



Good-bye blackout, hello MPPs

OPSEU has lifted the media blackout on OPS contract talks in an effort to bring about a quick settlement to the strike.

“It’s time to shine a light on the government’s demands so we can get this thing wrapped up,” OPSEU president Leah Casselman told a news conference at Queen’s Park today.

“Normally, a blackout should lead to a deal,” she said. “In this case, however, employer negotiators have used the blackout, combined with carefully selected ‘leaks,’” to apply pressure on the union while avoiding meaningful

‘Flirting with fun’ in Orangeville

Scott Coulter of Local 506 has been picketing with Local 227 because he lives in Orangeville.

Since Ernie Eves decided to seek election in his riding, Scott has been getting his feet wet in politics, “learning a lot and enjoying it a lot.”

“It has given us a new focus on the picket line,” he said in an interview. They have moved from picketing the courthouse to making a presence felt at PC headquarters.

“We have a message for Ernie that we have nothing to do until May 2 (election day), and we’ll be there as a constant reminder.

“We would be happy to have him take us out of his campaign. If he would deal with us so we could return to work, he could run his

bargaining.”

Casselman said that only two obstacles remain between OPSEU members and a collective agreement: a lack of political will on the government side, and the personal agendas of certain top-level bureaucrats.

OPSEU has charged Management Board Assistant Deputy Minister Kevin Wilson with an unfair labour practice for his role in miscommunication around bargaining.

Casselman called on OPSEU members to visit their MPPs **immediately** to explain the situation

campaign unimpeded by OPSEU pickets. In the meantime, we have a contribution to make.”

Scott enjoyed Monday’s all candidates meeting. He noticed a lot of anti-Ernie sentiments, from farmers upset with sludge being spread on fields and teachers upset with funding and curriculum, as well as OPSEU members.

“I don’t think Eves made any headway there. The NDP’s Doug Wilcox and the Green Party’s Richard Procter were both better.” Scott is working on the Wilcox campaign, his first foray into election work.

All told, being on strike and not getting full pay is a problem, but “this flirts with fun.”

and to urge them to call on Premier Ernie Eves to get directly involved in the talks. **Contact your local and/or your Regional Office for details of plans in the works.**

Key issues to be resolved include benefits, wages, the rights of part-time workers, and the government’s bid to take control of OPSEU members’ share of pension surpluses generated by the \$10-billion OPSEU Pension Trust.

“This concession could cost plan members more than \$140 million in an average year,” Casselman noted.

Full information on the current state of bargaining is available on the OPSEU web site at www.opseu.org.

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

If you **are** going to Orangeville to picket Eves’ office or to get involved in the campaign, give Tim Little a call. That way the local campaign will know you are coming and can plan for your participation.

Tim’s cell number is:
416-540-7003

What's in a name?

I no longer work for Ministry of Community and Social Services but for the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services.

Why? And how much does this cost us? Lots in the Ontario Disability Support Program Unit.

All the forms we use to process disability applications, consent forms, assignments either on paper or by computer must be changed to reflect the new name. Ditto all the envelopes and letterhead; the templates in the new technology (Anderson-built); the reporting cards that clients complete monthly; the logo on the cheques each office has on hand; commissioner stamps and staff business cards.

Not to mention the waste.

What happens to supplies on hand, do we shred it or throw it out? Do we staple it together and use as notepads? Or do we scratch out the "and Social" part and hand write "Family and Children's"? That's what we did when "Family Benefit Act" was replaced by the "Ontario Disability Support Program Act" not so long ago.

The e-mail extensions (@CSS) have to be changed and since our systems people no longer do that, the private company EDS Systems must. It costs more than \$30 per e-mail account to change the extension.

Then there are the building signs, posters, telephone listings and postage machines.

It would be interesting to do a cost analysis and then compare it to the 1.95 per cent we were offered.

— Jeanne Collins, Local 635

Cheaper isn't necessarily better

by *Caroline Di Cocco, Liberal MPP, Sarnia-Lambton*

The OPSEU strike is beginning to inconvenience more people every day. But it is important to remember that the public service has a unique role. They are those people dedicated and well versed in their role to doing the business of the public interest.

Members of OPSEU are skilled, well-trained workers who are lab technicians, water inspectors, conservation officers, correctional officers, clerks who process OHIP cards, drivers licenses, birth certificates etc.

There has been a strong movement created and developed by the Common Sense revolution to undervalue the public service. The direction has been to contract more and more to the private sector, put

Around Ontario

Rat faeces close Rexdale office

by *Mary Ellen Hume*

Local 551 and others have been very busy. We have done many work refusals, including one for rat faeces at the Rexdale Probation and Parole Office that kept essential workers out for a full week.

This week, we are targeting various P&P offices. Today, about 30 pickets went to the Keele St. office and prevented the essential workers from entering. We held a peaceful sit-in in the reception area.

When we became louder (singing O Canada, Solidarity Forever, blowing whistles, chanting) the

in part-time employees, pay workers less and somehow this will achieve a more effective service delivery.

Let's put into perspective the fact that cheaper (efficiencies) does not necessarily equal better quality (effective) service. We have come to understand the public sector has an important role in this province and they should be treated with respect and dignity by their employer, the Government of Ontario.

Another item I found interesting is under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves' direction the public service on the front lines has been cut by about 21 per cent since 1995. Yet the upper administrative management people have actually increased. In the Mike Harris/Ernie Eves world it seems to be taking more, higher-priced upper management to oversee fewer people who work on the front lines.

(This is an excerpt from her column in *Sarnia This Week*.)

police arrived. Even though the area manager had never directly told us to leave, she had to admit in front of the officers that she was the one who called them. She then directly asked us to leave, and the police enforced her request. They gave us time to allow the essential workers to try once more to go to work (they didn't) and then we moved our picket line outside.

It works and contributes to solidarity.

We remain active and develop different strategies each week at our weekly local meetings.

VROOOooom

Oddly enough, the strike is starting to affect motorcycle sales. Seems there is a shortage of the cute little licence plates that motorcycles need. And with the warm weather coming, too.

Strike hurts landlords

Landlords with bad tenants have been seriously hurt by the strike.

Brian A. Dwyer has written to MBS Chair Dave Tsubouchi to say he and his wife are on the verge of losing their house, which is occupied by a deadbeat squatter.

“He has not paid me a stitch of rent since December, 2001. He owes me \$6,000 and has made it very clear that he has no intention of paying so much as a dime, nor of leaving my house, as he knows that he doesn’t have to leave.

I have followed all provincial laws and obtained an order of eviction from the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

It sits in the Newmarket enforcement office waiting for the sheriff to enforce it. Until the government and the union resolve their issues, I have zero recourse for having this thief removed from my house.

“Do the right thing, not just for me, but for all the other people that you may think are not affected by this chaos.

Resolve the issues. Be fair with OPSEU and negotiate a fair settlement. You have the power to end this strike. You are the only person that can prevent the next news article which will detail how this strike has catastrophically had an impact on the “average” person.

Please turn on the heat in Chatham

Marg Reed of Local 130 tells of a work refusal in the Chatham Courthouse April 22.

It was over health and safety, as the temperature was below the required 18 degrees C.”

Management was unwilling to turn the heat back on and tried to warm the workplace with space heaters.

No scab inspectors please, we’re union

Last week, I received a call from a steward at the Cawthra/Bloor day care centre, reports Local 546 vice-president Louise Raymond.

They had just been inspected by two daycare licencing women.

When the director and staff questioned if they where on strike, as this is an OPSEU site, they said no. A phone call to me confirmed the two were supposed to be on the picket line. The steward and the director have called the ComSoc manager and told him not to send scabs to their centre.

Essential Services Serenade

Essential Services workers at Thistleton Regional Centre (Local 547) are at constant risk from clients’ extreme and at times violent behaviours. On top of that, they work short-staffed, on unforgiving work schedules and are holding the inside line.

“Their resolve and commitment to the people we treat and work with shows what they are really made of,” writes Jarrett Harris.

“We wanted to end the week on a high note and show our support for them. Outside pickets marched

Provincial Schools negotiations continue

Negotiations continue over essential duties at provincial schools.

These talks, ordered by the Labour Board, will determine which, if **any**, duties performed by **any** OPSEU members at **any** of the Provincial or Demonstration Schools meet the criteria of Essential Services under 30(a) of CECBA.

The Ontario Association for the Deaf and some parents of children in the schools have issued public statements saying students will be back to school on Monday. They have said that OPSEU wants an essential services agreement for the schools.

The first statement is wishful thinking. We are negotiating whether there are essential services at the schools. The second statement is false.

The decision to close the schools was the government’s alone.

onto the grounds, stopping at the residential programs. In thanks and as a show of solidarity to the essential service workers, we gave them and the residents some doughnuts, three cheers and a verse of Solidarity Forever.”

“It is through our continued collective action and solidarity we will succeed. Public services can be saved. We can maintain our quality of life and we as workers will be stronger for our endurance and the relationships we have developed on the line.”

Oh NO! Raccoon season

The Northern Picketers in Elliot Lake warn folks to take their sunglasses off from time to time.

If not, you are in danger of the dreaded raccoon look.

Our smallest picket line

by Suzanne Morin, Local 638

Charles Baxter is our “One Man Picket Line” in Constance Lake.

He works for the Ministry of Natural Resources. Constance Lake is a Native Reserve with a population of 1,000, about 20 km west of Hearst.

To save on travelling costs, Charles has decided to picket in his own community. He opened his own strike headquarters and does his duties close to home.

Once a week, we send a group from Hearst to picket with him and savour some of his specialty dishes. His headquarters is well known to the locals and has transformed into a Drop In centre. Family and friends stop by to chat about anything from the strike to the weather.

Objects wanted!

The Dryden line is looking for a set of horseshoes (or bean bags – softer if one goes wild!).

It’s tournament time between Wabigoon and Oxdrift, with picket captains called upon as referees.

Buried styrofoam cups may be the beginning of a putting contest. Pack your clubs if you’re going west.

Bell mobility honours helicopter line

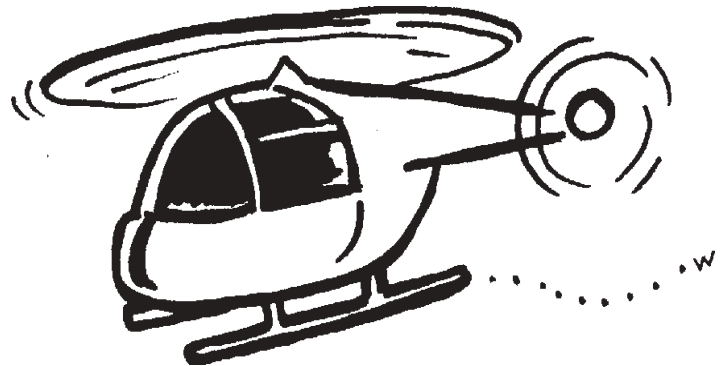
by Dick de Groot,
president, Local
727

Fire managers at the MNR fire program have hired helicopters for fire duty. To work for MNR, the choppers need MNR radios to communicate on MNR frequencies with regional radio operators, district radio operators and the fire crews on the ground. Bell Mobility has the contract to install these radios.

When our picket captains heard that these helicopters were on hire, they staked out possible locations where the installation could be done.

One was the Best Western. As they started to picket at the helicopter pad, one of the pilots asked the pickets if they were there to install the radio. When he found out it was a picket, he chose to go for lunch. When Bell Mobility person arrived and saw the line, he too opted for lunch.

The Best Western manager approached the line and said it was private property and they shouldn’t picket there.



Being private property, we needed permission for the picket. Police arrived to discuss the situation, and it became clear that if the picketers couldn’t picket the helicopter pad, they would have to fall back to the sidewalk along the Best Western entrances. That promised to cause more disruption than picketing the copter pad out back. The hotel chose to allow the picket by the helicopter, and Bell Mobility would not cross the picket line to install the radios.

Interestingly, MNR management never asked permission from the Best Western for the helicopters to land there and turn it into an MNR worksite.

The airport was the next possible stop for the helicopters, so picketers moved there for the afternoon.

Line Thoughts from Dryden

There’s no chance of getting an honest “spin” on the bargaining issue. If the deal was poor back in March, it hardly becomes better with age.

Unlike wine, something is beginning to stink. All the Tory ads have done is infuriate the public and those in the know. If this is showing concern for the public trust, one can only imagine what the OPSEU negotiators are up against (media blackout and all). Keep the faith, it’s too late to turn back or turn turtle. Forward Together!