotiations were producing good contracts. But you don't let your guard down around a government that made no bones about its anti-union leanings. There were more battles coming.

From fighting private delivery of health care, to working to change Alberta's outdated labour laws, and campaigning to save essential health care services, AUPE was in the thick of things. Increased organizing through the consolidation of health authorities and scores of private seniors care workers joining AUPE not only saw membership rise, but also strengthened the union's advocacy for both health-care workers and the people they care for.

Above: Alberta Hospital Edmonton supporters lined the streets of Red Deer urging the government to reconsider the announced closure of the mental health facility.



Above: AUPE president Dan McLennan addresses government service members during a 2004 information picket in Edmonton. Right: Delegates at AUPE's 2004 convention gathered for a photo to celebrate reaching 60,000 members.



AUPE REBOUNDS

AUPE had reason for optimism as a new millennium began amidst overblown fears that a Y2K computer bug would reverse the rapid spread of modern technology. The angst-ridden 1990s were coming to a close and the union was starting to rebound from the worst of the Klein cuts.

Several health-care wildcat strikes in the late 1990s fought demands for concessions by a government that was now running budget surpluses. The Canadian Health Care Guild merged with AUPE at the close of 1999 and brought an additional 7,000 members into the union.

In May 2000, the Klein government met massive public opposition to its Bill 11, which opened the door for private health care and surgical facilities. Some of that momentum carried over when more than 10,000 health-care workers walked out from hospitals and long-term care centres across the province on a wildcat strike later that month.

The wildcat ended on its third day with an agreement by the provincial health authorities to grant pay increases at rates substantially higher than had originally been offered. Even Klein, famous for his anti-unionism, commented that AUPE president Dan McLennan and the workers he represented were “good people who had earned a raise.”

Klein's remarks may have stemmed in part from his offbeat but genuine friendship with McLennan, a charismatic corrections officer known as “Buff”

2000 KLEIN INTRODUCES BILL 11

Despite mounting opposition to Klein's health privatization moves, he pushes ahead with legislation to allow private surgical facilities. Bill 11 draws enormous public opposition, including an occupation of the legislature and numerous large rallies and protests. The bill was amended to severely limit the range of services that could be offered at private facilities.

2001 AUPE IS NO LONGER AFFILIATED TO NUPGE

MEMBERSHIP RISES TO ALMOST 50,000 FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1982

MEMBERSHIP CLIMBS TO 60,000



2005 CHANGE THE LAW CAMPAIGN

A resolution at AUPE's 2005 convention leads to the launch of the Change the Law campaign in 2007. AUPE delivers 22,000 letters demanding changes to Alberta's outdated labour laws to the legislature in December 2007.

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

HEALTHCARE WILDCAT

Building on the momentum from Bill 11, over 10,000 healthcare workers walk out, returning to work on the third day with an agreement on wage increases.

AUPE'S LABOUR SCHOOL

After disaffiliating with NUPGE AUPE begins holding its own annual Labour School to educate members.

REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES CONSOLIDATION

Bill 27, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, consolidates 17 Regional Health Authorities into 9, forcing amalgamation of over 400 bargaining units into 30. From 2003 to 2004, AUPE wins LRB-ordered representation votes in consolidated health authorities, adding approximately 6,800 members.

AUPE CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY

who was first elected AUPE president in 1997. But that friendship did not protect McLennan and AUPE from fines of \$400,000 for his role in the 2000 wildcat strike, although the fine was later cut in half on appeal.

The union was establishing high water marks for bargaining, which attracted organized and unorganized workers alike. In 2001, AUPE's affiliation with provincial and national labour organizations ended over concerns about members of another union joining AUPE. Membership once again approached 50,000 in 2002, a first since 1982.

In 2003, the government amalgamated 17 regional health authorities into nine, collapsing over 400 bargaining units into 30. AUPE would eventually gain around 6,800 new members who voted overwhelmingly to join the union in run-off votes between 2003 and 2004.

A growing number of private seniors care workers like Julie Cromarty also joined AUPE. One of her residents, Roy Jamha, happened to be a former Alberta Federation of Labour president. "He was always my last client at bedtime, because Roy liked to talk," Cromarty remembered. "[H]e kept saying to me, 'You've got to unionize'...and he'd sit in his wheelchair and just get his fists going. 'You got to do it, Julie.'" Cromarty and her co-workers – and many more seniors care workers like them – came together to address issues including low pay, high workloads and working short.



However, these newly organized AUPE members faced an uphill battle. Klein and successive premiers never announced they were moving away from publicly delivered long-term care and toward non-unionized, lower-cost, privately run seniors care, yet the direction was clear. Between 1999 and 2009, long-term care bed numbers plummeted while private assisted living (now supportive living) beds grew by 187 per cent.

Nevertheless, the union had much to celebrate as it approached its 30th anniversary in 2006 at 65,000 members strong. In the 2000s, regional offices opened

Above: A Friends of Medicare rally against Klein's proposed Bill 11 and other health privatization moves packed Edmonton's Agricom on April 16, 2000. Organizers planned for 3,000 to attend, but more than 8,000 people showed up.

MEMBERSHIP APPROACHES 65,000



ED STELMACH BECOMES PREMIER
2006-2011

2006



DOUG KNIGHT ELECTED AUPE PRESIDENT
2006-2009



ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES
Government announces consolidation of health authorities under one superboard, Alberta Health Services.

2007

PENSIONS COALITION

AUPE joins with other unions in a broad Coalition on Pensions to reverse major changes to rules governing public pension plans that threatened the pension rights of 125,000 Albertans.

2008

OH&S COOPERATION

AUPE concludes a groundbreaking agreement with the provincial government to launch a collaborative occupational health and safety program that includes training and certification of worksite OH&S committees. See story on p. 10.

FIGHTING AUSTERITY

AUPE president Doug Knight refuses to renegotiate existing agreements to meet austerity claims and exposes a leaked document revealing government plans to proceed with radical privatization of the province's long-term care facilities.

MEMBERSHIP REACHES 76,000



MENTAL HEALTH BEDS SAVED

AUPE forms Save Alberta Hospital Edmonton Committee with strong community support to oppose the government's plan to shut down 220 acute mental health beds.

2009



GUY SMITH ELECTED AUPE PRESIDENT
2009-present

SENIORS' CARE

Hundreds of AUPE members attend public forums across the province hosted by Public Interest Alberta to discuss the deterioration of seniors' care.



(or re-opened), and AUPE consolidated its member servicing and training programs, including hiring a dedicated Workers' Compensation Board representative and launching Labour School. AUPE committees also stepped up, with political education, youth involvement, substantial fundraising for women's shelters, OH&S initiatives and tools to keep watch for possible increased privatization and contracting out.

During the decade, AUPE supported working people in Alberta and beyond, including striking railway, transport, federal government, service, brewery and communications workers. AUPE also participated in coalitions to defend public pensions and health care.

AUPE's mobilizing efforts coalesced in a major Change the Law campaign launched in 2007, demanding changes to Alberta's outdated labour laws. Although the campaign delivered 22,000 petition signatures to the legislature by December, the government not only ignored the campaign's demands, but also introduced new anti-union legislation targeting the construction industry the following year.

The Change the Law campaign activated the union and its members, helping prepare AUPE to confront a renewed government austerity agenda following the 2007-8 worldwide economic meltdown. In 2009, AUPE president Doug Knight exposed a leaked document revealing government plans for aggressive privatization of long-term care. In contrast, Knight called for increased government spending on health care and other social services to counteract the effects of the recession.

In 2009, members elected Guy Smith president with a mandate to focus on mobilization, growing AUPE and continuing the defence of public services. ■

Above: More than 10,000 health-care workers across Alberta walked out in May 2000 on a three-day wildcat strike. The strike built on opposition to Klein's Bill 11 and other health privatization moves and was successful in winning significant wage increases.



SAVE ALBERTA HOSPITAL EDMONTON

In a move that's become all too common, Alberta Health Services (AHS) sent out an unexpected press release late on a Friday afternoon in August 2009, announcing the "evolution of community-based treatment" for people with mental health issues, which meant the closure of most of the beds at Alberta Hospital Edmonton (AHE), northern Alberta's only acute care mental health hospital.

Immediate meetings between AUPE and AHS management proved fruitless. The decision to close the beds came from "a very high level," the union was told, and closing the beds would allow AHS to engage in "consultation" (albeit after the fact) with the community on treatment options. When it became clear that working behind closed doors would be ineffective, AUPE president Doug Knight struck a committee to take the fight for AHE public.

Press releases; community outreach campaigns; petitions; email form letters; websites; rallies; town halls; print, radio and television commercials; social media and collaboration with stakeholders and community groups were used to fight the closure. While today these are standard tools in AUPE campaigns, they were all fairly new back in 2009, and with the Save Alberta Hospital Edmonton campaign, AUPE began to realize the importance of walking the talk as defender of the public services Albertans rely on.

AUPE's campaign underscored that the fight was about more than just members' jobs; it was about the specialized services provided at AHE the community required. "Alberta Hospital Edmonton is an essential facility, no matter how many patients are moved into the community," said Knight at the time. "This hospital is worth fighting for and that's what AUPE is trying to do. We're speaking for those who can't speak for themselves."

It took some time – six months of non-stop pressure – but eventually AHS, and by extension the government, rescinded its plans to close the beds at AHE. It was almost a total victory. The geriatric unit still moved into Villa Caritas near the Misericordia Hospital, displacing seniors housed at the Edmonton General who had been fundraising for the facility for years. But even today, Alberta Hospital Edmonton remains open to help those in crisis. Lessons learned during the Save AHE campaign also helped AUPE successfully fight back against a myriad of attacks in the next decade. ■



Above: AUPE president Doug Knight addresses Save Alberta Hospital supporters gathered at a town hall meeting. Top: Save Alberta Hospital rallies were a common sight throughout the fall of 2009.



the 2010s

AUPE has spent the first six years of the 2010s deep in the trenches, and has emerged victorious. Strikes at private for-profit seniors care centres have taken the conversation about quality of care to the public. Attacks by a four-decade old government mobilized members to fight back against unconstitutional legislation, pension changes and plans to deny services to our most vulnerable citizens. Wildcats in the public sector – health-care support staff and correctional officers in jails and remand centres – caused the public to think differently about public sector workers.

After spending its entire existence fighting with the Progressive Conservative government, AUPE decided it was time to push for change. For the first time the union brought the questions and concerns they had to the public, asking them if the government was acting the way Albertans expected them to act. It was one of the myriad efforts that finally unseated the PC government.

Now, dealing with a new government for the first time in its existence, the future is sure to be full of fresh challenges. But one thing is clear – AUPE will continue making history for many more years to come.

Above: A wildcat strike by corrections officers in the spring of 2013 highlighted safety concerns at the new Edmonton Remand Centre. The strike was also supported by some provincial sheriffs, clerical staff and social workers.

SUMMER OF STRIFE

Seniors care workers take action to protect care

The summer of 2012 was one of the most active for AUPE seniors care members in the union's history. A number of first-contract negotiations at private seniors facilities in Edmonton and Calgary led to simultaneous picket lines in both centres.

Negotiations were marred by private care employers bent on undermining industry standard wages for staff and pocketing public dollars meant for care. However, members were united in their efforts to stand up for themselves and the seniors they cared for.

These struggles, and the gains achieved from them, led private seniors care staff around the province to seek AUPE representation.

Hardisty Care Centre – Edmonton

After a year of contentious negotiations, 80 caregivers at Hardisty, a facility run by Park Place Seniors Living, made the difficult choice to strike in an effort to safeguard sustainable, quality care.

For 60 days, members and supporters braved the unpredictable weather of an Alberta summer on the picket line. A late night mediated deal was reached in July, which brought wages in line with industry standards over the life of the agreement. Chants of “We worked hard for this! We worked hard for this!” echoed through the picket line as workers celebrated their victory.

The Hardisty deal acted as a model for its sister site, Devonshire, which was hours away from striking when this agreement was reached.

Revera Riverbend – Edmonton

Fifteen days after Hardisty went on strike, around 80 care and support staff at Revera Riverbend, who were paid up to 30 per cent less than their counterparts, went on strike after the employer refused to treat them as industry equals. Revera Inc. answered by locking them out.

The employer trucked in a revolving door of scab labour, and the standard of care plummeted. Medications were missed or the wrong medications were given out. The cleanliness of the building declined rapidly as well.

On Aug. 14, the province ordered a Provincial Emergency Tribunal (PET) over concerns of inadequate care provided by scabs. This ended the strike/lockout immediately.

An arbitrator awarded members a three-year contract that saw wages brought in line with AHS rates of pay over the life of the agreement. Members also saw improvements to sick leave, shift and weekend premiums, named holidays and vacation.

Monterey Place – Calgary

Close to 90 nursing and support staff at Monterey Place were locked out by Triple A Living Communities Inc. in a dangerous move to keep qualified, familiar staff away from residents, all because members refused to accept up to 27 per cent less pay than the industry standard.

The employer showed no intent to bargain in good faith. Monterey cancelled last minute mediation Aug. 1 and walked away from AUPE proposals just a few days later, stating they “may” provide a final offer down the road.

After more than 280 days on the picket line, members accepted a mediated settlement, which saw major improvements to compensation, ending the longest labour dispute in AUPE's history. ■



Above: Locked out Monterey Place seniors care workers protest the practice of skimming profits from public funding intended to pay frontline staff.

LONG-TERM CARE CLOSURES

Despite ongoing bed shortages, AHS moves to close several of their long-term care facilities, often replacing them with privately operated sites offering a lower level of care. Some of these would later unionize with AUPE, including Extendicare Michener Hill, which had replaced the closed Red Deer Nursing Home and Valley Park Manor.



AHS GSS WILDCAT, FEB. 16

After a mediator's recommendation for settlement was rejected by 95% of members AHS tabled its final offer, which was lower than what was rejected. GSS employees at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton began to walk off the job. Throughout the day, the wildcat spread to hospitals province-wide. The wildcat ended that same day after an agreement was reached to take bargaining to mediation/arbitration.

BILLS 9 & 10 ATTACK PENSIONS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS

Thousands attended rallies, town hall meetings and contacted government representatives, angry over the unnecessary changes. The government sent the bills to committee, and they later died when the legislature was prorogued in September.

2010

ALISON REDFORD
BECOMES PREMIER
2011-2014



2011

2012



SUMMER OF STRIFE

Three seniors care centres (Hardisty, Revera Riverbend, Monterey Place) are locked out or go on strike. A fourth strike at Devonshire is narrowly averted.

MORE PROMISES BROKEN

Alberta Health Services closes long-term care beds in a number of communities including Carmangay and Strathmore. Employees at Age Care Strathmore, which replaced the closed long-term care beds, later unionized with AUPE.

REDFORD ATTACKS REVERSED

The attacks on AUPE during premier Alison Redford's short reign birthed some of the most challenging and rewarding times in the union's history.

In 2013 and 2014, AUPE's membership mobilized to fight these attacks, and the results cemented the union's reputation as an effective advocate for both its members and the communities they serve.

Bill 46, the Public Services Salary Restraint Act and Bill 45, the Public Sector Services Continuation Act On Dec. 4, 2013, after months of difficult negotiations, the Redford government used its massive legislative majority to pass Bill 46, which forced a pay freeze and removed AUPE members' access to arbitration, essentially destroying the collective bargaining rights of more than 22,000 frontline government workers. That evening, Redford's Tories rammed through Bill 45, a heavy-handed unconstitutional response to the 2013 Local 003 wildcat, putting multi-million dollar penalties in place for any union

whose members went on an illegal strike, or even discussed an illegal strike.

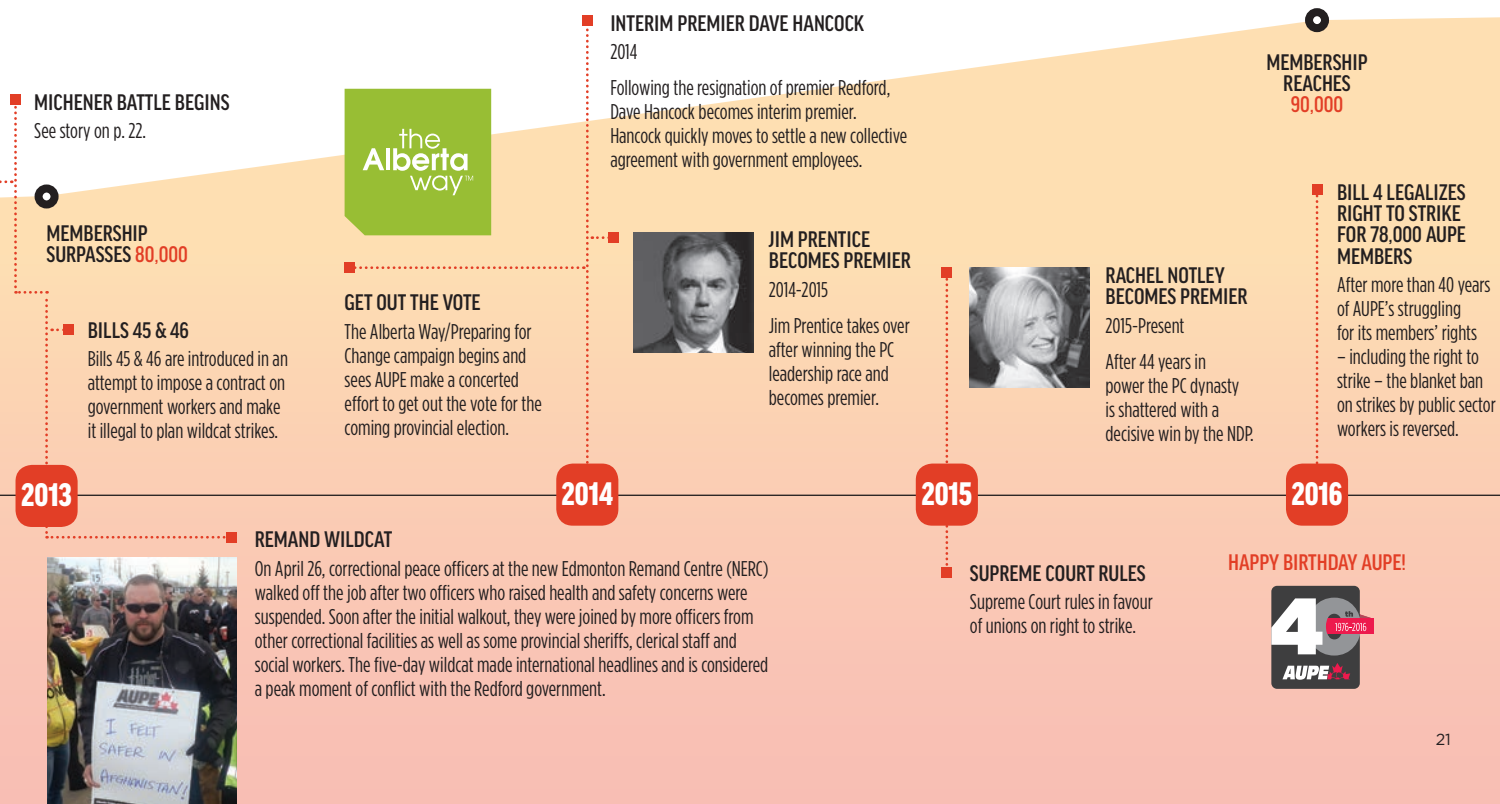
AUPE challenged both bills before the Alberta Labour Relations Board, Alberta Court of Queen's Bench and the UN International Labour Organization. Massive rallies were held in communities around Alberta. AUPE also created a website and placed radio and print ads in communities



Above: AUPE members and supporters brave a snowstorm on Dec. 2, 2013 to protest the Redford government's Bill 45 and Bill 46. Right: AUPE president Guy Smith addresses an anti-45/46 rally on Nov. 28, 2013.

around the province, which attracted much support for members affected by the bills.

After months of battle, the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench granted an injunction to suspend Bill 46 on Feb. 14. Soon after, Redford resigned as premier, and by April 2014, a tentative agreement was reached under interim premier Dave Hancock that saw significant improvements to what was dictated in Bill 46. In March 2015, PC premier Jim Prentice repealed Bill 45.





Bill 9, the Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act and Bill 10, the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act

In September 2013, finance minister Doug Horner introduced unnecessary proposals for pension reform in Alberta. In response, AUPE immediately mobilized its members to protect the hard-earned pensions of thousands, holding more than 50 town halls around Alberta, but the Tories pushed ahead with Bills 9 and 10 anyway.

AUPE and other unions in the Alberta Coalition on Pensions soon distributed information around Alberta urging opposition to the bills. As a result, thousands contacted the government, angry over the reforms. Many attended legislative sessions in Edmonton when the bills were being discussed, and hundreds attended multiple rallies in over 40 communities. March 20, 2014, the day after Redford announced she would step down as premier, was even named the Day of Action on Pensions.

Albertans, union or not, recognized the decades of service given by these workers and knew it was wrong for a government to jeopardize their retirement.

The pressure became too much and it soon forced the government to send Bills 9 and 10 to committee. AUPE urged members and the public to participate in province-wide committee meetings, and they did in droves.

On Sept. 18, 2014, the government prorogued the legislature, killing Bills 9 and 10 and ending the province's attack on pensions.



Red Deer's Michener Centre

Without warning, the Redford government announced in March 2013 it planned to close Red Deer's Michener Centre, the long-time home for severely disabled Albertans.

AUPE met with affected members and the community, teaming up with the Society of Parents and Friends of Michener Centre to form Keep Michener Open and fight the decision.

Television, social media, radio, online and print ads, and even a short AUPE commissioned documentary told stories of residents and family members and called on the government to reverse the callous decision to close Michener. The message resonated in Red Deer and beyond.

AUPE members and supporters held rallies at Red Deer City Hall and marched to the local MLA's office, demanding to be heard.

The community was strongly behind Keep Michener Open, and the campaign took off. More than 30,000 cheered as campaign volunteers, families and staff marched in two Westerner Days' parades during the summers of 2013 and 2014.

More than 25,000 petition signatures were gathered and over 2,000 Keep Michener Open lawn signs were planted.

More than 4,000 letters were sent to government and opposition leaders and a Facebook page rapidly gained over 1,400 followers. Support came in from city and town councils, other unions and all opposition parties.

The pressure took a toll on the governing Tories and played a part in the eventual downfall of premier Alison Redford in March 2014.

Government MLA Mary Anne Jablonski, whose riding contained Michener Centre, tabled an incredible 24,244 Keep Michener Open petition signatures in the legislature in November 2013.

The demanding 18-month campaign ended in September 2014 when new PC premier Jim Prentice announced Michener would not close under his watch.

Michener Centre remains in the community of Red Deer today. ■



Top: Lee Kvern addresses a Keep Michener Open rally in Edmonton. Inset: Bill Lough, speaks at a rally in Red Deer. As family members of residents, Lough and Kvern had seen the value of the facility first-hand and played an important role in mobilizing community support.

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

During the height of conflict with Alison Redford's PC government over budget betrayals and attacks on pensions, collective bargaining rights and service cuts, AUPE's provincial executive held an emergency debate on how to ensure the Alberta government pay a political price for its sustained attacks.

The result was the Preparing for Change campaign, which saw significant funds, resources, energy and time dedicated to the operation's goal: to have a direct and significant influence on the outcome of the 2015 provincial election.

Publicly, the campaign would be known as The Alberta Way.

In the months before Alberta's 2015 election, the mood for change was palpable. Voters had grown disenchanted with the long-ruling Progressive Conservative dynasty, in power for nearly 44 years, and growing more entitled and out of touch with each successive premier.

When Jim Prentice entered the scene in 2014, it was the beginning of the end for the Tory government's stranglehold on power – they just didn't know it yet.

Months later, after the Prentice government helped orchestrate a mass floor-crossing by the official Opposition Wildrose, led by that party's former leader Danielle Smith, it looked like the final nail in the coffin.

Rachel Notley's NDP would go on to topple the Tory dynasty in that historic race.

But the NDP didn't get there alone.

A groundswell of Albertans demanding change grew and AUPE captured the mood in its Alberta Way campaign. The public wanted politicians who had respect for public services. They wanted an honest government and leaders who didn't feel entitled to the highest political office in the province. They wanted politicians who would talk straight and keep their promises: that was the Alberta way.

AUPE – along with campaign spokesman Albert Howell, an Alberta-born comedian and writer – took the province by storm with that message in the summer of 2014, building momentum among Albertans.

AUPE representatives at summer festivals across the province asked everyday Albertans to do something easy: If a politician were in front of them today, what would they ask?

The questions Albertans had for their politicians quickly spread on social media, revealing serious concerns voters had about the PC government.

The summer tour was coupled with a simultaneous ad campaign on TV and online. Alberta Way ads were viewed an astounding 7.5 million times.

But the efforts didn't end there. Instead, AUPE intensified its advertising campaign promoting The



Above: Premier Rachel Notley and her cabinet are sworn in at a public ceremony attended by a crowd of thousands. Left: Alberta Way booths at festivals across the province allowed Albertans to ask questions of politicians and let them know they would be held accountable for their promises.



Alberta Way that fall, including additional television ads and a dedicated website to help Albertans understand and participate in what was shaping up to be one of the most important elections in the province's history.

The Alberta Way website was a one-stop resource for information about where the parties stood. It gave Albertans the ability to debate issues and rank their importance. It made them part of the process, and allowed them to cast an informed vote.

The Alberta Way campaign was a complete success and demonstrated AUPE's power in mobilizing Albertans of all walks of life to speak truth to power and demand more of their politicians. ■



AUPE's Centennial Steering Committee is commemorating the 40th anniversary of our union in 2016 and the centennial of its forerunner, the Civil Service Association of Alberta, in 2019.

For more information or to get involved:

Ron Patterson, Centennial Coordinator

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Photo: Bill Broad addresses protesting hospital workers on the steps of the Legislature in 1975. Broad was the last president of the CSAA and the first president of AUPE.

Courtesy of Alberta Provincial Archives



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Reakash Walters

*Women's Growing Voice in AUPE
Fight Against For-Profit Prisons*

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