

# Eastern Ontario faculty rally in Ottawa

Faculty from Algonquin, La Cite, St. Lawrence, and Loyalist descend on  
McGuinty's office

by Madeleine Whitfield

The Algonquin teams all met at Timmy's today and boarded the three school buses waiting for us there, ready for a 10 o'clock take off to visit Premier McGuinty's constituency office. For some reason, once aboard, some had an overwhelming urge to chew bubble gum and run up and down the aisles.

## Encouraging Welcome

When we arrived at Premier McGuinty's office, a wonderful sight met us: bus after bus pulled in each with a full load of feisty picketers all raring to go. All together, with people who were bused in and those who made it under their own steam, the crowd must have topped 300. It was great to see colleagues from La Cité, St. Lawrence, and Loyalist come out to join up with us as well.

To lighten the marching load we had a terrific trio of drummers who set the beat for our feet (and sometimes, hips) as we paraded round our prescribed route. We also had our perfect, pretty princesses leading us in rousing sing-a-longs. Too bad we didn't have microphones so that the music could have reached the outer limits of our huge group. However, we maintained our decorum and discipline and stayed with bullhorns and within police lines.

## Speakers

From time to time speakers (union presidents and Region 4 Executive Board members ) would get up with a bull horn and talk to us about the issues and offer strengthening words of encouragement. Especially heartening were the two students, Adam Millie and Meagan Dieroff who spoke of their support and appreciation for what we are trying to accomplish on students' behalf. At one point Doug, Fernand Begin, and Mary Ann White went into Mr. McGuinty's office to talk with his aide about the issues. The union local presidents received a good hearing and briefed his office on the issues.

## The Cold

As usual it was ab-so-lute-ly freezing and after a couple of hours, those who hadn't thought to bring hand warmers were getting a bit chilled. Luckily there was a little market next to McGuinty's office where we could get hot drinks and pies that could be heated up in a microwave. A hot beef and potato pasty is just the thing on a cold line! One thing we could have done with for some was porta potties, though. (Note to strike chiefs for next time)

## One Word to Sum Up Today

If there was one word that could sum up today, it was "solidarity." Most people I spoke to were impressed and pleased to meet people from other colleges. They said it gave them a much stronger feeling of "we're all in it together through thick and thin."

## Rally at McGuinty's

By Doug Brandy

We had a good turnout at Dalton McGuinty's constituency office Monday. Members in good spirits attended from Algonquin, la Cité collégiale, St. Lawrence and Loyalist. Mary Ann White from St. Lawrence, Fernand Bégin from la Cité and I had a meeting with John Fraser, the Premier's Assistant. We made sure John knew our issue is quality education with a corollary of part-time vs. full-time staffing. We also stressed that colleges must be held accountable for provincial funding targeted toward new full-time faculty positions.

Our small delegation carried one message but it was the 250 strikers outside that conveyed the message much more convincingly. We are determined to succeed in achieving changes that will ensure quality college education in Ontario.

### **Profile**

Please read this and see if you can guess whom it's supposed to describe. The answer is at the end of this column.

*What is my management philosophy? The answer can be different for each circumstance, as I grow and learn. But fundamentally it is to do what is right in a fair way. There are no easy answers. I engage people, using different strategies based on who they are – persuasion, reward and recognition, creating opportunities for growth, to take risks and make a difference, to be part of a team, to play in a different sandbox. I also counsel on leaving the organization, when that is appropriate.*

### **Support and strikebreaking**

I've tried to emphasise the importance of supporting our strike to everyone. I've asked our support staff Local to ensure its members are not doing anything that could be considered our work. Nevertheless, I've had some reports that concern me. It's not clear whether the following have been carried out by managers or by support staff under management orders.

A member reported to me that he had modified his College website just before the strike so only the index page remained and all other pages were deleted. Nevertheless, about the same time Bob Gillett began speaking of a "semester completion strategy", all his website pages miraculously reappeared.

I was able to take a sneak peek at my Blackboard sections. For one of my sections I had created an export file then deleted all content except the course outline before the strike as an experiment. I then restored everything before the strike and left it that way. I just noticed that all announcements, including those I posted several weeks ago are "Posted by Administrator Blackboard 5". In contrast, all announcements posted before the strike for my other section for which I did not create an export file are "Posted by J DOUGLAS BRANDY".

So, there's no doubt the College has been messing around. Just who has been doing it (managers or support staff or both) remains to be discovered.

### **Weekend getaway**

With the stress that inevitably accompanies a strike, it's very important to find some quiet personal and family time away from it all. My wife and I have been able to get away with our dogs to our cottage in a remote corner of Pontiac County on the weekends. There, it's very quiet with no hydro, phone or Internet and no permanent neighbours. Our technology spans the time from late nineteenth century wood stove and kerosene lamps to an early twenty-first century solar panel.

### **Answer to profile question**

The quote earlier in this column is part of a self-congratulatory description of Bob Gillett. You'll find the full puff piece at <http://www.networkedgovernment.ca/ThoughtfulVisionaryGillet>

# Management Semester Completion plans

## Questions and Answers

By Ted Montgomery, Chair of the Bargaining Team

**What details do we have regarding the Semester Completion Strategy?**

There are no details whatsoever – the way to ensure completion of the semester is to negotiate a settlement with the faculty that addresses the issues of quality that Rae, faculty, and students have identified.

There is no direction as to how the so-called guarantee will be met.

The quality of the programs at each college and system-wide will be seriously compromised.

The value of 2006 diplomas and certificates for all graduating students, no matter what their program or particular completion strategy will be permanently damaged and diminished.

## **2. Why are the Colleges doing this?**

Chief college spokesperson Rick Miner is quoted in the March 15<sup>th</sup> *National Post*:

*“Obviously we hope the strike doesn’t go on, but what we’re really trying to do here is buy time.”*

Different colleges have advanced a variety of possible “strategies” including have managers, or support staff deliver programs. Others are planning to hire replacement workers to perform struck work.

Management prefers to “buy time” rather than respond to the faculty’s request that they return to the table with an offer different from that already rejected.

## **3. How will the Semester Completion Strategy Work?**

No plans have been announced.

It will be impossible to provide quality education for college students without their teachers.

The faculty’s semester completion strategy is for the colleges to return to negotiations with a revised offer that addresses quality of education issues.

## **4. Are there some examples of what is planned?**

Individual plans have not been announced and will not be announced this week according to the colleges. This buys more time.

Colleges have mentioned managers and support staff teaching.

Colleges have indicated that only “essential” requirements will be covered, but have not indicated what those are, or who will make those determinations.

## **5. Why don’t the colleges just settle this matter and get the faculty back in the classroom?**

The colleges remain hopeful that faculty will be forced to accept the offer that is on the table. By directing attention to salary and away from the issues of quality education, the colleges hope to avoid making any system-wide improvements to quality.

Faculty have said there must be improvements to the quality of education in the colleges.

The colleges’ offer contains nothing that addresses the concerns about quality that have been referenced by Rae and McGuinty.

**6. Are the colleges saying that they are going to complete the year without faculty?**

The colleges say: “Faculty are critical to the delivery of college education.”

OPSEU continues to urge the colleges to end the strike by negotiating a settlement that includes provisions that address the quality issues.

The colleges’ offer on the table has been rejected by a 96% vote and produced an 81% strike vote. The colleges made that offer worse on March 6, knowing that would provoke a strike. That offer cannot be a settlement offer and will not end the strike.

The colleges know this and know that holding to that offer will force faculty to remain on strike and will keep students out of the classrooms

**7. Does OPSEU anticipate a long strike?**

That depends completely on the colleges.

The colleges have the authority to end the strike at any time, simply by good faith bargaining and a resolution of the quality of education issues.

The Colleges know that the offer on the table has been rejected and has provoked the strike. A negotiated settlement is possible and OPSEU has proposed several viable options to address the quality issues.

The Colleges Collective Bargaining Act requires the College Relations Commission to monitor “the successful completion of the courses of study by the students affected by the strike, lockout or closing of the college or colleges.” The Semester Completion Strategy will **not** result in the students to successful completion their courses of study.

**8. What is OPSEU doing to end the strike?**

The faculty bargaining team has tabled several proposals to address the issues of quality education. Resolution on those issues is key to ending the strike.

OPSEU president Leah Casselman has written to Premier McGuinty urging him to act on the need to settle the strike by having the colleges address the quality issues at the bargaining table.

OPSEU has urged all students to call on the McGuinty government to require the colleges to address the issues of quality in order to reach a settlement.

Faculty and students have been lobbying the members of the Ontario legislature and the public with a demand that the colleges come back to the table with a serious and reasonable offer, that addressed the quality issues.

The faculty negotiating team met with Minister Bentley seeking a resolution.

**9. Have the faculty given up on negotiating a settlement?**

No – settlement is possible. The colleges know that the current offer has produced a strike. They know that settlement can be achieved with a realistic offer.

It is quite possible, given that they have never tabled an offer that speaks to the key issues, that the colleges prefer arbitration to settlement.

**10. Do the Semester Completion Strategies dilute quality?**

Certainly this is true. Quality cannot be maintained without the faculty teaching their courses and programs of study.

Faculty are deeply concerned about quality. That is why they have voted to strike. That is why the strike will not end until the quality issues have been addressed

**11. Are students being cheated by not getting the education they paid for?**

Bob Rae's assessment of the colleges was that they had "diminished their ability to deliver the educational services that Ontario and Ontarians badly need."

All college students have suffered from the decline in quality identified by Rae. That decline is what faculty demand must be addressed.

By refusing to respond to the proposals for quality improvements, the colleges have forced the strike which is a hardship on today's college students.

**12. What are the specifics of the Semester Completion Strategies**

There are no specifics. There is no guarantee of quality or value.

**13. Will students get any of their fees back?**

The colleges are not answering this question.

OPSEU's view is that if students do not receive full value for which they have contracted, they should be reimbursed.

The Semester Completion Strategies do not constitute receiving full value for tuition payments

**14. Isn't it better to have the government legislate the faculty back to work and provide a real education?**

It is best to reach an agreed settlement. But that will take both parties to be willing to address the quality issues.

However, legislation would be preferable to any "Semester Completion Strategy" that does not have the college teachers delivering the courses that students need and deserve.

**15. Why don't the Colleges want the government to intervene and settle the strike?**

The colleges have not tabled an offer that addresses the issues of quality.

The colleges have diverted funds from *The Quality Improvement Fund* to cover already funded faculty replacements. Cambrian and Mohawk Colleges claimed that 30 new faculty would be hired using the *Quality Improvement Funds*. Actually added only 4 and 5 new full-time faculty to complement.

Funds not spent on quality improvements are available to the colleges for discretionary spending in other areas.

The colleges are looking for ways to "buy time," according to Seneca College President Miner.

**16. Is OPSEU saying that the colleges are diluting academic quality and trying to break the union and cheat students of their year?**

It was Bob Rae in the Report on Post-Secondary Education who said that the colleges have diminished their ability to deliver quality.

It was Premier McGuinty who said that college students should have more teachers and more time with their teachers.

The colleges are prepared to continue to give the students an inferior quality education. The “Semester Completion Strategy” greatly further damages the value of an Ontario College education.

The colleges are hoping to break the faculty strike and have engaged professional communications consultants formerly with the Mike Harris government to accomplish that objective.

**17. Is the “Semester Completion Strategy” a bargaining ploy?**

Both management negotiating chair and President Miner Chair of the Committee of College Presidents have described bargaining as “a game.”

Dr. Miner said the strategy was really “to buy time.”

Faculty are ready to return to the classroom and make up for lost work as soon as the colleges agree to return to negotiations and to settle the quality issues that have led to the strike.

**18. “What do [the colleges] say to the OPSEU charge that this can’t be done”**

This question is taken directly from the “Confidential – Not For Public Distribution” document obtained by the faculty from media sources. That document was produced prior to the release of the Semester Completion Strategy and prior to OPSEU or anyone making any statement about it.

Management correctly anticipated that the faculty would be critical of the “Semester Completion Strategy.” Representative student bodies have also seen through the so-called assurance, noting that it is “meaningless.”

**19. Do you think that students will have to work on weekends to make up the academic year?**

If management tables a serious and realistic offer now, that should not be necessary.

Scheduling and the assignment of teaching hours are totally within management’s discretion, including nights, and weekends. Faculty will carry out assigned responsibilities but have no say in scheduling.

# Perth perambulations

by Lorne Lowry

## **Strike Day 10 (or 14 – depending on how you count them)**

Well, the EMC came out on the 17<sup>th</sup> and our photo was on the front page, but the single photo of “Brokeback” Dana Lennox did not make it into the publication. We think he was relieved. We also think that his umbrella with the very nude cherubs on it was probably a bit too much for the red necks in Lanark County to see in their newspapers.

Friday March 17 was a cool one, but it “was” St. Patrick’s day and the Irish came out in all of us. The sixteen of us on the line were all in very high, non-alcoholic spirits. We had decided that none of us could afford to drive to Ottawa to attend the Local 415 “do” at Marshy’s, so we decided to have our own get together at the Lanark Lodge after picket duty that day.

Two-third’s of that day’s picketers attended and all glommed Chef Lorne’s Remarkable Lanark Chili made with venison and beef, a few pints, Mary’s buns (I hope you understand...) and **only** 3 OPSEU-supplied Pizzas. (Very Irish Captain Dave did not want to blow the budget...I’d always heard that the Scots [my other side,] were very tight but I now know that the Irish are even tighter than paper on a wall.) A good time was had by all. The other picketers had personal things to attend to, so they could not be there. A pity. Perhaps all will be able to show up for the end of picket get together he hope to have. Many lies were told and Picket Captain Dave Osborne distributed strike pay cheques – oooooohhhhhh! For that he received a Guinness, and the temporary use of an Irish crying towel –St. Patrick’s day, you know! He was not able to keep it, as Lorne is almost as Irish as David is, and he would not let him take it home with him. David did keep the Guinness he had consumed though. Thank you for that Dave!

## **Monday March 20**

Today another very cold one. It was sunny and the wind was biting, but 19 of us showed up to picket. Many thanks to Gord Wilcox for once more bringing his Truth or Myth cards. A rousing, mind numbing game took place and the men beat the women – again? I can’t remember, though I’m sure I will be told...

Discussions about the two BBQ’s scheduled for Woodroffe this coming Wednesday took place. We are all exercising financial restraint and we agreed that it would cost much more in fuel to attend than we would receive in strike pay. It was asked and bet upon if Woodroffe might send some of the donated BBQ food and fixings and drinks to the outlying campi (plural for campus – we feel we must include Pembroke in our “outlying” discussions) for ingestion and enjoyment at those locations. No one on the Perth line was betting “for.” (How about Pembroke?) I must, to protect myself from his wrath, record that Perth Picket Captain Super Dave Osborne abstained during the voting (betting.) He didn’t really, but officially, he did abstain. The minutes of the meeting are somewhere in the laundry as I type. Rats! The evidence is ruined!

### **New friendships**

One good thing about this strike is that we have had an opportunity to meet and get to know other faculty members, which would not normally have happened. Several Woodroffers live in and are now picketing in the Perth area, as is a faculty member from St. Lawrence College in Kingston. People have bonded, friendships have formed, and they will continue. Many thanks to Management for that!

President Gillett was scheduled to arrive for a coffee break and (sportsmen's- no cash involved) bets were taken to see if he:

- 1 - would be on time – (he was)
- 2 - would acknowledge our existence this time, unlike the last time he arrived – (he did, with a **five** fingered wave...)
- 3 - would drive more safely and considerately through the line and onto the campus than he did on his previous visit (he did)

Another picket day ended with all in good spirits. We are all hoping that the talks which resumed today will be fruitful and that we will all be back in class very soon.