

National President's Report

June – September 2005

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

This will be my last quarterly report to you prior to our National Convention in Winnipeg from October 3rd – 7th.

While things remain busy on many fronts within our union I hope that each of you have had the opportunity to have some down time with family and friends.

The purpose of this report is to capture the key highlights of our union's activities over this period.

1. Collective Bargaining

Our local bargaining teams along with our staff continue to achieve very good collective agreements day in and day out, on behalf of our members. While bargaining is very tough in many instances, our people seem to find a way to maximize settlements and to avoid concessions.

Since my last report we have settled two very nasty disputes in Northern Ontario. Members of Local 2196 (Timmins Child and Family Services) ratified a new agreement on July 4th after 11 weeks on the line. The employer's offensive concessions were removed and improvements for our members were gained.

Members of Local 2462 (Espanola Community Living) also achieved a settlement after some 10 weeks on the line. Our members sought parity with other ACL settlements in Ontario and they stood strong to resist concessions, and they won the strike.

Three very key settlements were achieved with the City of Toronto. Our outside group, members of Local 416 achieved new four year deals on behalf of the outside group and library workers, the settlements improved job security, wages and benefits and dealt with many seven year old amalgamation issues.

Members of Local 79 also achieved a settlement after a long and difficult round of bargaining. It too was a four-year, no-concessions deal which was ratified by a large majority of Local 79 members.

Regina municipal workers, members of Locals 7 and 21 have formed a coalition with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) in the face of very difficult talks with the City of Regina.

I was privileged to attend a one-day walkout on August 22, 2005 in which our bargaining committees received 100% support from the 1,700 workers affected. The talks are continuing, as is a work-to-rule campaign where no overtime is worked and no fees or fares are being collected.

Our strike fund is nearing \$30 million in assets due in no small part to the bargaining record of our committees and staff. The past number of months have seen only a small number of strikes/lockouts and as mentioned, a tremendous number of settlements.

In terms of current strikes/lockouts, the following groups are on the line as this report is issued:

PROVINCE	LOCAL NUMBER	EMPLOYER	# OF MEMBERS	STRIKE BEGAN
Quebec	1707	École Sec. St-Paul de Varennes	48	July 18, 2005
New Brunswick	4598	Canadian Red Cross Support Workers - Bathurst	75	August 18, 2005
Saskatchewan	7	City of Regina (City Hall Administration Staff)	217	September 1, 2005
Saskatchewan	21	City of Regina (Outside Workers)	1154	September 1, 2005

I remain incredibly proud of our activists, staff and locals who place a priority on bargaining and are making good settlements on a daily basis.

2. AFL-CIO Convention – July 25-27, 2005 Chicago

I attended the AFL-CIO convention along with CLC leadership, at a very momentous time for the American labour movement.

Union density rates in the US have fallen to 11% of the workforce and the 13-million member AFL-CIO has been struggling with internal dissension in recent months. On the eve of the convention the SEIU, Teamsters, UFCW and Unite-Here announced they would not take their seats at convention and were meeting to discuss their futures within the AFL-CIO.

On day two of the convention the SEIU and the Teamsters announced their formal withdrawals from the AFL-CIO, and the UFCW and Unite-Here announced they would be seeking mandates to withdraw as well (the Carpenter's Union withdrew some time ago).

These affiliates represent 4 million members and the withdrawals mark a major split in the American house of labour. Lack of direction and resources towards organizing, and some of the AFL-CIO political action pursuits are the most oft-cited reasons for the withdrawals. Other affiliates argue that while declining union density is a huge issue, a divided movement will only play into the hands of anti-union politicians and corporations.

It is very difficult for us in Canada to comment with any authority on what ails our brothers and sisters in the US, but the convention itself was almost surreal with no real debate on these issues and a sense of gloom in the corridor chats.

For me, it drove home the point that the Wal-Mart approach to opposing unions seems to dominate amongst US employers, and the American labour movement is struggling to respond to this assault on trade unionism. It caused me to think that we in CUPE must do our utmost to create a united movement here in Canada. Are we doing enough to make our labour councils, our federations of labour and the CLC as strong as we would like these bodies to be?

While we all hope that our movement does not go in the same direction as things appear in the US, it is up to us to re-dedicate ourselves to ensuring that CUPE is an active player at all levels of the Canadian labour movement.

3. Regional Updates

Airline Division

Our Components and Locals are preparing for their first bi-annual Conference being held in Winnipeg on the day before the National Convention begins. This allows the locals to capitalize on attending their own conference and the National Convention.

Newfoundland & Labrador

As a result of restructuring in the education and health care (hospitals) sectors, the union continues to work with the employer groups in an attempt to reach transition agreements with employers. The intent of these agreements is to avoid run off votes with other unions in these sectors.

Organizing opportunities continue to present themselves having just recently organized two new groups: the Scotia Recycling Plant as well as a women's shelter.

Nova Scotia

Contracting out issues continue to be the focus of negotiations in the municipal sector. Local 108 (Halifax Regional Municipality) bargaining is at an impasse over snow and ice control. A strike/lockout deadline of mid-September has been established.

CUPE is continuing to meet with provincial government officials and is moving towards the implementation of wage parity and a provincial agreement for our members working in the school board sector.

PEI

The provincial government continues to review all programs and service delivery methods. Our provincial division, CUPE PEI, has been proactive in the implementation of the National Strategic Directions document which has resulted in greater mobilization of our members as well as more coordination amongst our local unions. Protection of the integrity of our CUPE bargaining rights remain paramount. With the government's announcement that "there will now be changes coming in all areas", we must continue our coordinated efforts to ensure that our members' interests are protected.

New Brunswick

Our members of Local 4598 commenced strike action against the Canadian Red Cross on August 18, 2005. The issues in the dispute include wages, benefits and workplace issues. Our members, who provide homecare services make just over \$8 per hour, and have been trying to negotiate an agreement for the past two years.

Bargaining will heat up this fall in the Nursing Home Sector and the Court Stenographers, both are province-wide groups so we will likely be tested again by the Lord Government, but the CUPE NB solidarity pact is in place and mobilization efforts are underway.

Quebec

Currently, the Régie des rentes du Québec (*Quebec Pension Board*) is holding a consultation on the funding of extended defined benefits pension plans. The Régie is proposing several amendments to the Plan Funding act. We are working on a brief with the F.T.Q. This reform is a major concern for CUPE because employers will be more reluctant to implement or maintain defined benefits pension plans given the strict solvency requirements that apply, especially when a plan is terminated. This would result in a solvency deficit and in constant cost variations in the plan.

A major victory for locals 3055 and 4134, representing outside and inside workers respectively at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, is worth mentioning. This was an interest arbitration held after the mergers of five (5) municipalities forming the new city of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. The arbitrator standardized the working conditions based on the contract with the former city of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. This collective agreement was the most beneficial both normatively and financially.

It must be noted that in this case the arbitrator went against the decision made in the interest arbitration of Montreal's blue-collar workers (CUPE 301). We now hope that this will help our members of Local 301 with their appeal procedure against the arbitrator's ruling.

Local 375 representing the Montreal Harbour Dockers voted for a memorandum of settlement. The collective agreement includes wage increases of 14% over five years.

Ontario

Arising out of the May 2005 CUPE Ontario convention, work is well under way on the action plan delegates adopted at the convention.

The OMERS lawsuit is proceeding, and we are readying to reply to draft legislation introduced by the McGuinty government regarding plan governance.

On the P3 front, the government announced plans for five P3 hospitals, and our campaign to oppose these P3s has begun. The first of a series of community plebiscites was held in St. Catherines and some 12,000 citizens voted over 90% in opposition to P3s. Our campaign to expose the restructuring downfalls associated with the governments proposed LHINS (Local Health Integration Networks) includes public meetings showcasing our roving hospital room display.

Our members of Local 1097, health care support workers in the Niagara Region narrowly lost a representation vote with the SEIU in August. Our activists, staff and leadership put on a magnificent effort and while we were outnumbered by 1,700 to 300 we came up some 32 votes short. Another vote may result from the LHINS restructuring and our activists cannot wait for this to occur.

Manitoba

CUPE Manitoba made a \$10,000 donation to the provincial pediatric hospital arising out of fundraising held each year at the Division convention. This very worthy cause has received over \$70,000 in donations from CUPE over the past decade.

Health Care support workers remain at the bargaining table with other health care unions, with wage equity the major issue left to resolve.

Local 500 ran a spirited campaign to oppose the contracting out of refuse collection, and fell one vote short at Winnipeg City Council. This action on the part of Winnipeg's new mayor will certainly cause 2006 bargaining to be more complicated, and will motivate our activists in the October 2006 civic elections.

Saskatchewan

Master agreement health care support worker bargaining is continuing on behalf of our 12,000 members in this sector. The improved economic conditions in Saskatchewan (now a contributor to equalization as opposed to being a recipient), has caused the Calvert government to abandon their 0-1-1 wage guidelines.

Local 1975 members at the University of Saskatchewan remain locked in various disputes with their employer, many of which are being arbitrated and some which are at the bargaining table.

The Regina civic unions, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, are in a very difficult round of bargaining and have taken job action, in solidarity with the ATU Local.

Alberta

CUPE Alberta continues to speak out on behalf of all working people to mitigate the myth that Alberta is the "land of milk and honey". They have urged the government to properly fund child care and to use the huge surplus to fund the infrastructure deficit.

Local 38 is challenging Accenture's transfer of IT jobs to Toronto without the protection of the collective agreement. Accenture is following a corporate trend to send jobs overseas; in this case, to Manila.

British Columbia

Local 401 and CUPE BC's Water Watch Campaign scored another victory in the battle against privatization of water. This time, it was the Regional District of Nanaimo that backed down after being presented with proof of the folly of a P3 with Epcor. The campaign built significant public support, which will keep the issue on the front burner in the upcoming municipal elections.

Speaking of the municipal elections, CUPE BC will be building on the amazing work done during the spring provincial election to help locals mobilize members and make a difference at the ballot boxes in their communities in November.

HEU

HEU is preparing for a watershed round of bargaining in the spring of 2006. Members are signing up in record numbers to attend occupational bargaining conferences to identify and prepare proposals.

The Supreme Court of Canada will hear HEU's challenge to Bill 29 in February 2006. Bill 29 is the legislation which destroyed health care workers' collective agreement rights and allowed privatization of their work.

HEU has been organizing those contracted out workers in the face of sweetheart deals signed by the IWA. Whenever a vote is counted, workers are choosing HEU in overwhelming majorities.

4. CBC and TELUS Disputes

I am very proud to hear of the many ways CUPE members are continuing to support locked out TELUS and CBC/Société Radio-Canada workers. For both disputes we urge you to join the many picket lines and rallies in your communities.

In support of the TWU members, we have been encouraging members and their families to cancel special phone features and automatic bill payment, as well as write to federal labour minister Joe Fontana. The TWU is in its fifth year without a collective agreement. Visit www.anotherwrongnumber.com

To date, I have been able to drop by and support CBC workers in Winnipeg, Regina and Ottawa as I traveled for CUPE and have been impressed with their strength and solidarity. CUPE National helped organize a benefit concern for Ottawa CBC workers, and we have written to CBC President Robert Rabinovitch and to the Prime Minister Paul Martin, and urge you to do the same. You can also visit the <http://www.cbcontheline.ca> web site to find out more on how you can offer support.

Both these employers are taking aggressive action to further their “flexibility” agendas, which we know means downsizing and outsourcing.

The National Executive Board adopted resolutions of solidarity and support and a \$10,000.00 donation to both TWU (Telecommunications Workers Union) and CMG (Canadian Media Guild) members.

5. National Convention

As you receive this report we are on the eve of our National Convention to be held in my own hometown of Winnipeg. (No, you will not need either mosquito repellent or snow shoes in early October).

It promises to be a very full week, with exciting guest speakers, a very diverse and comprehensive cultural program and very spirited debate on the issues of concern to our members.

For those of you unable to attend convention, please follow the events on our web page at www.cupe.ca. For those of you travelling to Winnipeg, have a safe journey; we are all looking forward to an exciting convention.

6. Retirements

Our sincere thanks and best wishes also go out to the following staff who have indicated their intentions to retire:

- Sister Monique Cloutier, Quebec Area Office (November 1, 2005)
- Sister Lynn McDavid, Red Deer Area Office (January 1, 2006)
- Brother Lorne Saunders, Saint John Area Office (September 1, 2005)
- Sister Ginette Valin, National Office (September 1, 2005)

In closing, this will be my last report to you prior to the national convention. It doesn't seem possible that two years have flown by this quickly. But as Canada's largest union, it seems there is never a dull moment.

As always, I would like to recognize and thank both our activists and staff for your un-ending commitment to representing our members, day in and day out on the front lines. We sometimes focus too much on our challenges, because we are also a union of incredible accomplishments, and this is due in no small part to your efforts. Thank you.

In solidarity,

PAUL MOIST
National President

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