

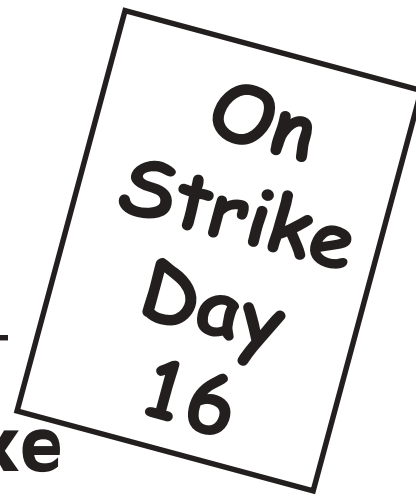
OPSEU



SEFPO

Frontlines

March 28, 2002



Telling the truth: It's up to all of us

The Ontario government is trying hard to make it seem as if this strike is all about money.

They are spending a lot of money – taxpayers' money – to do this.

You have all seen their newspaper ads touting a "fair and reasonable offer."

We know the ads aren't true. We know that the percentages are tilted to the highest possible level.

We know that the ads don't tell readers that this increase comes at a price – the price of selling out the unclassified staff who share our working lives and our picket lines.

Many classified members have spent enough time in unclassified limbo to know how important those issues are.

The ads also don't say that another price is getting a veto over how we use our share of the pension surplus.

We know this.

We estimate they are spending \$80,000 a day on newspaper ads in dailies alone to convey this misleading message. They are also doing ads in weekly newspapers and on the radio. And they have a bottomless purse to draw on, if they so choose.

It's an advertising budget that OPSEU can never hope to match.

That said, we intend to put out a new series of radio ads next week, and today's daily newspapers in most cities will have our "It takes two to tango" ad.

OPSEU members know, of course, that pay rates are just one of many issues involved in this labour dispute.

For most members, money is not even the most important one.

We are communicating this at every opportunity.

However, we do not have the same automatic access to the news media that Cabinet ministers have.

It takes a lot more of us to make news than it does of them. That's why it's so important for OPSEU members in every Ontario community to be writing letters to the editor, picketing, and organizing special newsworthy events as often as possible.

We will succeed when we harness all the creativity and energy of OPSEU members.

The government has the money but we have the people!

You can help right now by writing a letter to your nearest newspaper, as hundreds of members have done already. (See Page three of this edition for examples of letters written by members to support the strike.)

strike slogans

Thank Marg Reed of Local 130 for these ideas.

Ernie! Same skunk, different stripes
Public service is worth our pain

We strike for our families

Honk if you love the environment

Honk if you fish

Honk if you hunt

Honk if you drink water

36.6 % wasn't too much for your

MPP

A fair raise for dedicated workers

Do you want your child on an unsafe
bus?

Force Ernie to come to the table

Support the right to negotiate - honk

How much cutting before we bleed!

We do good work

Kiss a jail guard; they keep us safe

Pollution! It's a dirty word let's get

back to work

Do you know where the endangered

species are? Our biologists do!

Eat a politician. No calories in hot

air

Quote of the day

From a letter to the Globe and Mail, March 27, from Bradley Rudachyk in Barrie

Commenting on the election of Ernie Eves: "It is my guess that we have watched Ernie crest. Now, we'll wait to see Eves trough."

The news from everywhere

Hot cargo in Dryden

Sault Ste. Marie management broke the essential services agreement when they worked last weekend and shipped CL415 water bomber equipment to Dryden – a union worker’s job!

Dryden aircraft engineers discovered the contravention and quarantined the shipment, refusing to install the rebuilt equipment.

An agreement was reached: As it would take two days to return the equipment and two days to send it back to Dryden, the package would sit as is for four days.

Message to management: It is not business as usual.

Let’s Make a Deal

Local 307 president Al Donaldson found himself playing Let’s Make a Deal at Oakridge.

Management tried to ship in \$7,000 dollars worth of pop, chips and smokes. “We denied access, as these things were not essential. We were threatened with an injunction, so I said the items can enter the facility as long as you can prove to me that you are fiscally responsible with tax payers’ money.

“Normally patients buy these items. We let the truck across, provided patients were billed for the treats. They reluctantly agreed and they even put it in writing.”

Worth repeating

I found this address and thought that it might be a good idea to start an email writing campaign.

david_tsubouchi@ontla.ola.org

– Ken Chirico,

Local 634, North Bay

No Old Fort Brunch

Local 701 president John Watson tells what happened to a planned Easter Brunch at Old Fort William, to be catered by the Airline (Travelodge) Hotel.

Local 701 told the Airline manager about secondary picketing and a possible picket at the Airline. Before long the manager “cleared up” the brunch issue.

The Brunch is off. The picket threat worked, although the manager said the reason was many reservations had been cancelled.

Fan mail

I am impressed with the valuable, up-to-date information that has been presented on this website every day during the strike.

It is nice to hear the strike news other than that presented by the popular press. There are so many stories of support that I would never hear if I did not check your website every day.

– Kim Winpisinger

No sheep dip, Batman!

For three days, members of Local 232, with support from Local 233, have been turning away two van loads of non-essential workers from the OMAFRA site at the Wellington County Museum and Archives in Fergus.

The local manager tried to use the police to get them in, but the picket line told a different story to the *Guelph Mercury*.

Also kept out is one “double dipping Sheep Doctor (a vet who retired a couple of months ago under OPSEU’s Factor 80 plan),” reports Doug Peebles.

Shared bonds

I am a member of Local 672, support staff at Collège Boréal. In September, 1991, we were preparing for a strike.

I know the amount of work that goes into just preparing for a strike, let alone going through it. I am overwhelmed by the solidarity of the OPS workers during this strike.

My husband is a member of Local 618, a Correctional Officer at Cecil Facer Youth Center. I have spent a few shifts on the picket line at their site and it is amazing to see all of them come together. It is not easy when management is ready to lie, betray, and do whatever they can to win their point.

These essential workers work inside for 40 hours a week and then give another 20 hours on the line. That to me is true solidarity.

If some good can come out of this strike, it is the bonds that can be shared and the true meaning of solidarity that can be expressed.

– Nathalie Bélanger,
Local 672, Sudbury



Heather Bickle, 362, passed on the D.T. artwork

More snippets from our mailbag

Members and supporters have been writing to MPPS and newspapers telling our side of the strike. Here are some edited examples of recent efforts. Please feel free to put your own thoughts in writing and pass them on as well.

Wasting money

As a taxpayer I am concerned about the use of my taxes to finance a propaganda campaign (the “fair offer” ads). About 45 daily newspapers in Ontario are running this ad at least once weekly, sometimes more.

The average cost of this ad for the newspapers I consulted was \$3,750, higher on weekends. Toronto papers are much more.

I would estimate that \$200,000 dollars weekly and almost a half million dollars has been spent in an attempt to sway public support and avoid addressing the issues.

Stop wasting taxpayers’ money trying to avoid responsibility and to justify your Conservative policies. How many homeless people tried to find warmth with that advertisement today?

– Margaret Boudreau, Tilbury

We don’t want the moon

It is day 13 of the OPSEU strike. The government negotiators left the bargaining table at 10:30 a.m. the day before the strike began and haven’t been back.

One of the items in dispute is pensions. At one time, the government had sole control of the pension fund that both the employer and the union members paid for. It was used for low-interest political loans and managed poorly. While other union pension funds were growing, ours was going broke. Through collective bargaining and a very large amount of cash paid by the Union to the government, we established joint control over the fund. It almost immediately showed profits. The surplus funds are now split between the government and the union. The union used its share to give its members a holiday from premiums and to provide for workers to retire a little bit earlier.

The government wants full control over what the pension surplus is used for. It is our money and they want it. It is part of their offer. It is only one of many concessions they want us to accept.

We do not want the moon. We want to return to work. We just want a fair deal.

– Tony Elders, Chief steward, Local 711

Coverage? or lack of it?

I was really surprised to see Laura Joy’s cleavage on the front page of the *Windsor Star* and leading many newscasts. [Joy is a Windsor lawyer reprimanded for the cut of her T-shirt.] The exposure given to this story is absurd.

I have watched court reporters struggle during the 10 days of the OPSEU strike to draw attention to issues related to their employment. They have been sent home to change their clothes. Court has been suspended over disagreements about essential services. These events garnered nowhere near the coverage of Joy’s cleavage.

I represent court workers, jail guards, enforcement officers from all ministries, and probation and parole officers, who work with dignity and respect within the courts. They perform their duties as professionals, regardless of their personal feelings. No flashy news conferences, no personal indignity.

The victim in this story was the trial witness. An alleged assault victim will have to come back after preparing themselves yesterday for their day in court.

You won’t see front page stories of OPSEU workers admonished for indiscretions. But, then we’re professionals.

– Gino Franche, President Local 130, Chatham

The View From the Inside

This is a note of thanks to the outside picketers for standing out there and representing all of us. Your job isn’t an easy one and although you probably sometimes find it discouraging, I want to say that you are an essential part of my life right now and I draw courage, strength and determination from watching you and hearing about your efforts on our behalf.

The pressure is mounting on the inside from managers, the public and even sometimes from other offices within our own division. When I find myself getting pressured, I stop and think about you – my friends and colleagues out on the line – and why I am doing this and I find that I can keep on going with your help and with the help of my co-workers on the inside. We draw on each other’s strengths and we keep resolving to hold out as long as we can. Together we can do it. With all of us pulling together, inside and out, this strike will end sooner than later.

– Bernadette Bearisto
Crown’s Office, Local 645

Strike Heroes

James Boulton

James Boulton of Local 702 in Kenora underwent gall bladder surgery March 18 and was back on the picket lines and carrying out his executive duties by March 20. We are all impressed and appreciative of his dedication and spunk!



The women of 736 and 701

A worksite inspection Monday at the government building on Red River Road in Thunder Bay found renovations under way.

Monday night, eight women from Locals 736 and 701 were on the line to greet the contractors. At least two vans circled the site for a couple of hours before calling it a night. We are not open for business!

On Tuesday night the line had about 24 women. The contractors tried to enter the building, but were held up for two hours.

Then the evening shift returned to strike headquarters for a spaghetti supper.

Liane Levacque

For taking the strike to the financial institutions of Timmins. Levacque, from Local 649, was waiting in the bank when a customer complained of the smell of smoke.

Much sniffing as tellers tried to isolate the source. Fortunately they found it before they called the Fire Department. It was Liane. Too long around the fire barrel in her picket line parka and boots.

In smelly Solidarity! The members that stink together – stay together.



Norm Mooyekind

Norm has got to be a hero for everyone running strike accounts, reports Carol Cloutier of Local 649.

Norm has figured out a computer program that will print the strike pay cheques. With all the information in a database, the cheques take less than 10 minutes to print.

This will save the Finance folks hours of manually writing cheques.

“We will be letting the other locals in the Timmins Service Area know about it. I know Steve Momy and his Finance Staff appreciate the efforts.”

No downsizing resulted from this efficiency.



Dr. Cheetham

It is amazing to see the support Local 126 is getting, but our biggest supporter is Dr. Cheetham. Every day that he comes in to provide his care for the handicapped, he opens up his trunk and hands over coffee, tea, hot chocolate and donuts. Enough for all the pickets. Thank you, Dr. Cheetham.

Keep those nominations coming in to kfitzrandolph@opseu.org or phone to 1-800-268-7376 and ask for Katie. (email is easiest)