



Union News

A Union of Taxation Employees Publication

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UPDATE ON AGENCY CLASIFCATION SYSTEM ACS-Service Programs

The SP Guide training package is being finalized. It is the primary tool to assist managers and employees in understanding the Agency's classification system and the new SP group. Training is to be provided to the HR community in the first two weeks in December. Training to managers and employees through facilitated sessions begins shortly thereafter. Each training session is expected to take 3 hours. It is recognized that the timing of these sessions is not an optimal time of year and flexible scheduling will be provided to every extent possible. **Every employee must be provided the opportunity to attend.** Strategies are being developed to address situations such as employees on leave. UTE facilitators will be co-facilitating employee sessions.

Writer and Evaluator Training

The majority of writer training has been completed; any additional training will be done on an "as needed" basis. Evaluator training for Beta Testing is completed and additional evaluator training is expected to take place in January. The union received both writer and evaluator training in November.

Linda Cassidy
Chairperson of Staffing Committee

SEASONS GREETINGS



From the Executive and Staff of the Union of Taxation Employees, we wish you and yours a warm and prosperous holiday season.

PENSION TRIAL BEGINS

The litigation trial involving the federal government's \$30.2-billion expropriation of the federal public service pension surplus has begun. The lawsuit is the most significant case of its kind in Canadian history.

Three law firms - will represent 18 unions, employee associations and retiree groups representing more than 300,000 combined memberships.

A copy of the Statement of Claim submitted for the trial can be obtained from: www.acep-cape.ca, www.nelligan.ca and www.psac-afpc.org

By 1999, the pension plans of federal public sector workers (public service, RCMP and Canadian Forces employees) had accumulated a combined surplus of \$30.2 billion.

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**SI VOUS PRÉFÉREZ AVOIR CE COMMUNIQUÉ EN FRANÇAIS, VEUILLEZ VOUS
ADRESSER À VOTRE PRÉSIDENT- E DE SECTION LOCALE**

Member Volunteers in New Orleans Recovery

BROTHER BILL MCCALLUM from London Local 00017 is a certified professional embalmer. Bill volunteered his time and services after receiving a North American wide plea from the United States Government for experienced Funeral Directors to assist in the recovery of victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It was the hope of the U.S. officials that volunteers could endure for as much as two weeks recovering victims in the ruins of New Orleans and preparing their remains for release to their families. Bill and his team were deployed to the most devastated areas of New Orleans commencing their work a month after Katrina hit and within days after Rita. In fact, Bill worked five weeks straight, starting at 6:00 am and often not finishing until 10:00 pm, in 30 degree plus temperatures. Most often Bill worked in dreadful conditions within the wreckage of homes infested with alligators and poisonous water moccasin snakes. Armed escorts always accompanied his team. Collectively the teams recovered in excess of eight hundred human remains, assisting families achieve some form of closure from this catastrophe. Initially Bill was refused Leave with Pay by Local CRA Management for this humanitarian gesture, and was advised to apply for vacation leave before he departed. Within minutes of my call to Sister Bannon, our National President, her "interventions" resulted in Bill receiving Leave with Pay. Bill wants to thank UTE for their support, and I am humbled to know Bill and have him as a friend.

Barry Melanson. President. Local 00017

UTE UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 4 - 9,
2005**

Executive Council

**March 27 - April 2,
2006**

Executive Council &
Presidents'
Conference

AGENCY'S OSBERVE AND ATTEST INITIATIVE

The CRA has appointed a Competency Based Human Resources Management Advisory Committee (CBHRMAC) to oversee the competency based staffing regime. The new focus of the CBHRMAC is the Agency's new Observe and Attest Initiative which is aimed at allowing managers and Team Leaders to observe employees' performance and attesting that employees either meet or do not meet the threshold levels for:

- Client Services Orientation (CSO),
- Effective Interactive Communication (EIC) and
- Teamwork and Cooperation (T&C).

The Agency expects that most employees will be able to meet the levels required for their jobs. For those employees found not to demonstrate the required levels, the necessary support will be provided to assist them in their development. Members of the MG Group will be required to meet the threshold levels for Conflict Management (CM), Team Leadership (TL) and Developing Others, (DO) before they are trained and authorized to Observe and Attest the aforementioned (CSO,EIR,T&C) competencies for their employees.

Those members of the MG Group who do not meet the threshold levels and are therefore not authorized to Observe and Attest will be assisted in their development. Based on the information provided at our last meeting, training for managers and Team Leaders will commence in the fall of 2006.

Kent MacDonald



Betty Holmes and Annette Melanson

At their recent Annual General Meeting, The Honours and Awards Committee and the Executive of Local 60005, (Saint John, N.B.) recognized the work that has been done by Sister Betty Holmes over the years, by honouring her with the Local's highest award possible: The **A. Robert (Bob) Campbell Award of Merit.**

The award recognizes the love, respect, service and caring of the recipient.

The award symbolizes the true union philosophy of solidarity, support and representation as epitomized by the namesake.

To quote from the presentation,

*"The humanity, the warmth, the caring and sharing of Sister Holmes holds no bounds. **BETTY IS THE EPITOME OF A UNION ACTIVIST, Most of all,***

BETTY IS A FRIEND."

Annette Melanson

A Summer Night

*Hovering over the forest the full moon
Softly sows moonbeams around. Tall
Pine trees transmute to shadows against
The midnight, moonlit sky. On the lawn
Each blade of grass captures the whisper
Of another self. Gently the warm summer
Night wraps round me. Quietly resting beside
Me, my cat, and dog listen to the night sounds
The whispers hiding in the trees.
Scents of pine needles, and lilacs linger
With memories of the day. Warm night, and
Silver shadows surround us.
Covered by the quilt
Of the moonlit, midnight sky.*

F. E. Hawker
"The House that Toby Built"

the president's corner

Christmas is almost upon us. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were at the Triennial Convention in Saint John. I look back over the last 5 months. I admit that it has been pretty busy.

One of our first tasks at the National Office was to finalize the convention minutes and the changes to our By-laws and Regulations that were adopted by the Convention. The documents have been sent to the locals. We are actioning resolutions passed at Convention. The Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety Committees have discussed dates for their Regional and National Conferences. In fact, the Regional EO Conference dates have been finalized and published. Presidents Conference, the Executive Council and the National Staffing Course that trained 50 activists, all were held in September. Several locals held their Annual General Meetings in October and November. The 1st National Vice President and I have tried to attend all the AGM's to which we were invited. Weather did create some havoc for us.

To ask the question, "Are we busy?" Yes we are and I don't see it getting any quieter. There is the regular Union business and then add to that the creative antics of CRA. The negotiated salary increase that was due on November 1st was not implemented on the due date. UTE has filed a Policy Grievance on this and will inform you of the outcome. Individual members have also signed similar grievances and if you are interested to do the same, please contact your local executive.

If you wish to receive UTE information by e-mail at your personal address, you can "subscribe" through our website at www.ute-sei.org. The CRA has advised me that the link to our website will be active on the INFOZONE as of November 23rd. It will be found in the Employees Corner, Hot Links and under Sites of Interest. This has been a long time in coming and I trust there will be no further delays.

This is the capsule version of the news around the National Office.

I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season and we'll see you in the New Year

Betty Bannon



(Continued from page 1)

One of the main contributors to the surplus was the fact that the workers were paying into the pension fund based on calculations that assumed workers were receiving annual wage increases, when in fact they had a legislated six-year salary freeze in the 1990s. On average, federal public sector workers pay higher contributions to their pension plans compared to private sector workers. On September 14, 1999, Parliament passed the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act (Bill C-78), which introduced amendments to the laws covering the three pension plans, allowing the federal government to grab the \$30.2-billion surplus. The federal government is exempted from the Pension Benefits Standards Act, which limits employer access to any surplus in federally registered pension plans. Bill C-78 also gave Government the authority to raise the mandatory employee contributions in case of a shortfall and to reduce or cease employer contributions if the pension fund accumulates a surplus in the future.

On November 8, 1999, unions representing workers affected by Bill C-78, employee associations and retiree groups filed a lawsuit against the federal government. In total, 670,000 Canadians - or 1 in 50 Canadians across the country - are directly affected by Bill C-78. However, millions of Canadians are also affected, considering the impact the legislation has on the families of the workers. On top of the pension grab, on July 7, 2005, the federal government imposed yearly increases in employee contribution rates for the next eight years.

The following arguments will be laid out during the trial:

- The Government violated its legal obligation to use the surplus in the best interest of federal public sector workers and retirees.
- The Government's action constitutes a breach of contract in that the pension fund is part of the terms and conditions of employment governing public sector workers.
- Since the active and retired pension plan members contributed in part to bring about the surplus, they are at least entitled to a part of it based equitably on their share of contributions.
- Bill C-78 discriminates against public sector workers under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

OLYMPICS - UTE STYLE

Founded on the concept of fun, and designed to foster both regional and interregional solidarity, the Executive Committee of UTE planned and organized UTE's first Olympic games. Five events over two evenings were planned. The events included Texas Hold 'Em Poker, Sequential Cribbage Tournament, a Walking Relay, an Essay Contest and the Regional Vice Presidents' Game of Sequence. All 10 Regions fielded teams comprised of attendees to the Presidents' Conference from their respective Locals. It was great fun for all who participated, and for those who observed. And yes, it did become competitive.

Congratulations to The National Capital Region, who was our first Olympic Champions. A special thank you to our Executive Committee for thinking up the idea, and organizing and operating the events. A great time was had by all. Every region wants another Olympics sooner than later, so that they can knock off the current champions.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that all address changes should be done via e-mail to Sylvie Bastien (basties@ute-sei.org) at the National Office. If you do not have access to an e-mail, please pass it on (with your PSAC ID) to a local representative or mail it directly to the National Office at 233 Gilmour Street, Suite 602, Ottawa ON K2P 0P2.



Do Unions Have a Role in Global Social Justice?

As labour activists we are often asked by our members to describe for them our bargaining demands at contract time. When we answer with the usual list of demands, such as “a raise” or “improved leave provisions,” our members are comforted that they will experience *some* improvements to their working conditions. However, when we mention the “Social Justice Fund” as a bargaining demand, the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) members question why the union needs to negotiate the creation of such a fund.

No doubt we’ve all heard talk of the “Social Justice Fund” from the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). However, few members have a complete understanding of what this bargaining demand really means. In fact, many members quietly wish it would be dropped in favour of more “meat and potato” demands directly related to our workplace. But what is the “Social Justice Fund” and what role does the UTE play with respect to “Global Social Justice?”

Very simply put, the “Social Justice Fund” is just what it says...a fund for social justice. A key element of all labour organizations in the developed world is to fight for more stable working conditions in which labour law becomes a universal right. Only when such rights are established, will unions be capable of reducing the power of money (capital) to seek less labour friendly countries in which to generate wealth, thereby preserving our working standards and indeed improving the working standards in those countries.

With the rise of corporate globalization aided by agreements such as NAFTA, capital is now even more transportable than ever. The sad fact is that, because of this phenomenon, gains made by labour in Canada can disappear when corporations choose to transfer their capital to countries that have a repressive labour environment. As more and more corporations choose to let the free flow of capital lead their decision-making process, developed countries will begin to experience job loss; whereas those countries that are less inclined to promote improved labour standards will, in the short-term, be the beneficiaries.

It is this marriage of international corporations and governments that has facilitated the flight of capital to more “profitable” jurisdictions. However, this has provided a “wake-up” call for unions everywhere to develop bargaining demands in which social justice becomes as important as obtaining improved benefits for the members. This is particularly important to unions because, if left unchecked, the growth of low-wage non-unionized jobs in developing nations will increase while fair-wage jobs in developed countries will experience decline. Gains previously made by unions will be eroded and this environment will have a negative impact on the union movement’s ability to continue negotiating fair contracts for their membership.



So, in answer to the question, “do unions have a role in global social justice?”, the answer is a resounding “yes!” Without the strength of the union movement both domestically and internationally, all workers suffer. Capital can be more easily transferred to those areas where labour costs are cheap. By developing policies where social justice becomes a significant demand, our union will help ensure stability both here and abroad. Next time someone questions the need for a “social justice fund” and asks why the bargaining team isn’t solely adhering to the “real” demands, such as higher wages or an improved dental plan, you can tell them that corporate globalization now represents a significant threat to their jobs. Explain to them that, since governments are not committed to reigning in the power of corporations, it is the labour movement who must work to ensure that fair wages and better working conditions become a universal right...and remember, “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

Hugh McGoldrick

WHY IS HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPORTANT IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

"We work in a paper cut industry, so what's the big deal?"

We may not work in a munitions' factory, but that doesn't mean our jobs are without hazard. The hazards our members encounter aren't quite as sensational and are therefore, far more insidious. In an office setting, our health and safety activists must not only be ever vigilant in ensuring that their membership work in a healthy and safe environment, but they often do so in the face of this kind of opposition from management, their members and occasionally, even their fellow union activists. Whereas, in an industrialized workplace, management actively promotes a healthy and safe working environment; realizing that it is far more cost effective to prevent, rather than to pay the costs associated with the outcome of workplace injury. They make workplace safety their number one priority and it's time that we follow suit.

We forget our members encounter danger also and not just your garden variety paper cuts. Inappropriate lighting or noise level impacts our employees' stress levels. Poor indoor air quality, including molds and/or toxins, makes our members ill. Employees with allergies, breathing impairments or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities are finding it increasingly difficult to perform their duties in the workplace and are being forced to opt for telework arrangements or in some cases, premature retirement. Threatening clients, motor vehicle or equipment accidents or malfunctions can all result in devastating effects. Repetitive strain injuries (RSI's) left unaddressed or untreated can disable our members. Did you know that more Workers' Compensation claims result from RSI's than any other type of accident or injury?

Operating and maintaining any successful program requires the commitment and cohesiveness of all stakeholders; health and safety is no exception. Committee members, managers and employees all play a role in promoting and ensuring an effective program, with education, training, continued reinforcement and communication being the cornerstones.

Workplace Committees are the watchdogs of your program. Choose your members wisely; select those who are credible, well respected, dynamic, forceful and committed, possessing a creative vision to support a proactive program. Remember that these members ensure the employer meets their statutory obligations of providing staff with a safe and healthy work environment, as well as promoting preventative, proactive initiatives.



The employer needs to understand their responsibilities and the ramifications of not complying with the same. They need to know about the due diligence defence and understand their accountability; including penalties under both the *Canada Labour Code* as well as the *Criminal Code*. They need to appreciate that an effective program is based on prevention rather than reaction. Who is the employer?? Not just CRA, not just senior management, but all individuals who assign duties and/or tasks to employees; including front line supervisors.

Employees should also understand that they have both rights and responsibilities when it comes to health and safety. They must participate in the identification of workplace hazards and should also be encouraged to take part in the correction of those same hazards.

Everyone needs to realize and support the importance of health and safety. Where would we be if concerned individuals didn't push the envelope on the health effects of asbestos and PCB exposure? Where would we be if there was no legislation controlling hazardous chemicals in the workplace? Without support and a firm commitment to this issue, what disaster might we next encounter that endangers the well being of our membership?

Understand that a band aid may be the solution to a paper cut, but a band aid solution is not what we need.

Debbie Ferguson



MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

Subject: The launch of the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC)

Good Morning, Mr. Dorais!

I am writing to you to express my disappointment in the 'Friends and Leaders' recognition initiative. To 'award' someone and give them recognition as a 'friend' or even worse as a 'leader', based on the almighty \$\$, is insulting and disrespectful. Basing any kind of recognition on the monetary contributions made by employees is shallow and sets up a division of the classes. I am surprised that your office would promote such a thing.

There are a number of employees who cannot afford to make a monetary commitment to the United Way, or perhaps many other charities, for that matter. These same people, however, are able to volunteer either their time or the results of their efforts in order to help those who are less fortunate. I do not mean just supporting global assistance such as Flood Relief or Hurricane/ Disaster Relief. There are employees who volunteer to read to children in local libraries, coach children's sports teams, push juice carts in hospitals and nursing homes, and knit mitts, hats and scarves that are given to people in need in the community. There is no monetary value put on the time and efforts of these people and they do not receive a charitable donation receipt. However, I would think that the individuals whose lives they come in contact with, directly or indirectly, would consider them to be 'friends'. And these same people would be considered 'leaders' by their peers and their communities. It is amazing that promotion of such recognition comes from the top of our organization. Once again, I ask myself, 'Did you read that out loud to anybody before you had that printed up?'

The fact that 'Friends and Leaders' is based on monetary contributions would suggest that those who do not make the minimum contributions, are, by the absence of that contribution, not considered by the Agency to be friends or leaders.

A 5lb bag of onions for this one.

Thank you for your time,

Anne Marie McGregor
Peterborough Local



A QUICK LOOK AT BARGAINING

The Standing Bargaining Committee: Denis Lalancette, Chairperson; Pamela Abbott, Co-chairperson; Jean-Pierre Fraser, Taxation Centres; and Gary Kaschak, TSO's; met October 24 to 28, to action the following resolutions from the UTE convention:

RESOLUTION 234 (*That bargaining demands be received and reviewed by the UTE National Bargaining Committee at any time on a continual basis.*)

RESOLUTION 238 (*That the Standing Bargaining Committee explore the various bargaining processes (such as positional bargaining, binding arbitration, interest-based bargaining etc.) to determine the most beneficial process and make recommendations to the December 2005 UTE Executive Council.*)

Information and the findings regarding the two resolutions will be sent to you early in 2006.

As directed by a Resolution adopted at the September Presidents' Conference, we discussed and began the initial groundwork to provide a thorough review of the 2003/2004 Bargaining and Strike Processes. This resolution requires a tremendous amount of research, but we hope it will meet your expectations as UTE members, to be informed and active in your bargaining process.

Although the next round of bargaining does not start until 2007, UTE is beginning work now, as we intend to keep you informed and involved. The year 2006 will allow UTE to take stock of the past processes and introduce improvements.

The members of the UTE Standing Bargaining Committee would like to take this opportunity to wish you Happy Holidays filled with LOVE and JOY and that the NEW YEAR just over the horizon will see your dreams fulfilled.

Denis Lalancette
Chairperson of the Standing Bargaining Committee