

Negotiations and the strike

by Ted Montgomery

Some members have expressed concerns about the media coverage of the faculty strike. I have been in touch with locals around the province and can tell you that both inside and outside of Toronto there has been considerable coverage. Naturally, there is much complaint about the strike, and some focus on salary, but when one reads through that initial layer there is increasing support for the real issues -- our issues.

We know that management has been investing heavily in trying to focus on salary. Media, looking for a quick hit, often grab onto that. But, increasingly, the issue of smaller class size and more full-time teachers is being reported and highlighted. Interviews with students almost always begin with the student's frustration but move on to the students' concerns about class size.

That the *Toronto Sun* gets it wrong and blames the teachers is not surprising. All the private media are owned by corporations and seldom if ever side with any workers in a labour dispute. Compared to other strikes, we have done far better than workers usual.

We have constantly pointed out – and it has been picked up on radio and TV – that we are seeking the implementation of the Rae Report findings as they pertain to quality and to student/teacher interaction. Faculty demands also highlight the critical support of other educational professionals – counsellors and librarians. Give students more quality contact time with their teachers. Rae, without overtly taking sides, has re-endorsed that goal.

Premier McGuinty and Minister Bentley have also commented. Keep in mind that the government are on the employer's side of the table. Nevertheless, they have not taken sides in their public statements. But neither have they endorsed the position of college management. All they are saying is that bargaining should resume.

We agree – the sooner the better and with a serious new offer on the table. The offer that produced a 96% rejection and a nearly 81% strike vote obviously will not be ratified. To make an offer late on March 6th that was knowingly and admittedly worse than that tabled previously was clearly intended to provoke a strike not find a settlement.

More on part-time teachers, the ASA, and course reports

By Doug Brandy

Part-time teachers

I received the following and offer it, withholding my correspondent's name. I see the author's point and regret appearing to disrespect part-timers in an earlier column.

As a part-time teacher who's been working at Algonquin College for a couple of months now, let me first offer my solidarity, sympathy, and thanks for the brave action of seizing the bull by the horns and going on strike (especially after management's ridiculous games helped put you into such a position).

I've just been reading today's strike bulletins. I couldn't help but snort in derision at President Gillett's statement at what students say they want (maybe he was talking to the Student Association's (?)right-wing president, who, in this morning's Sun, advocated back-to-work legislation), and I was happy to see you refute such patent nonsense and agit-prop.

However, I had to take exception to the manner in which you responded to Gillett's horse-shit.

You remarked:

"Students want teachers who are competent, experienced, professional, dedicated, and available. Does that sound like a part-timer? Although most part-time teachers are dedicated, they have no time for anything beyond their scheduled teaching hours"

Although I agree wholeheartedly with your point about the time-constraints of part-timers, why did you feel it necessary to segregate full-timers from part-timers in such a manner as you did above? Why not point out that EVERY worker deserves full-time employment and its benefits (or their equivalents)? Why not point out that hiring part-timers opens the door for management everywhere to cheat both full-timers and part-timers out of wages and benefits which have been won by hard, union-backed struggle for the past five decades? Such a statement, carelessly made, can easily alienate those people you're trying to help from your/their/our cause.

Please take more time and put more thought into your next comment. Gillett's trying to hang each of us, one at a time; don't make it any easier for him. If we must hang, better we do it all together!

CE part-time teachers are caught in a difficult position. The College has asked many of them to continue teaching while our union is asking them not to cross our picket lines. To bring the management team back to the bargaining table, we'd like part-time teachers to have a discussion in class then have their students send e-mails to their MPPs instead of attending class. We're asking the CE teachers not to return to the College, so we can get the strike ended in everyone's best interest.

The ASA response

It's unfortunate Michael Barrett, Algonquin's Students' Association (ASA) President, has asked students not to get involved in our strike. He has also apparently asked the provincial government to legislate us back to work and declare college education an essential service.

Michael should understand that we are fighting for quality education for students, his members. Jack Wilson and I met with Michael and his Board of Directors at their request for an hour on February 9. We provided details on our position, gave him objective facts such as the "53/22" changes and responded to all the Board's questions. In my opinion, the ASA Board cannot claim to be uninformed. They could also have contacted us at any time for more information.

Course reports and management threats

You'll recall in the days just before the strike a number of managers were attempting to require faculty to submit progress reports on their courses. The reports were to include details of what parts of the course had been covered and student marks to date.

At the time, I advised members to first ask why the College was asking for this. If management persisted, I recommended, "My classes have completed the first eight weeks of the semester. I will be evaluating my students' progress when they have completed all course requirements. At this point in the course, all students are incomplete." Further, if management wanted more detail, members should say they've already given a reasonable response and now have a workload complaint as this was not a requirement of their original assignment. If the manager does not provide an acceptable response to the workload complaint within seven days, the member should forward his or her complaint to the Workload Monitoring Group.

Several members e-mailed me to say they had followed my advice then received a notice of discipline from the manager. Here's an example:

You were asked to provide a status report of the course content covered to date and the results of any evaluation you have done by March 3, 2006.

I note that you have not responded to this request. The request is consistent with management functions and your compliance is required. Failure to comply will be considered as insubordination and a disciplinary letter will be placed on your file.

Please submit the required information no later than 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 6th.

As a number of members walking the line have queried me about this, I've asked the Team to ensure any back-to-work protocol includes an agreement that no member will be subject to discipline as a result of engaging in the strike or in preparing for the strike, including any action or inaction associated with the College's requests for course reports. I subsequently received a commitment from the Team to address this at the appropriate time.

Successes on the Pembroke evening shift

By Shawn Pentecost

"Like sands through the hour glass, so are the days of our lines."

No wind, no freezing rain can stop the Pembroke picketers. Picketing continued at the Pembroke campus Thursday despite Mother Nature's wrath. I'm not sure, but I think she might be on Bob's payroll. I wonder if she got one of those double digit increases? If so, she's probably not a professor, instructor, counsellor or librarian.

The A.M. crew

Our morning shift saw the worst of the weather, endured, and ensured the environment was safe for the other shifts. Thank-you A.M. people. We also thank the CUPE members from the city of Pembroke's works department for sanding the sidewalk, ensuring our safety as well.

Evening picketing

The evening shift was successful in encouraging members of others unions taking CE courses not to cross our legal picket line. Some even sought immediate refunds. Way to go P.M. people. The presidents of the two union locals that represent teachers and educational assistants in this area will be on the picket line Tuesday evening to encourage their members to seek refunds for CE courses. Thank you Pauline for your energy and persistence, we all will benefit from it.

We may not be big in numbers, but we are big in heart.

Join the Thursday rally in Toronto

By Wayne Wilson

We hope to have two busloads of Algonquin faculty join their provincial counterparts in a rally in Toronto.

Departure and arrival: Buses leave at 6:00 AM sharp, Thursday morning from Tim Horton's/ Navaho location. Returning approximately 8:00 PM but probably late.

What to bring: Make your own individual parking arrangements, bring a lunch, and beverages. Bring a cellphone and camera, if possible: cell to contact pickup and camera for historic photos.

Rally leadership: Rally Captain will be Commodore Pat Kennedy and his trusty lieutenant Jack Wilson (shades of Gilligan's Island, you be the judge).

Four-shift credit!: There is a four-shift credit for the day; that means one more shift and you get your week's pay.

Reminder: Only one pickup and drop off location, -- no pleading please -- at Tim Horton's/Navaho location only.

Register today: Please sign up with your picket captain.

A few words from the picket captains at Woodroffe Campus

Police are great

Morale continues to be very high. We have a great group of people on the line and the message by Pam Thursday morning was just great. Janet Crupi and company came to visit again: it was great to see our brothers and sisters from the other picketing teams.

I hope one of the members of the Strike Committee will send an email to Vince Bevan of the Ottawa Police to express our appreciation for the excellent work that his officers have been doing. They have been very supportive and diligent in their work helping to keep our teams safe on the line.

— Marc Duval

Frequent Brinks sightings

A much more tolerable day weather wise, sorry we can't say the same for drivers entering and leaving the college. We had several incidents where drivers seemed to be in a very big hurry to get into the parking lot. All incidents were reported.

We had many visitors Friday. Coffee was dropped off by two animation students, another student – Michaël - asked to join the picket line and he walked with us for quite along time. We had a member from the Ontario Teacher's Federation drop off water and goodies and the representative said they would back after their March break. Lots of car horns were heard throughout the afternoon and many "thumbs up" gestures were seen. We all verify that the gesture was positive!

There was a Brinks truck that many trips into the college during the afternoon. We were wondering whether money was going in or being taken to destinations unknown! Many on the line had their own theories about where that money may have been going! (Editor's note: Management bonuses, perhaps?)

-- Chris Wojcik

Local unions come out in support

We have a relatively small but dedicated core who are on site each day. The "feel" on the line remains very positive. There were significantly more positive honkers than on earlier days.

Donations of coffee, huge muffins, candy, cases of water, etc. came in throughout the shift. Sharkey's Towing and Timothy's provided major donations. Several students from the animation program came by several times with coffee and timbits. The Ottawa Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation provided water and candy

Reps from OPSEU Local 399 and CUPE Local 4000 picketed with us. Vini Bhindi from the support staff union came out and walked briefly. A Carleton journalism student came by and is doing an article which will air on Monday on the university radio station - she suggested we focus on Dose, and regional papers for impact - providing specifics to counter the colleges' ad campaign (sorry, dis-information campaign). (Editor's note: An organized letter writing campaign has begun targeting the Ottawa Valley weeklies.)

--Steve Lee

Doing the CE hustle

C.E. traffic started coming in around 5:30, 5:45. John Tappin and I managed to get some pamphlets in many hands. I began chatting up the motorists who were all, to a person, friendly, polite and accommodating. We were joined by Serge Graftchuk. Serge was just three months ago hired by Niagara College after having moved from Ottawa, a case of bad

timing if there ever was one! He's a welcome addition to our line and was a stalwart out there.

We all loved Dianna McAleer's piece in the newsletter Thursday where she surveyed some of the members about class sizes. I read her piece out loud as we were circling the intersection, providing some laughter and many nodding heads.

Spirits remain very high. The only wrinkled foreheads come from Bob Gillett's 1:23 teacher: student ratio he claims we enjoy.

— Joe Banks

Safety first on Navaho

Well it was another dull day on the picket with little to report Thursday night beyond the occasional egg thrown our way by appreciative students followed by a few well chosen earthy Anglo-Saxon epitaphs hurled at us from a partially rolled down window.

Oh, did I mention the police officer who was struck by a car leaving our picket line. That was probably a bad decision on the driver's part. I think that the Tim Horton's parking lot was cleared of all the police cars who pulled up to lend the struck officer some assistance. The officer was clipped but did not appear hurt since he still was able to deal with the car that he had pulled over for running our picket. Unfortunately, the car did not have any license plates. I am not sure of the officer's frame of mind by the time he was actually able to make it to the stopped car. I thought of offering him one of our orange vests but thought better of it. Some things are just better left alone.

We did have a good turnout something just under 20 souls. All in good spirits and they appear to be very solidly behind the decision to strike. We appear to be coalescing into an effective team. As always Suzie of the PPSI was outstanding in discussing the issues with each of the cars that were nice enough to stop.

— Mac Nason, the milk monitor at Tim Horton's.

Quote of the day

"Algonquin College is a large machine that turns out a product..."

Counsel for the College at a 2006 arbitration hearing

Gillett sighting in Perth

by Lorne Lowry

Friday started out well. At 7:20 it was pleasant and calm. At 7:30 it started to rain, and the gear came out. At 8:15 the skies cleared, and the sun came out. It was beautiful! At 8:45 the skies filled in and it started to rain again, this time with more wind. Out came the rain gear once more.

Talk on the line today was about.... let's all guess. Yes! ...and cross dressing,

transsexuals and their transmorgifying (thank you Calvin and Hobbes) operations, architectural rendering, home heating systems, well drilling, ice fishing, people we know in common ie. “small world” discussions - and if President Gillett would drive at a more reasonable and cautious speed on his way off the campus than he did on his way on to it, and if he would or would not acknowledge our existence at that time. Yes on both counts.

Thoughtful gesture

Thanks very much to the nearby-living student who arrived with a tray hosting a glass carafe of coffee (not a thermal pitcher) and real ceramic mugs (not paper cups!) ...to ease the chills.

Monday is another day.

Some random personal thoughts

by Lorne Lowry

During periods of regularly scheduled classes when there is not a labour dispute taking place, Algonquin's security forces depend on the faculty to support them and advise them of building openings, closings, disruptive situations, and all sorts of things occurring. I and many others do that diligently. However, when there is a labour dispute, the faculty become the “bad guys.” Hmmmm...

Are we not the same people?

During disputes, one wonders what faculty members should really do during the “regular times.” Are we not the same people the security forces count on during the “good,” or “regular times?” Are we really that bad at other times? WHO is telling them to not trust us, and to video tape us on the picket lines? WHY are they told to do that? Are we not to be trusted? Are we bad people?

Why is there all of this nonsense? Are we not all professional people? I am sure that we will hear that it is all for the good of all of us, but I really do wonder why it happens. Perhaps, in the future and after this disruption, when I am the last to leave a college building, I might not call security to tell them that I am doing so. Will it matter to any one? Will anyone at any level care? In the past, I have always thought that by doing so, it was important to my employer and that I was being a good employee. I am now thinking that in the future, what difference will it make if I do or do not do that? If I cannot be trusted at all times, I suppose that I cannot be trusted at any time. Hmmmm, again...

Let's be professional

It is such a shame that I and others are treated so rudely, crudely, and with such a lack of respect. I must explain and reiterate that I never have, nor will I ever treat a member of the management group in the same way. We all have our jobs to do and we must all do them professionally and with the respect due to each group.

Support has been great at Navaho East

by Madeleine Whitfield

Morale was high Friday on the line at Navaho East, and there was no shortage of news. The first suggestion to me was that we should thank our supporters, so here goes. A big thank you to Sharkey's Towing and Road Service for the trays of muffins they brought in this morning. Those should last us through the weekend! Another fantastic supporter is student Lisa Soper who handed out hot coffee to cold, wet picketers. Strong supporter John Beesack wanted to know if we were starting a petition of those behind our cause and

became the first person to sign up. Others whose names we didn't get have dropped off food, shouted support going through the line, given the thumbs up, beeped horns, and generally made us feel that we're not alone out here. Thanks to all of you. Your support really helps. Student support is especially appreciated.

Safety First

As we all know, the freezing rain on Thursday caused the line to be closed down for safety, but some intrepid people still came out for the 5 to 7 p.m. shift. The police were in attendance, and when a motorist swore at Doris Fiszer, the motorist was cautioned. The police officer doing this was then himself clipped by the mirror of another car which drove too close to him. Obviously all picketers must be extra vigilant.

Something else observed is that some people are cruising all the lines and driving a little close to those handing out brochures, and these people are not always supporters. Another example, a truck gunned through our line today with the registration 539 4LV, so if you see this one give it a wide berth!

The Toronto Rally

Sign up sheets were started in the various portables today for those wishing to go on the buses to Toronto for the general rally this Thursday. On our line, there was no shortage of people wanting to go and within five minutes I had seven names written down! After that, we just started a list.

CE Closed At La Cité?

A member with connections at La Cité reports that their Continuing Education department has been closed down. Is this for the duration of the strike? We'll find out. (Editor's Note: CE was closed at La Cité last week because of study week. However, the La Cité management has announced CE will resume this week.)

Friendship and Solidarity

So many people mentioned how great it is to meet people from other parts of the College that it's worth a mention. These new friendships are cemented over coffee at Timmy's where department experiences are swapped amid much laughter. There is a great feeling of solidarity building up here. By the way, these trips to Timmy's are paying off. We've had four "roll up the rim" free coffees so far. In case someone wins big time, there are always willing helpers to assist in the rim rolling.

Questions

Who paid for the new sports facility whose dome can be seen at the end of parking lot 9?
Can we do hybrid picketing—two hours on the line and two hours on-line?