UNIONS AND THEIR FUTURE

CHARLOTTE A.B. YATES, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
STATE OF UNIONS – CANADA

Unions – agents of change/ products of capitalism

Stagnant Rate of Unionization: 29.7% 2011 (total membership rose by 80,000 over 2010)

Growing gap in unionization rates amongst women (31%) and men (28%)

Declining strikes – 10.6 hrs lost/yr/employee (1976) vs 1 hr/yr/employee (2011)

Union Wage premium is declining, from 7% to 0% in some sectors

Avg annual wage ↑ of unionized workers was 1.3% (2011) vs CPI of 1%

Employers and governments more hostile to unions
Melanie
Age: 41
Immigrant: Trinidad
Work: p-t kitchen help
Wage: $10.25 w/4yr exp
Educ: 1 yr Univ; HR cert
Biggest challenges:
- paying rent; no phone; lack of employment supports to find better job

Union does not rep. p-t or casual employees
Cost: resents unions. Racism at work.

James
Age: 19
White
Work: Uni student + p-t service work
Wage: $10.50
Biggest challenge:
- Pay fees & do well;
  How can I find a decent job? “The future is rushing towards us”

Cost: irrelevance

Rachel
Age: 25
White
Work: p-t retail
Wage: $11.50
Educ: BA
Biggest challenges:
- Low pay;
  unpredictable hours
- Wants more from work and life

Cost: lost activist

Tried to organize retail store. Now back at college w/ no union contact.

Cost: irrelevance
Unions

Union Members

Long-term Goals

Montreal civic workers - pension

UFCW agricultural

Unions

Members

Short-term Goals

OSSTF – sick days

Living wage TDLC