

Local 527 Prez Revs Troops!

Wednesday, March 20, was a damp and cloudy day, but you couldn't tell from the high spirits in evidence at Local 527's meeting held at OPSEU Headquarters on University Avenue in Toronto. By meeting's end, Local president Rod Sawyer won a standing ovation from the assembled members. Rod had methodically worked his way through a multi-item agenda when steward John Carter led the crowd in resounding cheer for the president's tireless efforts on their behalf through the first grueling week of The Strike of 2002. Here are some of the highlights.

Rod smilingly reported how Local 527 won a favourable decision from the courts over management's refusal to cooperate with worksite inspections. Local representatives are now armed with a court injunction detailing management's responsibility to cooperate with Local 527 worksite inspections.

Steward Paul Foster proudly unfurled two impressive new yellow banners which are destined to become a familiar sight in the vicinity of 400 University. Each banner's text, lovingly developed by Local 527 member George Clare, is arranged in a three-panel format. The first reads as follows:

**MPPs get a 36.6% raise! You get cuts to public services.
Results – Walkerton! Is that common sense?
Support renewal of your public services.**

The second reads:

**Big Business gets \$2.2 Billion in tax cuts.
You get cuts in public services.
Support renewal of your public services.**

George's and Paul's collaborative banner project brings new scope and meaning to the expression "...telling it like it is!"

PREZ REVS TROOPS (cont'd)

Before wrapping up the meeting, Rod encouraged everyone to participate in the Ontario Federation of Labour Rally against the Tories at their Leadership Convention on Saturday, 23 March. OPSEU members will be assembling at Victoria Memorial Park (Niagara Street and Portland) at 10:30 a.m. Be there or be square!

Steward Marilyn Miller reported on the reorganization of the Phone Tree. This tedious task saw Marilyn and steward Paul deRege working late into the previous evening to get things "up and running". Nonetheless, despite Paul's and Marilyn's stellar effort, some members complained that they hadn't been called while others raised concerns about being called too late in the evening. Marilyn promised to instruct telephone volunteers to make no calls later than 11:00 p.m.

Rod Sawyer then broached the sensitive issue of "strikebreakers". A list of known strikebreakers – a "wall of shame" – is being prepared, Paul assured the assembly. Communications staff have prepared a text to be delivered to strikebreakers over their office telephones or via their voice-mail. Communications volunteer Georges Tremblay underlined the importance of "sticking to the letter of the text"; inappropriate terminology or language could well come back to haunt OPSEU and/or individual volunteers.

Members requiring financial or other assistance were requested to document their needs in a letter to president Rod Sawyer; the Local's Finance/Hardship Committee will make its decisions on a case-by-case basis. Rod underlined that, during the Strike of '96, banks were surprisingly understanding vis-a-vis OPSEU strikers who could not meet their mortgage payments. As such, Local members experiencing financial hardship were encouraged to first approach their banks before resorting to the OPSEU alternative. Rod also underlined that any loans would be made "interest-free" and would need to be repaid by end-September or thereabouts. Specific timelines will be arranged on a case-by-case basis and take into consideration the duration of the current Strike.
(cont'd - see **PREZ REVS TROOPS** on next page)

The BOOMERANG's Tale

"Boomerang", an AMAPCEO member, reports from the "inside"! In an e-mail to Local 527 steward Marilyn Miller, the Boomer writes:

“...I'll just tell you what we've been doing ...I went floor-to-floor (MTCR and CZR) collecting money 'for our OPSEU brothers and sisters on the line'. People were amazingly supportive. I collected about \$450 in a couple of days. One person also wrote a cheque for \$500!

I have to say that the money came from AMAPCEO members as well as many in the management ranks. They've been totally on side.

But every party has a pooper, as the old song goes! I got one measly complaint, but that's all it takes! Human Resources instructed a manager to tell me not to canvass anymore. It seems that the Employer feels that strikebreakers might feel intimidated by my efforts! Go figure!

As a result, my hands are tied a bit. But you know me! I'm a resourceful creature! I sent out an e-mail to practically everyone I know in the ministry explaining that I can't go door-to-door anymore but, hey!, feel free to call me or drop in to see me. Anyway, I got a bit more cash this week that way, but it's definitely not as effective as approaching people personally.

I know some people have also been buying coffee etc., but I've been suggesting to people that donating real dollars will help prevent you people from getting 300 doughnuts every morning...even if they are timbits! Remember Bay and Bloor back in 1996? Why oh why is it that every time there's a strike, we're located next to a Tim Horton's? I'm not given to conspiracy theories....

There was a meeting today to talk about how we can raise bigger bucks through holding an event or something like that. Somebody suggested a talent night or karaoke! I'll see tomorrow what they came up with. We invited the AMAPCEO chair from MOL to the meeting so we could combine our efforts. I don't know whether they've been collecting money but I heard a rumour that they're buying pizza for everyone on Friday (March 22).

That's pretty much it 'from the inside'. Oops! I forgot to mention the only funny thing that's happened since you people went out. Last week, I thought I'd better water all the plants on the floor (in addition to yours, MM!). It turns out that I watered two fake plants! They sure looked real to me. Ahem! Let's just say I don't have a green thumb!

Let me know if there's anything specific I/we can do.

Meanwhile, we've got to raise a lot more money. \$950 won't go that far. Good luck and keep in touch!”

Hey, Boomerang!!! On behalf of all the brothers and sisters: THANKS A MILLION!!! You're one of a kind! Or as the kids would say — “BOOMERANG RULES!”

Front/ines HIGHLIGHTS

(March 19 - Strike Day 7)

Can you spell “Duh!”? — Local 635 in North Bay reports that many clients who crossed their lines had been turned away at the door by a “rentacop”. It seems Management hired a rentacop to turn away the very same clients they argued needed our essential services. Duh!

Essentially Waste! — Local 520 President Ron Marciniak reports that worksite visits at 777 Bay Street are giving him and Nancy Shepherd an eyeful of government waste. It's a typical office in downtown Toronto with no essential workers. Managers, directors, ADMs and senior management staff of all rank are just monitoring picket lines and doing no work. “This Government that purports to be responsible is anything but,” comments Rick.

IT'S A FACT: The first product ever to have a bar code was Wrigley's gum!

Strikebreakers Will Be “Getting The Message”

The following message will be communicated to strikebreakers via telephone or voicemail by designated volunteers from Local 527. Local steward Marilyn Miller will be coordinating this effort over the next week.

“Hi! The following message is from OPSEU Local 527. Deciding to cross a picket line for **whatever** reason — “personal differences” with OPSEU or individual OPSEU representatives, disagreement with one or more of OPSEU's current demands — does **not** constitute “having guts” or “taking a personal stand”. Crossing a picket line is **not** about “making your own decisions”. Nor can crossing a picket line be justified for reasons of “financial necessity”. OPSEU is **more** than ready to help members in real need! No, crossing a picket line is about disloyalty. Period.

Remember! Many people currently in OPS management ranks were “walking the lines” during the OPSEU Strike of 1996. These and many others in management ranks support OPSEU’s goals in the current round of negotiations. Likewise, many AMAPCEO members – perhaps even most – support OPSEU at this time.

Confusing “the Employer” and OPS managers or AMAPCEO members could have unforeseen consequences for you — and not just as an OPSEU member.

Consider this. One day in the future, you might find yourself in an interview situation sitting across the table from managers, AMAPCEO members or others who don’t confuse disloyalty with “individuality” or “taking a personal stand”. Such people will be very aware that interviewees who were disloyal to their OPSEU colleagues under the current circumstances could **just as easily** be disloyal to them in other circumstances or situations. Think about it.

Whatever concessions or gains OPSEU members EARN from their current strike actions, strikebreakers will also get. That can’t be denied. But at what cost to themselves and their future career potential?

Think about it. Think very hard. The future is not that far away.”

Frontlines HIGHLIGHTS

(March 20 - Strike Day 8)

It’s the Taj Mahal — Local 225 President Gerry Hope reports a strike HQ extraordinaire. Landlord Ron Levoy, owner of Walkerton Graphics and founding member of the Concerned Walkerton Citizens, is charging \$20 a day for space next to his print shop. Mr. Levoy is also providing use of a photocopier, fax machine, TV, VCR, overhead projector, four desks and office chairs, office supplies and foldout sofa as well! “Leah told me on Saturday it’s the best Strike H.Q. she had seen.” says Gerry. “Where else but in Walkerton will you ever find this kind of community support for public service employees on strike!”

Inside ‘strike’ is working well — Essential workers “inside” report that they have been wearing their new OPSEU T-shirts to work. “I particularly like the back. I think it’s important for everyone to remember that we’re all **On Strike** and not just those on the outside. I think the inside organization this time

is very important. Last time, the essential services didn’t really feel that they were part of the strike. We felt impotent. This time, as we’ve improved our tactics, we actually feel more involved. We do have an important part to play. May the force be with everyone!” emails Lise Riel from the Crown Attorney’s Office in Hamilton.

All kinds of wonderful things are happening. Reports from 26 courthouses have been received, including:

- A judge at the 311 Jarvis court in Toronto refused to go into court with a fee-for-service court reporter, being used to supplement the essential services complement.
- Counter clerks in Family Law at 393 University Ave. in Toronto refused to accept any documents except time-sensitive ones or on sensitive issues such as restraining orders or child protection.

All of this is the subject of a court hearing. Advice from OPSEU says to hold the line on the inside. The strike is working well and has prompted a lot of Labour Board applications where OPSEU lawyers are fighting for your rights.

IT’S A FACT: There are 14,400 seconds in one four-hour OPSEU picket shift! ! That’s 72,000 seconds per strike-week. That’s.... Oh, nevermind!

Between The Lines

by Merry-Spring Meadows

I don’t know about you, but I haven’t really been able to keep up with the daily newspapers lately. At best, I’ve managed to peer over some stranger’s shoulder on the subway - coffee AND a newspaper being way beyond my budget these days! And if you, like me, didn’t get past the headlines before the lucky reader turned the page, you might have been left with the idea that OPSEU workers are uncaring, selfish and more interested in pay increases than the safety of the people of Ontario.

“Strike hurting psych patients!” proclaimed *The Toronto Sun* last Tuesday, 03/19. “Ontario Strike Sparks Prison Safety Fears” announced *The Globe & Mail* (Thursday, 03/21). Because of us and out of the kindness of their hearts, judges are spending their paychecks on “...milk, juice and cookies for the 38 prisoners forced to spend the night in the cells,” according to *The Toronto Star* (Thursday, 03/21). I was amused, then alarmed, to learn that OPSEU members are dangerous, too (i.e. “Violence flares at

OPSEU picket lines” according to the *The Toronto Star* on Thursday, 03/21). Oops! I almost forgot. OPSEU “essential workers” are untrustworthy, deliberately planning a “havoc” by circulating “strategies” that “will affect health and safety standards.” The latter piece of drivel according to the “Queen’s Park Bureau” on Tuesday, 03/19.

I, for one, feel certain that provincial “standards” are being staunchly applied when prison managers distribute all the pizza and pornography needed to keeping prisoners “happy”, according to both *The Toronto Star* and *The Toronto Sun*! Strange, too, that the Employer’s own negligence, highlighted by the discovery of abandoned confidential psychiatric records in a former government building, received only a single mention by Toronto’s stellar dailies.

Maybe I’m being unfair. Perhaps it’s just more difficult to create a sensational headline about the validity of our concerns. But what do I know? After all, they are usually given a mention in dull language at the bottom of the article – just at the point where the average reader moves on to the next headline.

But the page won’t be turned on us much longer. Ontarians are starting to notice – and ask questions.

Thank you Justice John McIsaac for throwing out the contempt of court charges against our leader, Leah Casselman - charges that Christopher Riggs, representing the province, later admitted were the result of decisions by the correctional services management.

Many others citizens, like Ed Charbonneau, husband of a correctional officer, are wondering out loud in their Letters to the Editor why “...the government keeps going to court to get injunctions against the union. Why doesn’t it spend the energy in getting a

settlement ...?” Great question, Ed, and thanks for asking. And let us know, will you, if ever you find out? Inquiring minds want to know...

(**BETWEEN THE LINES** looks at Toronto’s media dailies over the last few days, and will be a regular feature of this publication.)

Frontlines HIGHLIGHTS

(March 21 - Strike Day 9)

No Filming Today, We’re On Strike! — Local 568 Picket Captain Sean Fraser tells of shutting down a TV film shoot Wednesday morning with strong support from Locals 527 and 514. “More than 70 brothers and sisters picketed the Ontario Heritage Foundation for the first time in the 2002 strike.”

A television film shoot, scheduled to start there at 7 a.m., was delayed for the morning, forcing the production company to relocate a portion of the filming to another site and hitting the employer where it counts most – the pocketbook.

“We would like to thank the solidarity shown by IATSE Local 873 whose members honoured our picket line. While only 23 members of Local 568 are on strike, striking members from the Heritage Foundation were joined by fellow 568ers from the OPSEU Pension Trust, who gave personal time to help keep the Foundation closed. Thanks to all who braved the inclement weather and made the day a success.”

TIMES on the LINES is published by Local 527. If you have any information or stories to share, please contact Georges Tremblay (PHONE: 416-763-0448 or e-mail: geotrem@attcanada.ca) or Marilyn Miller (PHONE: 416-769-1872 or e-mail: marilyn.miller1@rogers.com)