

OPSEU



SEFPO

Frontlines

April 20, 2002

Hydro
sale is
off!
Tories
Can
be beaten

Rally for an answer in Orangeville

The largest rally in Orangeville history will take place Monday as hundreds of striking OPSEU members converge on the city.

Their mission: to find out how to get the same deal Premier Ernie Eves has had as a public servant.

“Ernie Eves got an \$810,000 pension payout and \$78,000 in severance pay after 21 years on the job,” said President Leah Casselman.

“He’ll get a three per cent pay raise in 2003 (bringing his salary to \$152,836) and a 25 per cent pay raise if he’s still Premier after the next election, which would bring him up to \$191,000 a year, plus benefits.

“Our members are coming to Orangeville to ask Ernie, ‘What do we have to do to get the same sweet deal?’”

The schedule of events for Monday is as follows:

- **11:00 a.m.:** Buses arrive at Tony Rose Memorial Sports Centre, 40 Fead Street
- **11:30 a.m.:** Marchers leave Sports Centre and march to Eves’ campaign headquarters, 163 First Street, via Clara, Elizabeth, Louisa, Broadway and First Streets.
- **12:00 noon:** Barbecue and rally with special guest speakers.

Speakers for the Orangeville rally are:

Bruce Davidson,

Concerned Walkerton Citizens

Doug Wilcox, NDP

candidate, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey

Josh Matlow, Liberal

Candidate, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey

Leah Casselman.

Bargaining continues through the weekend

While the media blackout continues, the bargaining team is working through the weekend in the ongoing effort to achieve a settlement.

OPSEU makes a farm call on Eves

The new premier was holding a “restricted” campaign media event at a farm near Caledon East Friday afternoon when about 20 OPSEU members from nearby Orangeville turned up.

Region 2 EBM Jay Jackson reports that two strikers had already gained access to the media event and asked Ernie some questions

about the strike.

The OPSEU bunch were soon told to leave the property. They promptly set up a picket line on Airport Road, effectively sealing off the farm and Ernie for about two hours.

Members told the reporters they were there to question Eves about their contract.

After about an hour, Ernie tried to leave in his RV, and got out to talk to the strikers.

Eves said he’d directed Dave Tsubouchi to “alter” the government’s bargaining position.

Next stop on the Ernie tour is Orangeville on Monday evening, where Eves is set to attend an all-candidates’ meeting.

Want to reach Ernie?

Here’s how:

Ernie@ErnieEves.com

163 First Street,
Orangeville, ON L9W 3J8

Phone: 519-941-1255

Toll-Free: 1-866-225-3837

Check the web: www.opseu.org has the latest on everything.

Being on strike is healthy? Maybe so!

Strikers at the Province of Ontario Savings Office in St. Marys have noticed something interesting since they started picketing.

Their health has improved.

A number of them were under doctors' care for breathing problems. Now they feel better.

They had never connected their illnesses with possible air quality problems in the workplace. Now they aren't so sure. Getting it checked is high on their agenda when they get back to work.

'Not since I was a kid'

Last Friday, outside strikers at the Kenora Courthouse held a terrific potluck lunch by the barrel to honour the strength of their inside sisters in holding the inside lines, reports Faye Whiting of Local 702.

There were games, draws and prizes, made possible by donations from more than 20 local businesses and crown attorneys. Everyone left with a prize and a strong sense of solidarity between our two lines.

One member said afterwards, "I haven't had that much fun since I was a kid."

Thunder Bay closures

"We closed down the Water Street complex in Thunder Bay on Thursday," reports Region 7 vice-president John O'Brien.

Friday they closed down the MTO Building for the day. The OPP relocated a training exercise so as not to cross the picket line.

Around Ontario

Local 649: Sandbagged

On Wednesday, members from Local 649 in Timmins jumped to the assistance of city workers.

Extremely warm weather had raised concerns about flooding, reports Carol Cloutier.

The call for help went out late Wednesday, "and in no time at all, a large number of our members showed up. Of the 130 people bagging sand, 75 per cent were OPSEU members. And about 90 per cent of them were from MNR.

They worked until the early hours of Thursday. City officials were extremely impressed.

Management coffee may have a price

Ken McWatters of Local 447 is taking a second look at management kindness to picket lines.

"We, too, were very appreciative of the managers' support – until some of our fire staff were intimidated and threatened with discipline and dismissal. It is not such a nice easy feeling any more"

"Times are a-changing. Our lines are still fun and stronger but I can't help but wonder if the strike will go on, well after its "official end."

Tax relief

Liberty Tax in Thunder Bay has also offered free tax preparation for strikers. It might be worth checking other Liberty locations as well.

Traffic stopped at landfill

A flying squad from Locals 301, 302 and 331 lent their support to community activism Friday morning.

About 50 of them joined 40 residents who suspect seepage from a landfill site is contaminating their wells in Kinsale, Durham Region.

"They were surprised to see us with our picket signs," said staff rep Tom Tangie. "We blocked Hwy 7 and stopped the huge trucks from entering the landfill site."

When police arrived, they controlled traffic and allowed the trucks to enter and leave the site, one at a time. They acknowledged OPSEU's right to set up a secondary picket.

"It was wonderful to see our members blocking Hwy 7. The media showed up and we told them who we were. The community members were ecstatic. They never had such huge support. They are very grateful to OPSEU in helping their cause to close down the landfill," said Tom.

Marching in Goderich

Local 122 is planning a protest Tuesday in Goderich.

Starting at 4:30 p.m. at the Livery parking lot on South St., there will be a march around the square, winding up at the office of Helen Johns, the PC MPP for Huron-Bruce.

Ever wanted to picket Canadian Tire?

Here's your chance. With the strike on, MNR has handed selling turkey hunt licences to Canadian Tire stores. A good location for a secondary picket.

Flying squad from CAW lifts spirits

Richard Stewart of Local 122 (Bluewater Youth Centre) was overcome after a visit to their picket lines Thursday evening by a Flying Squad of 120 students from the CAW education centre in Port Elgin.

“They taught us what running a picket is all about, they provided words of encouragement and the words for Solidarity Forever. They cheered, they sang and they chanted. They provided a much needed lift,” writes Richard.

“Their camaraderie was very much appreciated. The energy and electricity brought tears to my eye and my weary heart. When they left, we all felt the loss of their presence. But that was eased by more than \$400 dollars in cash donations.

“Our deepest appreciation to these fine brothers and sisters from all across Canada.”

Asbestos triggers walkout

Almost half the scheduled essential services workers refused to enter the Kenora Courthouse Monday after asbestos was found in one of the rooms the week before.

Work at the courthouse slowed or stopped until air quality tests results received late in the afternoon showed the levels within the acceptable range under provincial standards.

“The walkout showed that workers take health and safety seriously. They gained a commitment for on-going air quality testing in the courthouse,” reports Faye Whiting of Local 702.

Individual support

Eva Robinson, Local 579, says the picket line has been making friends.

John Beattie, a member of CUPE Local 1 at Ontario Hydro, downtown for a doctor’s appointment, approached picket captain John Fitzpatrick at 790 Bay St. and donated \$50 to his line.

Fitzpatrick says: “It’s the first time that this has happened to me personally. It’s a great feeling to know first hand that we have the support from not only the other unions in the province but individual members as well.

The buck stops with you

Mr. Eves:

When they are on the job, OPSEU members give your applicants and customers the best customer service possible and love to present their employer in the best possible light. As the strike progresses and the government treats its employees in increasingly belligerent, unlawful and underhanded ways, it makes me wonder where the customer service values of this government are.

OPSEU members want to be able to hold their heads high and say that they are proud of their employer for the fair and logical treatment it has shown them.

I think that perhaps it is time that you walk over to that negotiating table and see if what is being shared with you is actually true. After all, the buck does stop at you. I know that I certainly do not want my name smeared, and I am sure that as Premier you would feel the same.

– Gregory Kasper

It’s a bad year to be a little fish

The Chatworth Fish Culture Station has lost 6,200 yearling lake trout in recent weeks.

The hatchery started putting the fish out April 19, well in advance of the normal mid-May time for stocking lakes. About 150,000 lake trout will find themselves in Owen Sound harbour, although most were originally intended for eastern Georgian Bay. Other specially-tagged fish had been destined for north of Meaford.

Fish (100,000 lake trout) are also being moved out of the Dorion hatchery west of Nipigon, says Charles Faust of Local 724.

The local did a workplace inspection when it learned management was routinely calling in emergency workers. At issue is the potential overcrowding of yearling brook trout and splake.

“Until there is an emergency, there is no need for emergency workers,” says MNR biologist Rob Swainson. “If the strike were to end tomorrow, there would be no loss of fish stock. The longer the strike goes on, the more likely it is that an emergency will occur.”

District MNR staff are also worried that the sustainability of natural fish stocks are being compromised through lack of enforcement during the strike.

Rick Salmon is a fisheries biologist with the Lake Nipigon Fisheries Assessment Unit. He puts it in perspective: “If we lose a year-class in the hatchery we can create another one, whereas, if we lose a year-class in the wild, it’s up to nature to make it up and there is no guarantee it will happen.”

Support from college faculty

Local 417, the faculty at St. Lawrence College, has given \$5,000 to help striking locals in Region 4 assist with hardship cases.

The Kingston Area Council has received a \$500 donation from the local OSSTF, and another \$500 from the Queen's Inn. Both will go to the local hardship fund.

Fire drill?

Lucy Robillard from Local 628 was approached by a member of the public who asked if this was a fire drill.

Her reply: "If you call six weeks a fire drill."

Cell phone rituals

If you remember pay phones in drug stores, do you ever recall seeing anyone go into the phone booth and drop a dime just to say, "Hey Shirley, I'm in the drug store?"

Who comes up with these?

Bob Runciman's new ministry is Public Safety and Security. What's it going to be called? PSS? Or just the SS?

Not in the Tory game plans

I think that the Tories didn't plan that we would be spending our time getting to know our colleagues from our own offices and across the province quite so well, writes Anne Pereira of Local 246. The solidarity is building. I had a wonderful time meeting OPSEU members at Queen's Park, and can hardly wait to head to Orangeville. Keep the road trips coming!



Strike Shorts MPAC members say no to strikebreaking

OPSEU members working for the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation are being forced to cross OPS lines to participate in Assessment Review Board hearings.

The hearings, usually OPS work, are being conducted by managers and some strikebreakers.

OPSEU members at MPAC, the property assessment work previously done by the Ministry of Finance, have asked for picket lines next week at the hearing locations.

They are upset that their employer, a public corporation, is not honouring a legal strike and is supporting strikebreaking.

Leaflets explaining the issue are on their way to OPSEU offices in Kingston, Brockville, Ottawa, Oshawa and Toronto.

Can't beat chilli

Linda Thibert of Local 107 bemoans the great food on the line.

Napoleon said that an army marches on its stomach. The executive wants to congratulate the queens of the trailer for feeding the pickets through the miserable weather. Val Gaulin, Germaine Wright, Sue McLean have made chilli, which has had rave reviews from the food critics of 107 and brought in chocolate and cookies.

"Day-old doughnuts are the basic staple of pickets, but nothing compares to home-made chilli."

Health unit staff may strike in Grey Bruce

The support staff of the Grey Bruce Health Unit, members of Local 266, will be in a legal strike position on April 29 following the release of a Conciliation Officer's report on April 12. Mediation talks to avert a walkout are set for Monday in Owen Sound.

The 20 clerical employees work with other GBHU staff to deliver Public Health Programs throughout Grey and Bruce Counties.

CFS keeps on cooking

The line at 25 Grosvenor (Local 579) may have to spend almost all of their time in the shade, but the CFS (Centre for Forensic Science) makes the sun shine even in the snow and rain.

Since the strike began, the CFS, where most of the staff have been declared essential, have not only joined us on the line before their shift starts, during their breaks and lunch, but they have made sure we are well fed, says Eva Robinson.

"From collecting donations for pizza, to bringing out soup, cider, fresh sandwiches, chilli and great BBQs, the members of the CFS have helped keep our spirits up."

Mike Whiteside, one of our Stewards in the CFS, and the rest of the Chemistry Section make great chicken noodle soup, but they won't tell us the secret ingredients. Maybe it's better we don't know!

OPSEU has had problems with some of its head office phone lines. These have been fixed.