

July 8, 2020

## Statement on Defunding the Police

In the wake of a number of murders committed by police in the United States and Canada, CUPW joins an ever-important number of voices that are calling to **DEFUND THE POLICE**.

While attention about the senseless police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis featured widely in Canadian media, Black and Indigenous people in Canada were also killed at the hands of the police. This is nothing new. There are examples across the country that show the extent of this practice: Black Torontonians account for 8% of the city's population but are 20 times more likely to be killed at the hands of the cops.<sup>1</sup> As for Indigenous people, the stark figures out of Manitoba show that 60% of people killed by the cops are Indigenous, to cite but one example.<sup>2</sup>

All too often, police resort to excessive force rather than de-escalation. The call for re-thinking the police as a coercive arm of government, and a stop to funding “guns and gadgets” is urgently overdue.

CUPW's National President, Jan Simpson, says “systemic racism hurts everyone, and as workers, we must stand unified against such injustice. We must fight to dismantle systemic oppression”.

The police is an institution that found its origins in colonialism, a system that created slavery and Indigenous dispossession and genocide. Its mission was to serve and protect the interests of white property owners. It has rarely been at the service of Black, Indigenous or other people of colour.

---

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, N. (2020) 'Canada Has Race-Based Police Violence Too. We Don't Know How Much' in, *The Tyee*, (<https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2020/06/02/Canada-Race-Based-Violence/>)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

It has never been there for workers either. Long service postal workers will remember the huge number of police officers, and the very violent measures they used to escort scabs in the 1987 strikes of CUPW and the Letter Carrier Union of Canada.

When protests of any kind are met with the riot squad, this is a direct attack on our democratic right to resist injustice. The police is an arm of the state with the power and authority to arrest, charge, jail, and kill. It often acts with impunity and is rarely called to account.

**DEFUNDING THE POLICE** is a call to change the focus of safety. Funds used to militarize the police have increased while social service budgets have been cut. Policing monies must be re-directed towards improving social services. It means re-orienting funds toward health and mental health services, and community programs that can positively affect the health and wellbeing of marginalized communities. Defunding the police is a key step toward eliminating systemic racism, and other oppressions. As workers, we must stand united in calling for our elected representatives to change the direction of police at all levels, and work to ensure that our brothers, sisters and friends of colour be safe, secure, and treated with the same respect that white people expect.

/Im COPE 225