
THE BOTTOM LINE

ALL THE NEWS FOR OPSEU LOCAL 420

No. 9

Thursday 16 Mar 2006



BILLY BRAGG SALUTES STRIKERS

By Scott Whalen -
The number one issue in Ontario today is the

OPSEU college teachers' strike, British post-punk songster and social activist Billy Bragg told a sell-out crowd at the Opera House in Toronto last Sunday.

"[Faculty] are on the sharp edge and are looking out for us," he said. "They deserve all our support.

"The audience sang along with 'There is Power in the Union' like it was a national anthem," said concert-goer Damian Wiechula of the OPSEU faculty bargaining team. Here's Damian's note to OPSEU members:


"I've just come back from the Billy Bragg concert at the Opera House on Queen Street East. During his show he told the audience "I want to talk to you about the number one issue in this province... the OPSEU College Teacher's strike," saying college teachers are looking out for everyone and deserve support. "The

crowd went wild when Bragg called for support for the strike, cheered and got REAL LOUD! He went on to praise public servants as "what holds us all together". It was hard to hear (because it was the loudest most raucous part of the concert) and then the audience sang along with him. The majority of the audience was young, maybe college age. A definite minority were our ages."

Damian asked the promoter if Bragg would be around Thursday; unfortunately he'll be in Texas. "He'd have been great at the Mowat Block rally or Dundas Square," Damian said.

According to *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia website, Stephen William Bragg (born December 20, 1957), known as Billy Bragg, is a British musician known for his blend of folk, punk-rock, and protest music. He has been active for over 20 years. His music combines poetry and political comment with occasional romance. He has collaborated with many other leading musicians, including Johnny Marr of The Smiths, protest folk singer Leon Rosselson, R.E.M., Less Than Jake, Kirsty MacColl, and Wilco.

Sources: Wikipedia, and Billy Bragg fan Damian Wiechula of OPSEU faculty.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Week Two of the 2006 Strike. The first week of the strike went well considering this is the first strike in 17 years. For some of us this is our first experience, for others the second and third! Let's hope it is at least 17 years until the next one.

This week the colleges decided to enact a "Semester Completion Strategy" for our students across the province. For first year students, it appears that the college will roll current course curriculum into next fall's semester. How on earth would we be able to teach this semester's courses with next semester's courses? I think our students would be confused and much over worked if the college initiated this hair-brained approach.

Secondly, the college has decided to guarantee graduation for students in their last year of their programs. Do the colleges so devalue the education they provide that they are willing to hand out diplomas and certificates without completing the full course curriculum? I think we are getting closer to charging for college education, and once the cash is in the college's hands, a diploma will be given. Think of the savings then!

Why would the colleges develop such a half baked idea? I can think of three reasons: 1) they want to make themselves look good in the public eye; 2) they want us to look bad; and 3) they are trying to scare us into forcing our team back to the table. I don't think they have created this semester completion strategy to assist the students. Students need to be able to take their educational certification to employers with complete trust that they are qualified to do the work. Employers need to trust the graduates that they can do the work. This strategy doesn't assist either group.

Let us resolve to continue to support each other. We are all in this together.

CAAT ON SEMESTER COMPLETION STRATEGIES

TO: CAAT Academic Local Presidents
FROM: Ted Montgomery, Negotiating Team Chair
DATE: March 14, 2006
RE: Semester Completion Strategies

CAAT Academic
Negotiating Team

Management's latest announcements are not a surprise. This is simply a continuation of their campaign to impose acceptance of their bad offer. They keep telling anyone who will listen that it is a good offer. It is not.

It wasn't a good offer in August, November or February. It is not a good offer today. It does not do anything to improve quality. In fact, this offer goes backwards on quality by increasing weekly workloads. Management tabled a previously-withdrawn, additional obnoxious term at 9:30 pm on March 6th fully knowing it would provoke a strike and that it took the parties further apart.

The way to end this strike is crystal clear – for management to put a serious and responsible offer on the table. The union has told management over and over we want to negotiate a fair settlement. They refuse to reply to our offers of settlement and offer nothing at all on quality.

Students may well be initially attracted to a guarantee of graduation but let's all take a closer look.

The so-called guarantee actually is a demonstration of the problems that college faculty are concerned about and that brought us to this situation.

College management thinks so little of the college students' education that they are prepared to give them a diploma, or certificate, or degree with half or more of the curriculum uncovered. And, of course, the last part of the curriculum is nearly always the critical part, the more difficult part, where students and teachers synthesize all the learning that has been established in the early weeks.

If management's schemes were to be enacted, the Ontario college system and the value of Ontario college diplomas and degrees would plummet and never recover.

This year's graduates would be the new "poster children" for all the flaws, weaknesses, and failures that Bob Rae pointed out in the colleges.

It is not possible for supervisors (nor anyone else for that matter) to take all of the classes -- the time alone makes it impossible and the skill sets show that it would be a complete farce. Supervisors do not have the skills and more importantly do not have the knowledge of their class of students as the teachers do. There are not enough managers to do the job and they do not have the skills. They do not have the knowledge. ANYONE who would seriously propose this as a solution to the strike is dangerously out of touch with student needs.

Would you want the 2006 grad nurse who has missed the last half of the last term in charge of your care? For that matter would you want the nurse who was in gigantic classes with a manager for a professor and no reliable preparation, testing, or feedback? Would you turn your company's books over to the 2006 college grad who missed the last half of the last term? Would your company hire these 2006 grads when other candidates are available?

As for the notion of adding the five to eight weeks of lost curriculum to next years classes, it is equally farcical. The courses are not same. The teacher skills sets are all different. All curriculums would have to be re-written...then by whom?...when?...with what resources? This notion would only perpetuate a problem for many, many years.

The proposal called "Semester Completion Strategy" is so misguided that is alarming. Cloaked as a help to students, it actually makes college students the long-term scapegoats. Management is willing to sacrifice the quality of their education to try to prolong the strike.

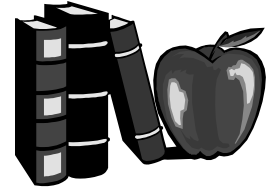
A true semester completion strategy is really a simple one – table an offer that addresses what Rae, the Workload Task Force, McGuinty and college faculty have called for. Start to address the quality issues.

OPSEU has repeatedly invited management to return to the bargaining table with a better offer than the one that produced this strike. They have not responded. OPSEU has pressed Premier McGuinty to get the colleges to bargain a settlement. All that is takes is the willingness for management to put a real offer on the table rather than hold to the same old offer that was rejected and caused this strike. The current offer invests not a penny in quality improvements. It does nothing whatsoever to address the issues Rae identified as problems and that McGuinty spoke of in his May 13 address – "more faculty and more faculty time for students."

College faculty are on strike because college management has failed to table an offer that will benefit college students. This latest gambit when looked at in the realistic light

of day only confirms the findings of the Rae Report in its assessment of college management.

Ted Montgomery, for the faculty bargaining team



JOIN THE ONLINE SURVEY

OPSEU ONLINE has a form for faculty to tell everyone about the challenges they face in the classroom. Go to www.opseu.org and look for the survey link. Fill out your information in the form, then see the survey results (link at the bottom of the survey form) and write-ups input by colleagues from around the province. It's a great way to get YOUR story out!

VISIT THE ONLINE STRIKE WEBLOG

OPSEU ONLINE has a strike weblog going that could be your connection to the latest news during the strike. Visit the weblog daily at www.opseu.org.

CAPTION CONTEST WINNER!

Karen: *"Alright, it's agreed...pistols at dawn!"*

Maureen (thinking): *"Hmmm...this could work...whether it's the Union President or the VP that goes down I could save some major coin!"*

Congratulations to Vicki Ryckman, and thanks to Eric Bauer and Jake Sandison for their contributions. Plate o' snake bites to the winner! – *Local 420 Strike Committee*



KEEPING IN TOUCH

Local 420 President Bernie Belanger is available to speak to, or visit with, all members of the media and general public, daily during weekdays, 8:30 am – 9:30 am, at Local 420 Head Office. At other times of the day, join him as he walks the line, or phone him at the number listed below. When you need the facts, go to the source!

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!!

As requested, all of our newsletters are available as .PDF files for the World to read! We almost have all newsletters formatted in .HTML for those on dial-up. Patience, please, we're close. Log-on to the Web, go to www.opseu420.org, and follow the links. *P.S.* Check your e-mails regularly!

Pay Day at Local 420

The process begins the day before when Eugene Tay, chair of the Strike Finance Committee and his two assistants, Gord Peck and Shelly Lyck verify the eligibility of each member to draw strike pay.



Henry Brugma, our OPSEU Staff Representative, is late delivering the blank cheques to Eugene. Consequently, the committee must leave the actual preparation of the cheques to payday morning.



Payday morning starts at 7:00 a.m. with Shelly hand-writing the Local Supplement cheques.



Gord oversees the printing of the cheques supplied by head office. Unlike the Local cheques, they can be printed on the computer.



Pay Day!!

Here's Gord taking his turn signing cheques. Each cheque had to have two signatures.



At noon on Tuesday the members gather for a general meeting and to collect their strike pay.



Both before and after the meeting the members lined up and the committee distributed their cheques



If you didn't make it to the meeting and you are going on the Toronto bus this morning, someone from the finance committee will be at Quinte Mall with the cheques.

Otherwise, your cheque will be delivered to the picket line or you may arrange to pick it up at strike headquarters.