

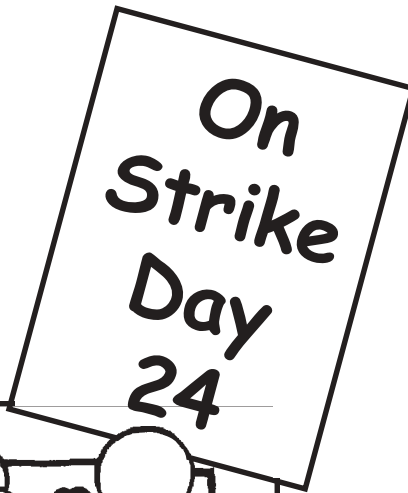
OPSEU



SEFPO

Frontlines

April 5, 2002



Convention 2002 Unions are on the move

The labour movement is on the rise, President Leah Casselman told the 2002 OPSEU Convention.

An Environics poll reports that 64 per cent of all Canadians now approve of the labour movement.

“That’s labour’s highest level of public support since the early 1960s,” she said in her opening address.

“I’m convinced the public approves of unions more now because of the work that you are doing in your communities and on your local labour councils, and what you are saying and doing about the need to rebuild public services,” she said.

“We must expand our activities beyond the workplace and into the social and political life of the province.”

Casselmann said a number of events have changed peoples’ views on public services. Among them are the water fiasco in Walkerton and the tragic events of Sept. 11.

“I also think that deregulation of electricity is a factor.

“People don’t want privatized electricity. They hate those door-to-door hucksters who demand to look at your hydro bill. ‘Wanna buy a bucket of electricity?’

“People can’t understand why
See **Rebuilding**, Page 2

‘Talks continue with a media blackout’ What does this mean?

When a mediator issues a blackout on bargaining, it means the mediator hopes that serious negotiations will take place.

If the sides are talking publicly about what is going on at the table, it can interfere with the job of coming to an agreement.

The privacy of the media blackout means that nobody is making assumptions about what is going on. Nobody is reading meaning into little bits of information. “They ordered tea instead of coffee. What does **that** mean?”

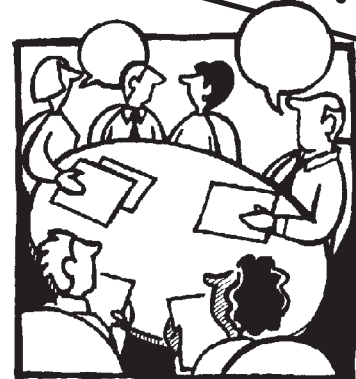
The work of negotiations is one of detail. The parties have to work out what they want to achieve, and then they have to come up with language that will make it happen.

In the process of negotiations, many things will happen.

One side will put a position on the table. The other side will probably take it away and discuss it. After that, they will return to the table and respond.

Sometimes positions are exchanged through the mediator, rather than across the table.

Sometimes a mediator can



explore possible areas of agreement. This is along the line of trying to find out: “If they do this, will you do that?”

Everything that happens through the mediator is off the record. Only agreements that are made across the table count.

But the mediator can help to explore possibilities that the parties would not be prepared to present across the table if they didn’t think they would lead in the desired direction.

All of this works much better if it can happen in confidence. That is why serious bargaining usually takes place with a blackout.

When a blackout is lifted, it means one of two things: The parties have an agreement, or talks have fallen apart.

Obviously everyone is hoping for an agreement, not a breakdown in negotiations.

In the meantime, let the blackout do its work.

It means that both sides are still at it.

Does a media blackout mean the union can't talk? **Heck NO!**

It means we can't talk about what is happening at the bargaining table. But it doesn't shut us up.

We have lots to say about the progress of the strike. We have to keep the pressure on. We have to keep writing letters to newspapers and MPPs.

[So many people are doing this that *FRONTlines* can't possibly excerpt even a paragraph from each of the published letters that have been faxed in from all across the province. It's working well and some great letters are appearing in the newspapers. Keep it up!]

You have undoubtedly noticed that the noxious government ads are continuing. But then so are our radio spots.

And there are more stories we can tell.

In smaller communities with weekly papers, you can get attention with a special rally, barbecue or celebration - a collective party for everyone who has had a birthday since the start of the strike?

The larger the city, the tougher it is to get media attention, but the general rule applies: Actions speak louder than words.

Find a way to dramatize your message. Think about pictures. Plan the event and then send out a news release.

Keep the heat on. Intensify. This is about pensions, about justice for the unclassified, about rebuilding public services.

Scream it from the rooftops. The blackout does not apply to the strike.

Rebuilding public services

Continued from Unions on the Move, Page 1

it's happening. It's bad public policy."

OPSEU is hitting home with its message of rebuilding public services. "People know that privatization leads to tragedies like Walkerton and the kind of scandals like the lab in Hamilton that has been charged with faking test results."

She said it has been a tough year at the bargaining table, paying tribute to the 45,000 OPS members on picket lines.

"We can't help but be disappointed that our massive rejection of the government's offer didn't move them off their 'take it or leave it' strategy.

"It's been real tough for our members on the picket lines and for their families who have to make sacrifices. And it's also been a struggle for our members who have to provide the essential services."

She said the union was proud of them all. "For every day that we are out there, the momentum builds to get this strike settled and to get Ontario back to work. For every day we're out there, a nail is driven into the coffin of the Tory government."

OPS members are not alone in fighting to rebuild public services, she said. "Our health care professionals are mounting a

campaign to address workloads in hospitals."

Children's Aid Society workers are organizing their bargaining around staff shortages and working conditions as well.

"We're fighting on the front lines to rebuild public services, and we've got to take that fight into the next provincial election as well."

Casselman also introduced the members of Local 361, locked out by Kennedy House, a young offenders facility in Uxbridge, since last June.

They refused to accept a package of concessions that included elimination of top-up pay for parental leave, no seniority for laid-off workers, no wage increase for four years, elimination of all health and safety language, no prior notice for shift changes, no overtime until you work 176 hours, elimination of sick credits, no workplace accommodation for injured workers and no pension plan.

The history of the labour movement is the story of working people taking on the bullies and saying, "Enough is enough."

"When we walk the picket line, the spirits of generations of workers are walking with us. These contracts did not just appear. There's a lot of history behind us," Casselman said.

Samuelson visits Elliot Lake

OFL President Wayne Samuelson joined OPSEU's 22 pickets in Elliot Lake recently.

The Elliot Lake *Standard* said Samuelson has been on the road for two weeks visiting OPSEU lines.

"I want to reinforce the message that they are not only fighting for

issues that affect them at work, but also for people who think it's important the government be there for them when they need it, whether it's to make sure your water is safe or to make sure your workplace is safe," Samuelson told the *Standard*.

The sweatshops of the OPS

Over 800 delegates from Convention marched in support of court workers to Toronto's main courthouse at 361 University Ave.

Joining the convention delegates and showing their union colours were OPS pickets from the surrounding area.

Leah Casselman said that working conditions in Ontario's courts are an embarrassment. "It's a public sector sweatshop. If courthouse workers are so essential during a strike, then why are they treated so poorly?"

Eight court workers talked about their working conditions and taking on the employer. They were Pauline Tapping, Region 3 vice-president from Newmarket, Diane Rivait from Windsor, Elaine Young from Hamilton, Nancy Anderson from London, and Toronto court workers Karen Woon Sam from 361 University Ave., Shelly McCormick from Old City Hall, Joe Blake from College Park and Paul Myers from

Superior Court.

More than half of court workers are unclassified members who live from contract to contract, wondering how they are going to pay the rent. Some have worked on contract for 20 years or more. Among those who work inside the courtroom, 90 per cent are contract employees. They don't know what their hours will be one week to the next. Unclassified court workers don't have access to bereavement leave, sick days or benefits. When judges go on holidays, our court workers don't get paid.

"We are here to remind judges and lawyers in the courts today that they depend very heavily on the record keeping and the transcripts provided by court workers," Casselman said.

Court workers are one of the toughest groups of inside strikers. Their creative strategies are holding management accountable. Their strength is inspiring.

Here's a few clues

From a crossword designed by Al Kirk of Local 102.

Sorry the whole puzzle would not reproduce well for **FRONTlines**.

The numbers in brackets give you the number of letters in the answer.

1. Got drunk and screamed at the poor. Mike says he's an inspiration. (5)
2. Who is paying for the Harris lawsuit against the Globe and Mail? (3)
3. If Harris wins his lawsuit, who gets to keep the money? (3)

4. New place for homeless. (4)
5. Leah went to court in _____ (9)
6. Our new premier spends \$25,000 a year on _____ (8)
7. Told welfare moms to buy dented tins of tuna (9)
8. Ernie's yearly paycheque from Credit Suisse was \$1.2 ____ (7)
9. Number of meat inspectors still working for the government. (5)
10. Before he was a golf pro, Mike failed at this profession. (7)

(answers tomorrow)

A plea from Atikokan

Mayor Dennis Brown of Atikokan has written President Leah Casselman advising that the township council has passed the following motion:

"Resolved that the Township of Atikokan request Mr. Ernie Eves, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and Hon. David Tsubouchi, and Leah Casselman, President of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, take all actions practicable to bring the current job action to an amicable solution and closure."

Mayor Brown's letter continues to say that the OPSEU strike "is adversely affecting not only the numerous OPSEU workers, but our entire community."

Walleye threat

The *Sudbury Star* carried a recent article suggesting Lake Nipissing's walleye population may be threatened by the strike.

The danger comes from poachers who could net the fish on their spawning grounds, because there are no Conservation Officers around to enforce game laws.

More support from teachers

The Dufferin-Peel Secondary Unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association has sent a message of support backed by a cheque for \$500.

"In addition, we are organizing our membership to select and support a specific picket line location, encouraging members to walk with fellow unionized workers," wrote unit president Kevin O'Dwyer.

Payroll chaos (Theirs, not ours)

Many members have found discrepancies in their pay cheques from the government, including wrong dues deductions.

OPSEU has written to MBS outlining the problems for the pay period ending March 17.

OPSEU accounting staff are tracking discrepancies for the eventual reconciliation.

If you have noted a dues discrepancy, please forward these details to Francis Rustia (frustia@opseu.org):

- Name and ministry
- Union number or SIN number
- Amount of gross pay on pay stub in question (copy of pay stub is preferable)

- Amount of dues deducted

In the meantime

- Tell management to correct the error and issue a cheque for the differential directly from the workplace “accountable warrant.”
- Smile and file a grievance
- Call CEO Tony Pierro of Shared Services Bureau 416-325-1940 and demand that your pay be reconciled.

You might be a Tory if:

You once broke loose at a party and removed your necktie.

You’ve ever said, “I can’t wait to get into business school.”

You’ve ever called a secretary or waitress “Tootsie.”

You’ve called education a luxury.

You’re afraid of the liberal media.

The only union you support is the Baseball Players, because heck, they’re richer than you.

You think you might remember laughing once – as a kid.

A survival kit

Cathy Bowman in Sioux Lookout got a “striker’s survival kit” from her sister in Toronto:

A package of chili mix; packages of various beans; recipes for bean soup and pasta salad; red licorice; a picture of Ernie Eves labeled “target practice” and lottery tickets.

Warmth in Hearst

School teachers have joined the line several times in Hearst. Last Thursday they even provided dinner for members and their families, reports Suzanne Morin.

Check the website for Marc Johnson’s pictures of the group’s visit to the one-man picket line in Constance Lake First Nation.

“They were treated like Kings and Queens. Charles Baxter is truly a hero of the 2002 Strike. He has opened his own strike quarters and turned it into a Drop Inn Centre where people stop in to chat and find out about the negotiations.” she writes.

“On Day 15, the staff from the Porcupine Health Unit came and walked the line with us and brought lunch for everyone.”

More good managers

Monique Bumbaco, an essential worker in the Crown Attorney’s office in Sault Ste. Marie, agrees with Beth Anich that some members have been receiving good support from their managers.

“Our manager and the managers at the Court House have been supportive of our efforts during this strike.”

Nothing less

For some time now, I have been hearing an ad on 96.7 CHYM which begins: “This is a message from the Ontario Government. We have offered striking public service employees a **10%** pay increase....”

How does 1.95 + 1.95 + 1.95 add up to 10 is what I would like to know? Perhaps the Right Horrible David Tsubouchi could shed some light on this quandry.

Now that the two sides are back around the table, anything less than 10% should not even be considered.

Best of luck in this round of talks.

– Gary Worton, *Local 233*

A grateful pres.

I would really appreciate if you could post on the site my heartfelt thanks to all my members of Local 722, Ministry of the Environment, here in Thunder Bay.

Without their dedication, support and professionalism, we, as a local, would not be as organized as we are.

I personally want to thank them as their Local President for all their hard work and dedication. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

In solidarity,

– Cheryl McDonald, *Local 722*

Costly choice

Ernie Eves’ decision not to run in Nipissing will cost taxpayers an additional \$500,000.

It has been reported that his personal ambitions and Mike Harris’s indecisions have cost the taxpayers of Ontario an estimated \$1,486,000 in severance and extra election costs. And they are stalling negotiations with their unionized employees.

– Margaret Reed, *Local 130*