Store chain told to rehire dropped staff

MONTREAL (CP) — A Quebec labor court judge has ordered the Bonimart department store chain to rehire 12 workers it let out last year and pay them back wages totalling $80,000, their union said yesterday.

The union said Judge Rene Beaudry has ruled that the 12 were fired illegally for union activities at Bonimart's outlet in nearby St. Jean.

A spokesman for Local 502 of the Retail Workers International Association said Bonimart broke an organizing drive at the store by shutting down in February, 1976, after union members there had been on strike for four months seeking a first contract.

The store reopened several months later and 110 people were hired, most of whom hadn't worked there before the strike, the spokesman added. But Bonimart refused to hire 14 of the strikers who wanted their jobs back.

In a March, 1977, report, Quebec Labor Department commissioner Rene Gosselin said the shutdown was a lockout under the provincial Labor Code and that the company had acted illegally by refusing to hire back the strikers.