

A STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL PAY

Eliminating the coder classification amounted to fighting for equal pay since this move reduced the number of postal worker classifications from four to three, and the wage gap between the highest and lowest classification was narrowed from 84 cents to 66 cents.

Although there are still three classifications today, the difference between the highest and lowest paid postal worker has dropped to 43 cents. The CUPW ensured, through negotiations, that the wage gap did not increase, by negotiating across-the-board dollar increases instead of percentage increases. In addition, the Union reduced the wage spread by negotiating larger dollar adjustments for lower paid workers.

	Feb. 26, 1973	Dec. 1, 1975	Oct. 1, 1983
Highest Wage	4.16 (PO5)	5.68 (PO5)	12.80 (PO5)
Lowest Wage	3.32 (PO1)	5.02 (PO2)	12.37 (PO2)
Difference	.84	.66	.43

If the Union had negotiated percentage increases since 1968, the lowest paid postal worker would today be earning \$5,476 a year less than the highest paid postal worker.



BENEFITS WOMEN IN PARTICULAR

Eliminating the coder classification achieved equal pay for women postal workers since the vast majority of coders hired between 1972 and 1974 were female. Today, it is common to see both men and women at coding suites.

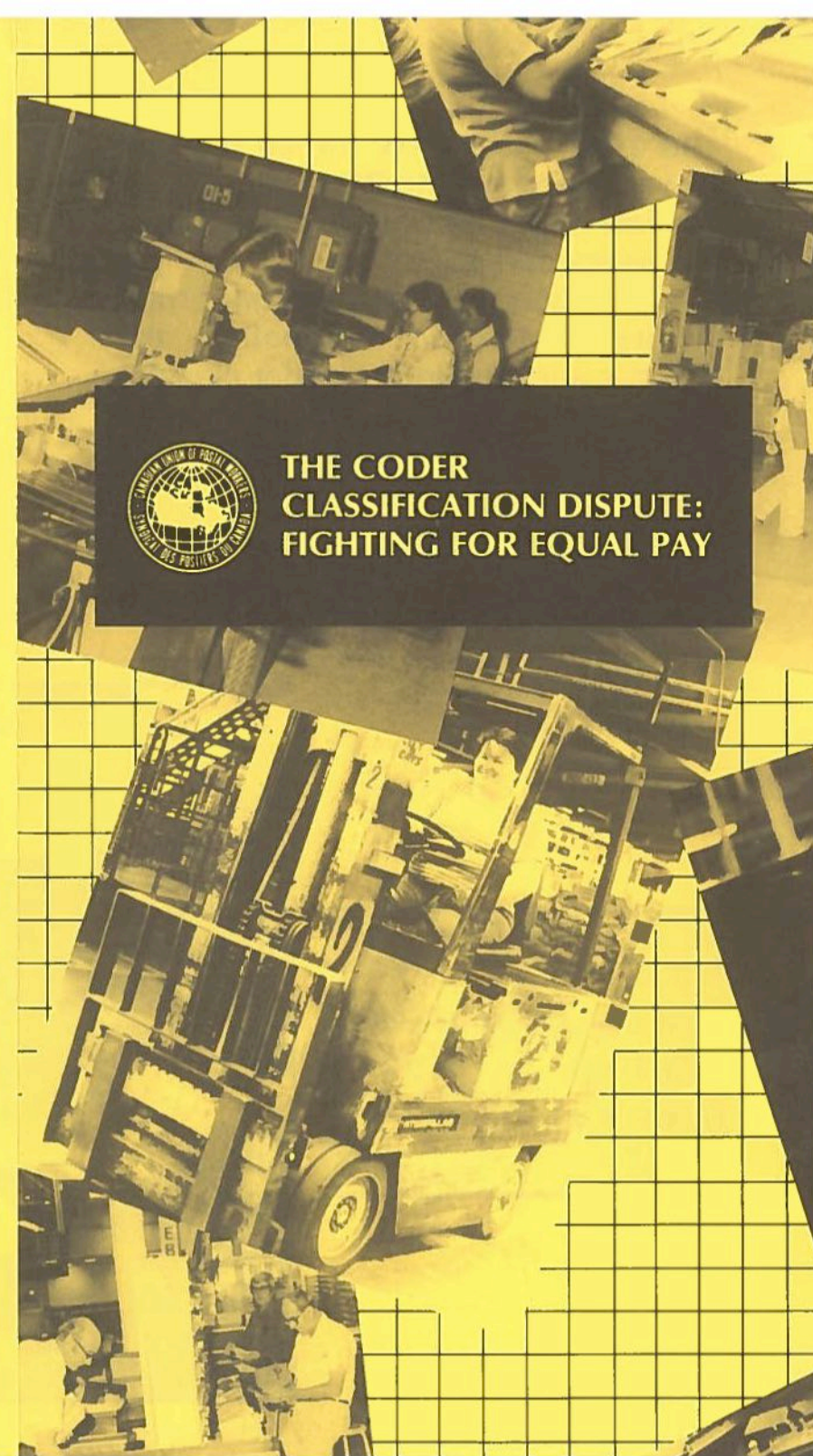
Our struggle for equal pay has been a very successful one that has resulted from fighting hard both during and outside of negotiations. Postal workers have benefitted both individually and collectively from this struggle against Post Office attempts to create divisions and differences in our bargaining unit.

Today, the employer's Five-Year Plan reveals that management intends to use bogus comparisons with other workers as a way to justify their plans to attack the wages, benefits and protections of certain groups of postal workers.

In the past, we fought hard for equal wages, equal protections and equal benefits for all. We are not going to start walking backward now!

FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY — IN THE INTEREST OF ALL POSTAL WORKERS

CUPW March 1984



In 1974, the CUPW forced the employer to abolish the PO level 1 classification that it had created for coders two years earlier.

In addition to being an important victory relating to automation, the Union's success in the coder classification dispute was a very significant gain in our fight for equal pay.

JOB CLASSIFICATION

Job classification is a device that employers frequently use to legitimate exploiting workers. Job classification is open to abuse if employers are permitted to unilaterally make decisions about job content. For instance, specialized classifications can restrict workers' ability to learn a variety of skills and perform varied functions. Subjective decisions that are made in relation to job content can serve to legitimate existing discriminatory practices. Female job ghettos like typing pools are good examples of what can develop from such practices.

THE CODER CLASSIFICATION DISPUTE

The dangers arising from an employer's unilateral power of classification became particularly clear to postal workers in 1972 when the Post Office created the classification of PO level 1 for coders who worked the newly introduced group desk suites. This new classification required postal workers to read postal codes and key them with hand movements like those used in typing.

By arguing that coding did not require the extensive memorization and skill involved in manual sortation, the employer attempted to justify classifying coders at the lowest possible level even though manual sorters (postal clerks) were classified at the PO 4 level.

The new PO 1 pay rate was 75 cents per hour less than the PO 4 rate. It increased the total wage spread in the bargaining unit to 84 cents.

AN IMPORTANT VICTORY

For a time, the Post Office successfully used technological change as an excuse to limit job content and, by this means, declassified the postal workers who were made redundant by the new letter sorting machines.

The CUPW forced the employer to get rid of the coder classification with a national strike in 1974. Eventually, the Union negotiated a new job classification, PO level 4, postal coder-sorter-sweeper, which combined coding and postal clerk functions into one. Combining the functions eliminated the potential for deskilling the work and declassifying the workers.

THE CODER
CLASSIFICATION DISPUTE:
FIGHTING
FOR EQUAL PAY

