

OPSEU honours general's true courage

For 100 days in 1994, Rwanda, Africa, was gripped by the brutal genocide of Tutsi, pro-peace Hutu and foreigners. More than 800,000 Rwanda civilians and others died, often by machete-wielding Hutu extremists, and without thought to the age or gender of their victims.

Hutu and Tutsi peoples have long been at odds over true Rwandan ethnicity. Hutu hold the ethnic majority.

Lieutenant (LT) General Romeo Dallaire was assigned as the Force Commander for the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission in Rwanda in 1993. His mission was to oversee a peace accord between the government of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) after three years of civil war. The General was the first Canadian to be assigned a commanding position of a UN peacekeeping mission.

Within months of the assignment, racial tensions erupted with the assassination of Rwanda President Juvenal Habyariman, a Hutu, on April 6, 1994. The subsequent Tutsi genocide marked the end of the peace agreement.

Within days of the first Tutsi murders, the UN and other Western nations chose to withdraw

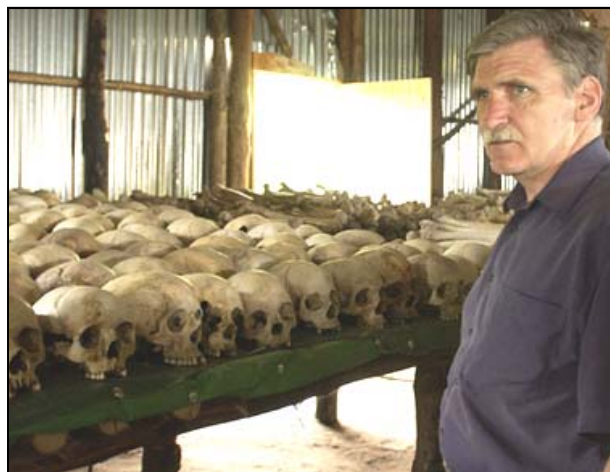
peacekeepers from the country now under siege by extremists. The General, from his headquarters in Rwanda, begged the UN for 5,000 additional troops, believing this could stop the violence from escalating. His pleas were dismissed.

Seriously ill-equipped, Lt. General Dallaire ignored orders to abandon the Rwandan people as he felt a responsibility to the more than 20,000 refugees in UN controlled areas. Only a small contingent of 450 troops stayed with him. He continued to plea with Western countries for assistance, all unheeded.

Though his decision to stay in Rwanda during the horrific events over 100 days in 1994 has taken a great personal toll on Lt. General Dallaire, there is no

telling the countless number of lives he saved or the hope he gave to the people he served and protected.

Lt. General Dallaire doesn't like to be called a hero. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a "hero" as "one that shows great courage." Lt. General Romeo Dallaire deserves to be called a hero and to receive this year's Stanley Knowles Humanitarian Award.



Dallaire at the National Resistance Museum in Rwanda, 2004

Health and Safety Award—Local

Local 521 persistence pays off in protecting worker health and safety

In 2004, officers of Local 521 uncovered an asbestos survey taken at the Mimico Corrections Centre. The employer denied having a survey completed.

Through Freedom of Information (FOI) access, the Local discovered reports, dating back to 1993, that showed the employer had been hiding the presence of asbestos at the facility. The employer had violated the Ontario Health and Safety Act and had been putting the health and safety of all employees at risk for more than a decade. The Ministry of Labour ordered the employer to correct the deficiencies.

A local group grievance was filed and forced to go to mediation/arbitration.



In September 2008, the grievance is settled, but not before the lives of Brother Terry Pollock (grievor) and Brother Curt Bishop (representing all provincial corrections officers that may be impacted by the case) are lost.

With no confidentiality clause, the settlement acknowledges the employer's breach of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Collective Agreement, compensates members who may have become ill from exposure dating back to 1980, compensates the Pollock estate

and establishes a Health and Safety Scholarship in the name of Brother Bishop. The courage of Local 521 members to stand up for the health and safety of all employees is deserving of recognition.

Health and Safety Award—Individual

Bishop dedicated life to health and safety

Curt Bishop was an active member of the Corrections Health and Safety Team, representing workers in jails and detention centres across the Province of Ontario.

Instrumental in helping settle many landmark cases, including the Mimico Centre asbestos fiasco, Brother Bishop was known for his dedication to the protection and safety of workers.

A member of Local 678, Brother Bishop worked at the Algoma Treatment and Remand Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. He was a well-known and respected OPSEU activist. Sadly, Brother Bishop passed away on June 30, 2008, leaving behind a wife and two daughters.



Honourary Lifetime Membership Award

Evelyn Anger

An active member since 1986, Evelyn Anger has shared her boundless energy and commitment to trade unionism within OPSEU and her local labour council.

A proven leader, Sister Anger has given much of her time to OPSEU members and to the



labour movement in various roles, including local president and board member of her local labour council.

The Honourary Lifetime Membership Award recognizes her dedication and achievements.

Gary Fordyce

Gary Fordyce was Chief Steward of Local 110 from 1984 until his retirement in 2007. He provided support to members and was known as the “guy to call” if there was a difficult case.

Brother Fordyce’s grievance success rate is reputed to match those of labour lawyers handling similar cases.

Brother Fordyce was an advocate for many members. He was the chair of two provincial subcommittees and a member of two provincial bargaining teams.

He has more than paid his dues and is deserving of the Honourary Lifetime Membership Award.

William Playter

Bill Playter is a well-respected OPSEU activist, known for his commitment to the members. His selflessness is exemplified by his actions during the 1996 Ontario Public Service (OPS) strike. After learning of an outbreak of an infectious disease in the geriatric ward at the psychiatric hospital where he worked, he got permission to check on his residents and work colleagues, without considering the possible risks to his own health.

Brother Playter is known for his many years of fighting for disability rights and accommodation issues. One of his many achievements includes signing the first Workplace Accommodation Agreement to be used in the public service.

Brother Playter has always assisted whenever necessary. He will be missed in his retirement by those whose lives he’s touched.



Human Rights Award

Wade Stevenson

Heteronormative practice (the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles and the view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation) in the work environment negatively impacts the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and transsexual people every day.

It takes everyone in the workplace to challenge systematic practices that allow discrimination to continue. Wade Stevenson has stepped up to the challenge by stepping forward as a gender variant person. Stevenson has gone further by creating a workshop to share expertise with other individuals and union activists in furthering human rights in the workplace.

The courage taken by Stevenson in ensuring basic human rights and educating others falls in line with the criteria for the OPSEU Human Rights Award.

Leah Casselman Award

Local 674 demands respect from employer

In the fall of 2008, members of OPSEU Local 674 were in negotiations with their employer, the Timiskaming Health Unit. The employer made an offer, which was resoundingly rejected with a 90 per cent strike vote.

Known as a silent and less active local, the approximately 95 nursing, professional-technical and clerical staff quickly learned the meaning of union solidarity. Never having faced a strike, these members walked the picket line, unsure of the decision they had made. Despite the uncertainty, they held their ground. The bargaining team worked with seasoned negotiators and were able to get the contract their members deserved. Not only was it a decent contract, but the members gained respect from the employer and respect for themselves. No longer the silent local, members of Local 674 have gained the confidence to stand up to the employer, ensuring all members' rights are upheld.

It is their fortitude and commitment that makes Local 674 excellent recipients for the Leah Casselman Award.

This is the second year this award has been given, presented to the local/individual that exemplifies the spirit and intent of mobilizing to win.



Brought to you by **IN SOLIDARITY**.

This is the sixteenth year that the Editorial Committee of **In Solidarity** has produced the daily updates. We will provide a record of Convention events and happenings.

Who we are: Karrie Ouchas, Local 340, Laurie Sabourin, Local 368, Edwin Mercurio, Local 526, Felicia Fahey, Local 681 and Jim Ziolkowski, Local 137. Ex-officio members are: James Tocker, Executive Board Liaison and Don Ford, OPSEU Communications.