

# S.O.N.G.

SOUTHERN ONTARIO NEWSMEDIA GUILD

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## Montebello Cops Guilty of Inciting Violence *CEP Renews Demand Public Inquiry*

Two years after they posed as protestors at a demonstration against the North American Leaders' Summit in Montebello, three Quebec police officers were found to have "failed to respect the authority of the law by inciting persons to violence."

The ruling by **Quebec's Police Ethics Committee** released yesterday, also found that the officers were disrespectful or impolite, used obscene, blasphemous or abusive language, and refused to produce identification when asked.

"This is a victory for democracy and for the democratic right to peaceful protests, but I have the same question I had two years ago," says **CEP National** President Dave Coles, the man who confronted and unmasked the police officers.

"Who ordered them to do it? We need an independent judicial inquiry into the whole cover-up. When people show up to protest because they are concerned about an issue – and they are attacked by those who are supposed to be defending them... there is something wrong with the system."

Coles attained rock star status when his attempts to stop three burly men, dressed in black, one armed with a rock, from infiltrating the peaceful protest, were caught on video and posted on You Tube. He called for a public inquiry immediately following the August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 incident.

"These officers did not make the decision on their own to pose as demonstrators and incite violence. Police were used to try to turn a peaceful protest into a violent one. The public should be very concerned."

The three police officers —Patrick Tremblay, Jean Francois Boucher, and Joey LaFlamme— must now appear before the committee investigating their behaviour within the next two weeks.

### ***Interim Staff Rep Appointed:***

Former 87-M President and longtime activist Richard Leitner of the **Hamilton Community News** has been appointed by CEP Regional VP Bob Huget as a temporary staff representative in the absence of Len Deiter. Leitner will service the units at **Maclean's Magazine, A-Channel, Niagara Falls Review, St Catharines Standard, NOW Magazine**, and his home unit.

## Wal-Mart's closing of unionized store Illegal *Lancaster House Publishing Reports:*

By closing its first unionized outlet in North America in 2005 and throwing some 190 employees out of work less than a year after union certification was granted and before a first contract could be achieved, U.S.-based retail giant **Wal-Mart** violated a prohibition in the Quebec *Labour Code* against changing "the conditions of employment" of employees after an application for certification had been filed, a Quebec arbitrator has found.

The arbitrator held that it did not suffice for Wal-Mart to invoke unspecified "business reasons" for the store closing and the resulting layoffs, without explaining satisfactorily what those reasons were. A full report is available at: <http://www.lancasterhouse.com>.

## Split Arbitration Decisions

The **Sing Tao** unit has won yet another arbitration decision, this time upholding the right of five part-time mailroom employees to be converted to full time salaried staff. "The parties negotiated a specific provision outlining when employees transition from part to full time," wrote arbitrator William. "The grievors have satisfied the preconditions of that provision." The staff exceeded the 30.5 hour threshold for conversion to full time over a 20-week period, and averaged close to 38.5 hours over several months.

The **Globe & Mail** unit was not so fortunate at arbitration, losing a claim that contract provisions requiring reasonable management behaviour and prohibiting anti-union discrimination did not imply that employees had a right to use the company e-mail system for union communication. Arbitrator Kevin Whitaker ruled that the union's ability to communicate with its members was not impaired by the company ban on union e-mailing. He also said that the union's unsuccessful attempt to negotiate an explicit right to use the e-mail system for union communication in the 2005 round of bargaining was a tacit admission that employees didn't have that right.

"Unfortunately the decision does not reflect the reality that communication by email is the modern day equivalent of union bulletins," said Unit Chair Sue Andrew. "It appears the Globe's mandate to "go green" and reduce paper is less important than trying to limit the union's ability to communicate with members."

# My Opinion: David Frum Gets It Right

By Howard Law

When David Frum goes on national television to tell his fellow neo-conservatives to wake up and realize “there is tremendous inequality in America,” you know capitalism is in trouble.

It would have helped if the rush of epiphany has swept over our friend David twenty-five years ago. But since then we’ve had Reaganism, Thatcherism, and, in Canada, free trade-ism. Oh you remember “Free Trade,” don’t you? And NAFTA? And global “trade liberalization?” Prime Minister Brian Mulroney promised it meant “jobs, jobs, jobs?” Oh yes, and “safety nets?” See any? What we got was twenty years of gutting unemployment insurance. What we got was a steady flow of hundreds of thousands of decent manufacturing jobs headed to Mexico, China, and other low-wage havens. If you aren’t sitting on a bubble of oil these days, things are looking pretty grim for your children.

Which brings me to pensions, naturally. Last month the Harper Conservatives responded to a national outcry from pension and labour experts that public and private pension schemes will not stand the weight of mass retirements of baby boomers in the next twenty years. As scrupulously detailed in Konrad Yakubski’s column in the **Globe & Mail**, pension experts say something bold must be done to ensure that Canadian retirees will be living off pensions that keep them out of poverty and cat food. Your CPP and the federal old age supplement ain’t gonna cut it.

The Prime Minister’s response? Allow private plans to accumulate bigger surpluses in their pension funds without running afoul of laws restricting tax sheltering.

Oh my, thanks genius boy. Defined benefit plans cover about 16% of Canadians in the private sector and the plans haven’t run surpluses since the 1990s when long term interest rates were at historical heights. Rates are now at historical lows now, and these plans are in deficit to the tune of \$50 billion. As for the other 84% of us, please hold, your call is very important to the Prime Minister.

## Strikers Scoop Own Paper

Locked-out journalists at **Québecor’s Le Journal de Montréal** are out hustling the paper that put them on the street nine months ago, reports the **Toronto Star**.

Reporters at the striker-run news website **ruefrontenac.com** broke two major stories last month in the corruption saga cross-linking local politicians with construction companies winning huge public building contracts in Montréal.

Local 87-M recently acquired the ruefrontenac.com publishing system and templates in preparation for a possible **Globe & Mail** strike last June, and the union has also donated \$5000 to the Montréal journalists’ strike fund.

## Smith Wins Union Award

Dan Smith of the **Toronto Star** unit has won Local 87-M’s annual Fred Jones Award in recognition of years of distinguished leadership in the union. Smith, the paper’s longtime book editor, has served as chief steward of the 340-member editorial department since 1992 and has represented the newsroom on the ébargaining team numerous times.

Smith got involved in the union as a steward when he landed in Toronto in the late '80s after years as the Star’s Western bureau chief, in Edmonton and Vancouver, and became chief steward in the newsroom in the early ‘90s, a period highlighted by a six-week strike against the Star in 1992. “You go through an experience like that and you presume there must be a better way, for union and company,” says Smith. “Then you discover how seldom newspaper executives actually do want to put what’s best for the paper ahead of their immediate political goals. That’s the disappointing part.”

The last ten years have been a struggle at the Star, says Smith, as at every paper. “Our industry is in deep trouble. As a union, we have to be more creative. As employees, we need to stand together with our union more than ever before if we are going to affect the poor decisions our owners are making.”



Dan Smith (r) accepts Fred Jones Award from 87-M President Brad Honywill.

## Sun-Osprey Units Win Settlement

Bargaining units at the **Belleville Intelligencer** and the **Sarnia Observer** negotiated deals at the Labour Board on October 28<sup>th</sup> to protect jobs and bargaining strength.

The Intel unit won a contract clause to stem the flow of union work and jobs to surrounding non-union weeklies. In Sarnia, journalists at the newly organized Observer newsroom were reunited in the same bargaining unit with paginators whom the company had moved from Sarnia to nearby Dresden following last year’s successful union vote.

Masthead design by Marcelo Pazan, Star Unit