

SONGSHEET

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CRTC Orders Carriage Fees

Windsor A-Channel Gets Reprieve

The **CRTC** extended a lifeline to local TV broadcasting July 6th by ordering cable and satellite companies to start paying broadcasters for carrying their programming. The immediate effect was to repeal the closure of the **CTV-owned A-Channel** in Windsor for at least one more year.

The cable-satellite response to the CRTC move came as expected. **Rogers** denounced the ruling and promised to fight it. **BCE**, which also takes local TV signals for free and re-sells them, expressed dismay.

For years the cable and satellite companies routinely dismissed the television broadcasters' demand for "carriage fees" as a cash-grab that would do nothing for viewers. The cable and satellite companies have threatened to raise their own subscriber rates by every dollar they have to pay out to television broadcasters. Until now the CRTC had rejected carriage fees because broadcasters wouldn't guarantee the money would go into local programming.

Not finished yet, the CRTC also took the opportunity to boost the cable and satellite companies' cash obligations to the Local Programming Improvement Fund by 50% for the next twelve months in an effort to help profit-squeezed TV stations produce local programming.

At the same time, the CRTC gave TV stations a dramatic one-year reduction on local programming required under the broadcasting licenses issued by the Commission, a concession that CEP Media VP Peter Murdoch finds deeply troubling but concedes many TV stations "face for the moment a tough environment."

This means a reprieve for CTV's Windsor A-Channel station which will now stay open at least another year, according to a company spokesperson. However CTV stations in Wingham and Brandon, Manitoba will still close August 31st.

Last month **Shaw Cable** bailed on a tentative deal with CTV to purchase three stations including the A-Channel location in Windsor.

Globe Ratifies 5-Year Deal

Drastic Reduction of Concessions

The **Globe & Mail** unit ratified a five-year contract at a packed membership meeting at the Toronto Hyatt Regency hotel on July 6th, approving the package including several concessions by a margin of 289 to 52, or 85%.

The struggle over pensions was at the heart of the negotiations, which concluded five minutes prior to a strike deadline on July 2nd. The CTV-owned Globe got its wish to put new hires into the RRSP-style "defined contribution" pension plan and to allow current staff to switch out of the richer defined benefit plan beginning in 2011.

A last ditch mediation session, scheduled on the heels of an 89% rejection of the company's "final offer," resulted in the company dropping several other demands. An earlier strike vote of 97% had previously pared down the company's list.

"This was the toughest negotiation I've been through, but in some ways the most satisfying," said Globe unit chair Sue Andrew. "It would have been unrealistic to expect gains at the table. This was about weathering a period of convulsive change in the industry and defending what we already have. It really brought home the fact that the Globe is a very unique place, and we really are the sum total of our people. We found our strength in numbers, and our union is stronger than ever."

"The Globe is having a very bad year," said Local Rep Howard Law following an off-the-record briefing for the union bargaining team on Globe finances. "What we achieved in bargaining was a severe limitation on CTV's attempt to exploit the current economic environment and bargain a deal based on the worst-case scenario for the rest of the five year contract."

Annual wage increases in the deal are zero per cent for two years, followed by increases of 2%, 2.5% and 2.5%.

Please see "Globe Deal," over

My Opinion: Toronto City Strikers and the Green Monster

By Howard Law, Local Representative

Somehow I imagine CUPE 79 president Ann Dembinski, or maybe CUPE 416 honcho Mark Ferguson, having to wipe away the spittle from the corner of their mouths. This happens whenever I read Marcus Gee's column in the *Globe* telling striking Toronto city workers they're out to lunch on this one. Dembinski and Ferguson, I know, must be apoplectic.

The irritating thing for me, as a union staff representative who worked ten years for the public sector union OPSEU before jumping to SONG, is how accurately Marcus captures the majority public sentiment, not uncommonly shared by many of our Local 87-M members, about public sector strikes and strikers.

The message to striking civic workers is this: your contract is already too good and you should take your licks during the recession like everyone else.

But the unspoken sentiment behind the message to public sector strikers is usually this: you have more bargaining power than me, it's not fair, and I would feel better if you didn't succeed.

Ahhh. What your mom used to call the little green monster of envy. And nobody has a monopoly on it, admit it. If we in SONG, or any other trade union, find a way to generate the bargaining power to run a shut-it-down strike resulting in total employer capitulation, winning us breakthrough wage increases, rock solid protection from contracting out, or (insert favourite issue here)...we will take our winnings gladly and praise Chairman Honywill to the skies.

So why so cranky when Toronto civic workers—with a solid rank-and-file and a strike that may well pack a knockout blow once the inevitable mid-summer heat wave hits—take their best shot at resisting the City's grab at thousands of dollars in cashable accumulated sick credits? They did after all win this benefit years ago by trading off another item for it in collective bargaining. It's a thinly veiled retirement gratuity, something one of SONG's employers actually put on the bargaining table (then pulling it off before we could agree to it!).

And why so shirty when municipal strikers look for decent wage increases during the recession, after enduring an eight-year-wage freeze during the '90s (yes, that's a fact) when the rest of us were keeping up with inflation or better? That's about a 20% loss in income to make up.

We tend to forget how often governments of all political stripes gleefully legislate long term wage freezes for municipal, provincial and federal workers, which politicians prefer infinitely to the alternative: raising taxes on you and I. So what happens? My neighbour who works for the city takes this hit, but not me.

Ok, I'll stop. I have to wipe the spittle from my mouth.

Globe Talks Spur Union E-Innovation

Here it is, the new age of "e-unionism."

The strike preparation and voting arrangements improvised for the recent **Globe & Mail** talks have provided solid platforms for future collective bargaining across the local.

The web publishing system for *globenation.ca*, the striker-run news website that would have competed with the *Globe* in the event of a labour dispute, was purchased, redesigned and awaiting the green light when a last-minute settlement avoided a strike. The site is now ready for use, rebranded with a new web address, by any other unit that finds itself in a potential strike or lockout situation.

The *globenation.ca* site was modeled, literally, on templates from **ruefrontenac.com**, a French-language news website run by the locked-out staff of the **Québecor**-owned **Journal de Montréal**. Freelance e-journalist (and former **Canoe** and **Air Miles** web producer) Ian Harvey was hired by the Local to lead the implementation team.

Voting arrangements were improved for *Globe* national and foreign bureau staff with the use of the web-based, video-conferencing **Livestream** application, tying in staff spread across the country and around the planet into the strike and ratification meetings held in Toronto.

"I'm really excited about the potential uses of this technology in encouraging more participation, and therefore a more vibrant democracy, in our Local," commented Local President Brad Honywill. "We have members from Windsor to Ottawa and Owen Sound to Belleville, which can make it difficult for everyone to attend meetings and interact with counterparts across the province. While there's nothing like being there, live video-streaming comes a close second."

Globe Deal

Continued from page 1

Other concessions included elimination of the sixth week of vacation except for those who already qualify and the reduction of double time premiums to time-and-one-half.

