



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Canadian refinery workers and labor unions boycott Petro-Canada, 2007

September 25,  
2008

to: December 29,  
2008

**Country:** Canada

**Location City/State/Province:** Quebec

**Goals:**

To end the lockout of workers.

To obtain a more agreeable contract.

### Methods

**Methods in 1st segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 078. Workers' boycott

**Methods in 2nd segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 078. Workers' boycott

**Methods in 3rd segment:**

- 001. Public speeches
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 078. Workers' boycott

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 016. Picketing
- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 078. Workers' boycott

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 078. Workers' boycott

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 078. Workers' boycott

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 001. Public speeches
- 048. Protest meetings

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Economic Justice

**Group characterization:**

- Labor unions
- refinery workers

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Canada Labor Congress (CLC); Communications, Energy, and Paperworks (CEP) Union; refinery workers

**Partners:**

Not Known

**External allies:**

Consumers

**Involvement of social elites:**

Not Known

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Additional notes on joining/exiting order:**

All known campaigners seemed to have joined in the first segment. It is unclear if the CAW Council officially supported the campaign.

**Segment Length:** 2 weeks

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

### **Opponents:**

Petro-Canada

### **Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

The campaign began as a response to a lockout by Petro-Canada managers.

### **Campaigner violence:**

Not Known

### **Repressive Violence:**

Not Known

## Success Outcome

### **Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

### **Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

### **Growth:**

2 points out of 3 points

### **Notes on outcomes:**

The workers and labor unions were certainly successful in obtaining the result they desired via the boycott. The end of the lockout was also a huge success.

The campaign grew support of workers, labor unions, and consumers.

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On November 17, 2007, Petro-Canada locked refinery workers of the Communications, Energy, and Paperworks (CEP) Union Local 175 out of the refinery. For several decades, Petro-Canada negotiated a pattern agreement with the CEP. This agreement covered wages, shift premiums, holidays, and length of the agreement. All remaining issues were left for the local union and company to determine individually. At the Petro-Canada refinery in Montreal, management decided to break the pattern by demanding a six-year agreement rather than the typical three-year agreement. Furthermore, the company insisted on the elimination of a full-time union health and security position and created shorter safety training periods. According to CEP President David Coles, the union attempted to meet the needs for a major new capital project, but Petro-Canada refused to recognize the National Bargaining settlement or end the lockout. Management workers stepped into various positions to maintain operations during the lockout. Many of the locked out workers were young men and women with only a few years of seniority.

The refinery workers asked Quebecers to boycott the company's gas stations in support of their labor dispute. On October 28, 2008, Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC), announced a country-wide boycott of Petro-Canada's gas stations and many consumers decided to participate as well. Concluding the announcement, Georgetti stated, "If Petro-Canada wants to hurt these workers, then we'll see how they feel when 3.2 million workers return the favor." The CLC announced the boycott 21 days before the one-year anniversary of the lock-out.

On November 21 and 22, members of the CEP picketed Petro-Canada gas stations throughout Ontario in solidarity with the locked out members. Other local unions held pickets on November 24, where they held signs and handed out pamphlets.

The boycott was a successful in decreasing company sales by twenty percent, but they still had not achieved their goals, so the struggle continued and was a central focus of the Canadian Auto Workers' Council, where the protesters urged the delegates to

join the boycott. Georgetti encouraged the delegates to support the workers not only via boycotts but also by picketing gas stations and providing financial support to the locked-out workers.

Finally, on December 29, the refinery voted 94.6% to accept a new agreement that ended the lockout. The three-year agreement included wage increases, a \$4000 bonus, vacation benefits averaging \$6000 per worker for 2008, and \$3800 per employee profit sharing for 2007. The workers returned to the refinery on January 12, 2009.

## Research Notes

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### Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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